

Stress Management and Employee Productivity in Manufacturing Company

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ABSTRACT

Stress is a pervasive problem in the manufacturing industry, with studies suggesting that up to 80% of employees experience it at work. This study examines the effects of stress management on employee productivity, with a focus on acute, chronic, and traumatic stress as a measure of stress. A survey of 265 respondents was conducted at Flour Mills Nigeria PLC, representing a target population of 348 out of the total population of 2673. The findings, analyzed using Pearson's correlation, reveal that stress management measures have a significant impact on employee productivity. Specifically, this study shows that acute, traumatic, and chronic stress significantly influence employee productivity. Based on these results, this study recommends that management prioritise stress-relief activities to enhance employee productivity. By doing so, organizations can mitigate the negative effects of stress and promote a healthier and more productive work environment.

Keywords: Acute Stress, Chronic Stress, Employee Productivity, Stress Management, And Traumatic Stress

INTRODUCTION

Stress is a pervasive problem in modern workplaces that affects employees in various industries and occupations. According to Sucharitha and Basha (2020). Studies on the impact of stress on employees' productivity and job stress at the workplace are considered to be among the foremost factors affecting employees' performance. He reiterated that stress is alluded to as a condition of pressure experienced by people confronting phenomenal strains, limitations, or openings. Chronic stress can lead to decreased productivity, absenteeism, turnover, and various physical and mental health problems. Stress is a worldwide phenomenon that occurs in various forms in all workplaces. For this reason, Obi (2020) opined that stress is a worldwide experience in the lives of many employees. Similarly, Odita (2023) posited that stress is inevitable in a work environment. Some of the underlying theories and underpinning concepts behind stress are now settled and accepted, whereas others are still being researched and debated. Stress has become a common phenomenon among employers and employees. Business operates in a dynamic, complicated, and insecure environment that may cause unpredictability in an organization's performance (Adewoye and Salau, 2022). According to Salau (2022), it is pertinent that every organization that adjusts to all modifications must apply an appropriate approach that values employees' contributions and considers their well-being. Thus, stress management is crucial.

The impact of stress on employee productivity is significant. Stress can impair cognitive functions, including attention, memory, and decision-making. This can also lead to decreased motivation, reduced job satisfaction,

and increased errors. Stress can also affect employee well-being, leading to burnout, anxiety, and depression. Effective stress management is essential for mitigating the negative effects of stress on employee productivity. Thus, employee productivity is a major tool through which organizations boost their performance indices, such as market share, sales ratio, and profitability. To achieve these concomitantly, good organizations ensure that their employees have the same visions, strengthen the strength of identification and bond between them and their employees, promote employees' voice in decision-making, and equally show concerns for employees' health and welfare (Dukerich et al., 2002). Stress management interventions can include employee assistance programs (EAPs), wellness initiatives, mindfulness training, and workplace redesign. These interventions aim to reduce stressors, improve coping skills, and promote employee well-being.

In today's work life, employees generally work for longer hours, as rising levels of responsibilities require them to exert themselves even more strenuously to meet rising expectations about work performance (Mark, 2012). Stress is a complex and dynamic phenomenon. Undesirable levels of stress affect an organisation's overall performance. Therefore, to achieve effective work, the organization or manager should properly manage the level of stress. To achieve this objective, all the factors that influence stress should be properly identified and measured (Kamalakumati and Ambika, 2013). Job stress is of vital importance and has become a key challenge for organizations because of its impact on the performance of an individual as well as the organisation. Employees serve as assets for an organization, but when they are stressed, undesirable circumstances such as increased absenteeism, low productivity, low motivation, and legal financial damages (which eventually affect the employee's work behaviour and lead him/her towards counterproductive work behaviour) emerge.

Stress in organizations affects both the individual and the organisation (e.g. increased turnover rates). Individuals can be affected at the physiological, affective, and behavioural levels, as well as during their leisure time and family life. Stress affects individuals and organizations within different timeframes. Stress reactions can occur immediately (short-term reactions) and/or take longer to develop (long-term reactions). Stress influences the physiological responses of the cardiac system. For example, individuals so-called high-strain jobs (i.e., jobs with high demands and low job control), show higher blood pressure than individuals in other types of jobs (Schwartz, Pickering, & Landsbergis, 2016). Stress is often misunderstood and misinterpreted, which results in avoidable problems. Therefore, it is important to understand stress well before thinking about its management.

The definition of stress has changed over time. Initially, it was considered an environmental pressure, followed by strain within the person. Stress is a psychological and physical state that results when the resources of an individual are insufficient to cope with the demands and pressures of the situation. Thus, stress is more likely in some situations than in others and in some individuals. Stress is defined as the response to a demand placed on a person. It can be simply understood as "a condition where one experiences a gap between the present and desired state." Merriam Webster defined stress as a physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension and may be a factor in disease causation. Stress can also be considered an unpleasant emotional situation that we experience when requirements (work-related or not) cannot be counterbalanced by our ability to resolve them. This results in emotional changes in response to this danger. It stems from the relationship between a person and their environment, and it appears as a subjective pressure because the same stress can affect one person but not another. When an employee can manage the pressures of the job and the possibility of completing a task is substantial, stress can be a motivating factor (Halkos and Dimitrios, 2018). According to Salau, Genty and Olanipekun, (2022), organizational support plays a crucial role in addressing the social, emotional, and economic needs of employees through guidance, counseling, fostering a positive work environment, ensuring fair compensation, and prioritizing their well-being. These initiatives contribute significantly to improving stress management practices.

Many organizations worldwide are witnessing an alarming increase in the negative effects of stress on employee productivity (Henry & Evans, 2008). Most organizations end up saddling employees with an overload of work to meet deadlines with the objective of attaining higher productivity, and this might have physical and psychological effects on employees. This may result in something contrary to what these organizations want to achieve (Mark, 2012) and thereby influence their productivity. Recently, there has been an increase in cases of

occupational stress-related problems among employees, which has led to declining interest in their jobs, less commitment, and growing impatience among top managers (Pflanz & Ogle, 2016). This is mainly due to the competitive nature of the job environment, shift in work demands, and economic hardship due to the economic recession. Therefore, this study aims to examine the factors associated with the effect of stress management on employees' productivity in the service industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stress

The word "Stress" is hailed from the Latin word "Strictus" which means "to tighten". Stress can be defined as the response of a person to demands (stressor) forced upon him/her (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2016). Conceptualising stress is a challenging task and a common topic for ongoing discussions among experts. Despite this continuous debate, there is consensus that stress arises from a perceived imbalance between an individual and its surroundings. The researchers explained the term stress as a situation in which the wellbeing of an individual is affected due to his failure to cope with the demands of the situation. Stress is defined as "a condition of tension that arises from actual or perceived demand which calls for adoption behaviour. Allen (2016) stated that whenever we lose confidence in our ability or potential to face the situation, we feel stressed. The term stress can have different meanings for different people. Davis (2018) studied stress as "a condition of anxiety on one's emotions, physical conditions, and thought processes". Di Martino (2015) summarized the theory of stress as "the emotional and physical response when occurs when the requirements of demands of the job do not match the capabilities/potentials". Stress is not completely negative. However, it is a reaction in which people react differently according to their experiences. Bosma and Brouwers (2004) argued that there is a significant relationship between stress and employee performance, as generally high levels of stress can have a negative impact on employees' productivity. This means that stress can lead to a decrease in productivity, increase in absenteeism, and employee turnover. However, this relationship is complex and may depend on an employee's ability to cope.

Hans Seyle (1956) cited in Sengupta (2017), one of the founding fathers of stress research, first introduced the term "stress" to describe physical and psychological responses to severe conditions or influences. He used the word "stress" which is an engineering term, to describe the responses to a force that when implemented in bodies, causes deformation. He further stated that stress is not necessarily bad; it depends on how it is taken. The stress of exhilarating, creative, and successful work is beneficial, whereas that of failure, humiliation, or infection is detrimental. Beehr (2016) defined stress in very general terms as "anything about an organizational role that produces adverse consequences for the individual". Okere (2013) defined stress as the physical and psychological conditions that result from forceful attempts to adapt to one's environment. Following this, and the fact that stress is an integral part of human existence, scholars argue that intensive efforts should be made to create better awareness of this contemporary reality amongst the workforce, so that they can know its nature, consequences, and how to manage it in their daily routine in the organisation (Amadi, 2007; Armstrong, 2012; Okere, 2013).

Acute Stress

Traumatic stress results from exposure to traumatic events and is a prevalent issue in the modern workplace, significantly affecting employees' physical and mental health, job performance, and organizational outcomes. Acute stress is short-term stress that arises from specific events or situations that are perceived as immediate threats. It triggers the body's "fight or flight" response, releasing stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. In small doses, acute stress can positively enhance focus, energy, and performance by increasing alertness and readiness to respond to challenges; however, when it is frequent, it can lead to fatigue, errors, and decreased productivity over time. It can also cause physical symptoms such as headaches, muscle tension, and digestive issues, thus impacting overall work performance. To explore the relationship between acute stress and employee productivity, this study proposes the following:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between acute stress and employee productivity.

Traumatic Stress

such as accidents, natural disasters, or violent incidents. It can cause severe psychological and emotional responses, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Traumatic stress often leads to a significant immediate drop in productivity owing to intense psychological distress. Affected employees may experience anxiety, flashbacks, and difficulty in concentrating, and their long-term effects include absenteeism, reduced work quality, and high turnover rates. Employees may require substantial recovery time and mental health support to regain their productivity. The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) suggests that individuals' appraisal and coping with traumatic events significantly influence their stress levels and productivity. Effective coping mechanisms and support systems are crucial for mitigating the negative impact of traumatic stress on productivity. Therefore, we propose the following:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between chronic stress and employee productivity.

Chronic Stress

Chronic stress is a long-term stress resulting from ongoing situations or conditions such as job insecurity, high workload, or continuous interpersonal conflicts. It is pervasive and can persist for weeks, months, or years. Chronic stress leads to a gradual decline in productivity owing to continuous strain on the body and mind. The symptoms include chronic fatigue, irritability, and decreased motivation. Long-term exposure to chronic stress can result in serious health issues, such as cardiovascular diseases, depression, and burnout, further reducing productivity and increasing absenteeism and turnover rates. Several studies have shown that chronic stress can lead to a variety of negative effects on employee performance and organizational well-being, such as reduced productivity and work quality, increased absenteeism and turnover (Bosma & Brouwers, 2004), decreased employee satisfaction, engagement, and morale, increased levels of burnout (Tim & Bakker, 2018), increased rates of depression and anxiety, increased rates of accumulated health (Folkman & Lazarus, 2017), and challenges such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and sleep disorders (Schaufeli et al., 2009). When employees experience chronic stress, they can experience depression and become unconscious of their regular routine jobs. Chronic stress can cause talented employees to become very unproductive and nonperforming. This level of stress dwindles the emotional and mental states of employees. Owing to this inconsistency in reasoning and work behaviour, employees may not be able to deliver routine jobs effectively, thereby reducing the level of productivity performance.

The Job Demand-Control-Support Model (Karasek & Theorell, 1990) posits that high job demands, coupled with low control and inadequate support, contribute to chronic stress. Employees experiencing chronic stress often feel overwhelmed and powerless, leading to sustained reduction in productivity and job satisfaction. Stress, whether acute, traumatic, or chronic, significantly affects employee productivity. While acute stress can temporarily enhance performance, traumatic and chronic stress are generally detrimental to long-term productivity and contribute to occupational stress. The underlisted hypothesis is therefore suggested from the above conceptual review

H₀: There is no significant relationship between traumatic stress and employee productivity.

Stress Management

Stress management involves applying various techniques to reduce the effect of stress on an individual. Amadi (2007) described it as a wide spectrum of techniques and psychotherapies aimed at controlling a person's level of stress, specifically chronic stress. Stress can be managed in many ways, depending on the type of stress and

its cause. The best stress management plans usually include a mix of stress-relievers that address stress-related ailments (Checks, 2011).

The goal of stress management is to help individuals manage their everyday stress. It also refers to interventions designed to reduce the impact of stressors in the workplace, with the aim of increasing an individual's ability to cope with stressors. Stress produces numerous symptoms which vary depending on the individual, situation, and severity (Ravikumar, 2016). These include physical health decline and depression. The process of stress management is known to be one of the keys to a happy and successful life in modern society. Victor and Akintokunbo (2018) defined stress management as a proven group of techniques for modifying stress, producing thoughts, relaxing physical and emotional tension, and learning how to make changes to our environment (or situation) whenever possible. Stress management also refers to a wide spectrum of techniques and psychotherapies aimed at controlling a person's level of stress, especially chronic stress, usually for improving everyday functioning (Baridam 2016).

Although life provides numerous demands that can prove difficult to handle, stress management provides several ways to manage anxiety and maintain overall wellbeing. Effective stress management can help us resolve conflicts with others assertively and confidently become better problem solvers in the face of life's demands and to appreciate the helpfulness of exercise and recreation. Stress management is designed to reduce the impact of stressors in the workplace. These can have an individual focus aimed at increasing an individual's ability to cope with stressors. The goal of stress management is to help individuals manage their stress in everyday life. Given the beneficial nature of mild-to-moderate levels of stress, the goal of stress management is not to eliminate all stresses. Rather, stress-management techniques are designed to maintain stress levels within an optimal range. Engaging in healthy lifestyle behaviours can help reduce stress and maximise the likelihood of living a long and healthy life.

Theoretical Framework

Selye's Systemic Stress Theory

Karanja (2016) opined that the popularity of the stress concept stems largely from the work of endocrinologist Hans Selye. In a series of animal studies, he observed that a variety of stimulus events (e.g. heat, cold, toxic agents) applied intensely and long enough can produce common effects that are non-specific to either stimulus event. (Besides these nonspecific changes in the body, each stimulus produces, of course, its specific effect, heat, for example, produces vasodilation, and cold vasoconstriction.) According to Selye, these nonspecific changes constitute the stereotypical response pattern of systemic stress. Selye (1976) defines this stress as 'a state manifested by a syndrome which consists of all the nonspecifically induced changes in a biologic system.' This stereotypical response pattern, called General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS), occurs in three stages. (a) The alarm reaction comprises an initial shock phase and subsequent counter-shock phase. The shock phase is characterized by autonomic excitability, increased adrenaline discharge, and gastrointestinal ulcerations. The counter-shock phase marks the initial operation of defensive processes and is characterized by increased adrenocortical activity. (b) If noxious stimulation continues, the organism enters the resistance stage. In this stage, the symptoms of the alarm reaction disappear, which indicates the organism's adaptation to the stressor. However, while resistance to noxious stimulation increases, resistance to other types of stressors decreases simultaneously. (c) If aversive stimulation persists, resistance gives way to the exhaustion stage. The organism's ability to adapt to the stressor is exhausted, and the symptoms of stage (a) reappear; however, resistance is no longer possible. Irreversible tissue damage occurs and if stimulation persists, the organism dies. Although Selye failed to consider coping mechanisms as important mediators of the stress–outcome relationship, his theory explains that the detriments of stress of interventions are not made in time to rescue stressed individuals. This theory indirectly underpins the importance of stress management strategies to prevent employees from reaching the irreversible stage when stress is more advanced. With adequate intervention measures that are applied in time, employees' commitment may be restored, and therefore, their productivity.

Empirical Review

According to Garrison and Bly (2017), corporations have become acutely aware of problems caused by stress. The illnesses associated with stress are costly and can debilitate valuable workers. When stress is not handled well, absenteeism, turnover, and medical compensation increase and productivity decreases.

Okeke and Ojan (2016) examined the effect of stress on employee productivity in the Nigerian banking industry by reviewing relevant theoretical and empirical literature and anchored it on the Person Environment (PE) Fit Theory. This study adopts a survey research method. The study population comprised five selected banks in the Awka metropolitan area. Purposive sampling was used to select 250 employees. This study revealed that workload pressure has a significant effect on employee productivity. It was also revealed that stress hinders effective employee performance. Therefore, management should take remedial measures to minimise the effect of job stress on a permanent basis.

Amadi (2024) adopted a psychological approach to organizational well-being to examine stress management and employee productivity. The study revealed that both domestic and occupational stress can negatively impact employees' productivity performance. The study also revealed that employees with little or no stress can minimise delivery time, waste, and utilize available techniques and technologies. The study therefore concludes that stress is inherent in men, as such organizations should be proactive in managing the emotional state of employees, which is their engine-room for better performance. To achieve this, superordinates should observe employees' emotional states regularly to know when there is deviation, and how to help put them back on track.

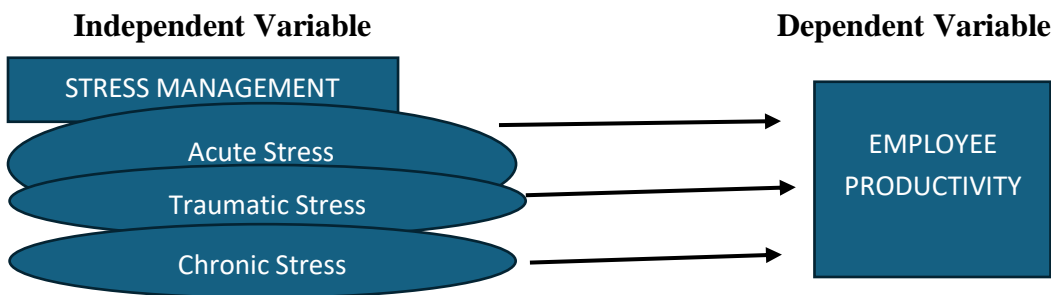
Sucharitha and Basha, (2020) the study investigates the impact of work stress on the performance of employees, using the purposeful and simple random approach to select the sample size of 200 participants. Data were collected using questionnaires and focus group discussion. The findings indicate that participants suffer from undue stress that adversely affects their performance, as many of them feel that leadership exerts pressure on them to improve their performance.

Timotius and Octavius (2022) assessed past and present workplace stress-related information and analyzed their impact on productivity. Four eligible studies were qualitatively assessed from 2,642 identified literature through four databases (Cochrane, Science Direct, SciELO, and PubMed) using the keywords stress, impact, productivity, industrial engineering, management, and medicine. The study was convinced that stress in the workplace contributes to worsening relationships at home, worsening relationships between superiors and subordinates, and contracting diseases. This has a potentially negative impact on productivity. Furthermore, the work environment plays a significant role in inducing workplace stress due to human physiological responses. Noxious stress is detrimental to the human body, especially if it is maintained for a long time.

Akintunde-Adeyi et al. (2023) investigated the extent to which stress affects staff performance. This study adopts a descriptive survey research method. The study was conducted at a private university in southwest Nigeria. The study population was comprised of all non-academic staff at the university. Two hundred and eighty (280) non-academic staff members of the university participated in the survey. A questionnaire was used for data collection. Inferential and descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data that had been obtained. This study reveals that stress has a significant impact on employee performance. The results also showed a substantial correlation between employee performance and personal stress management strategies.

Gupta, Mishra, and Saxena (2024) investigate the impact of stress on individuals' information behavior, focusing on behaviors that look to be especially interesting or important. The research was conducted at the Department of Posts of Jabalpur, and 118 participants responded to a survey during the course of this research. A pre-tested questionnaire contained questions related to the work assignment that were personally given to randomly selected people and obtained the views of the employees on the aspects related to the study. The study found that the major factors clearly indicate that the work assigned plays a significant role in connection with positive stress.

Conceptual Model



Source: Researcher Conceptual Model (2025).

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study because it provides an accurate account of the characteristics and was chosen to meet the objectives of this study. Therefore, the population for this study consisted of staff members at every level of management in Flourmills of Nig Plc, with a total population of 2673 and 348 target populations according to the Taro Yamane Sample Size Determination Formula. Data were analyzed through the data generated from questionnaires using descriptive statistics, and hypotheses were analyzed using Pearson's correlation at 0.05 levels of significance. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Presentation And Data Analysis

Test of Hypotheses

The hypotheses raised in this study will be tested to clarify the acceptance or rejection of the given statements through relevant data analyses.

Hypothesis One

H₀: There is no significant relationship between acute stress and employee productivity

Correlations

		Acute Stress	Employees' Productivity
Acute Stress	Pearson Correlation	1	.300**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	265	100
Employees' Productivity	Pearson Correlation	.300**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	265	100

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation

If the P-value is less than 5% ($P < 0.05$), the null hypothesis is rejected; otherwise, it is accepted.

The analysis of the Pearson product moment correlation from the table above shows that the Pearson Correlation is significant since its value ($p = 0.000$). The PMC value of .300** and significance ($p = 0.002$) suggest that both

acute stress and employee productivity have a significant positive association. Since the P-value of the Pearson Correlation is less than the benchmark of 0.05, the stated hypothesis is rejected, and we conclude that there is a high degree of relationship between acute stress and employees' productivity.

Hypothesis Two

H₀: There is no significant relationship between chronic stress and employee productivity

Correlations

		Chronic Stress	Employees' Productivity
Chronic Stress	Pearson Correlation	1	.476**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	265	100
Employees' Productivity	Pearson Correlation	.476**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	265	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation

If the P-value is less than 5% ($P < 0.05$), the null hypothesis is rejected; otherwise, it is accepted.

The analysis of the Pearson product moment correlation from the table above shows that the Pearson Correlation is significant since its value ($p = 0.000$). The PPM value of .476** and significance ($p = 0.000$) suggest that chronic stress has a significant relationship with employee productivity. Since the P value of the Pearson Correlation is less than the benchmark of 0.05, the stated hypothesis is rejected, and we conclude that there is a high degree of relationship between chronic stress and employee productivity.

Hypothesis Three

H₀: There is no significant relationship between traumatic stress and employee productivity

Correlations

		Traumatic Stress	Employees' Productivity
Training and Development	Pearson Correlation	1	.448**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	265	100
Employees' Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.448**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	265	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation

If the P-value is less than 5% ($P < 0.05$), the null hypothesis is rejected; otherwise, it is accepted.

The analysis of Pearson product moment correlation from the table above shows that the Pearson Correlation is significant since its value ($p=0.000$). The PPM value of .448** and significance ($p=0.000$) show that traumatic stress has a significant relationship with employee productivity. Since the P value of the Pearson Correlation is less than the benchmark of 0.05, the stated hypothesis is rejected, and we conclude that there is a high degree of relationship between traumatic stress and employee productivity.

DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

This study focuses on the effect of stress management on employee productivity. It was discovered and established from the findings that the major effect of work-induced stress on an organisation is reduced productivity. Reduced productivity can also occur when an employee experiences negative work-induced stress. The results of this study also demonstrate that the consequences of stress on the physical and mental existence of people adversely affect their working performance. Individuals exposed to excess stress lose their determination to work and willingness to work that employees must perform. According to the hypotheses, the study revealed that acute stress and employees' productivity have a positive significant association, chronic stress has a significant relationship with employee productivity, and traumatic stress has a significant relationship with employee productivity. These submissions align with the findings of Akintunde-Adeyi, AkinbodeB, and Akinola (2023), who revealed that stress has a significant impact on employee performance. Amadi (2024) concluded that both domestic and occupational stress can negatively impact an employee's productivity. Okeke and Ojan (2016) opined that stress hinders effective employee performance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Stress is at the centre of several challenges bedevilling employees in the workplace; it cannot be eliminated. Hence, it is necessary to manage it to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the workforce. Organizations should ensure that their work environment is in order, jobs are designed to accommodate employees, and policies that are made for flexibility in the workplace should be put in place

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussion and conclusions above, the following recommendations are made.

1. Management must ensure that it formulates policies that are capable of relieving employees of stress to enhance productivity by providing a friendly ground for employee voice, making good policies for employees' health and welfare,
2. Management should design tasks and jobs to be effective and efficient and improve the performance of their workforce.

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