Innovations

Impact of Workplace Stress Management on Employee Engagement among Office Managers in University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *The issue of office managers' engagement at workplace has been attracting the attention of public educators and stakeholders in education.High workload of office managers is one of the factors impeding their desire to put up excellent performance due to the stress resulting from workload. Therefore, this study deemed it fit to investigate the impact of workplace stress management on employee engagement among office managers in University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Descriptive research design was adopted. Population consists of 276 office managers from University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. 276office managers served as the sample size for this study. Complete enumeration sampling technique was adopted as the sampling technique for this study. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that workplace stress management had positive and significant influence on employee engagement (Adj. R^2 = .418; $F_{(4, 122)}$ = 23.587, p<0.05). The study recommended that there should be an advocacy for teamwork that would enhance effective workdone and reduce stress while engaging office managers as this could also heighten their level of job performance. This would make them to perform better in their jobs.*

Key Words*: Workplace, Stress Management, Office Managers, Organization, Employee Engagement.*

Introduction

Employee engagement is defined in general as the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organisation and its values. When an employee is engaged, he is aware of his responsibility in the business goals and motivates his colleagues alongside, for the success of the organisational goals. The positive attitude of the employee with his work place and its value system is otherwise called as the positive emotional connection of an employee towards his/her work. Engaged employees go beyond the call of duty to perform their role in excellence. Engagement at work was first conceptualised by Kahn (1990) as the ''harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles''. He added that in engagement ''people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances''. There are various factors that define an employee as an engaged employee. The concept has evolved taking into account the various behaviours exhibited by an employee that is positively productive.

Employee engagement is the strength of mental and emotional connection employees feel toward the work they do. It is a fundamental concept in the effort to understand and describe, both qualitatively and quantitatively, the nature of the relationship between an organisation and its employees. Engagement is an emerging psychological construct that purports to measure how much a person is into their job. Engagement is an example of a recent approach to psychology, stemming from the positive psychology movement. The concept of engagement was first introduced by Kahn in his article entitled "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work." Personal engagement is "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work role; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". Scholars have since then proposed different meanings and measurements of engagement, some of which even overlapped with other established constructs such as organizational engagement, job satisfaction, and job engagement. There are two common characteristics that were noteworthy for defining engagement. First, engagement indicates "a psychological connection with the performance of work tasks rather than an attitude toward features of the organization or the job". Second, engagement relates to the investment of multiple personal resources in work so that the experience with one's work is simultaneous and holistic. A study describes job engagement as a relatively enduring state of mind referring to the simultaneous investment of an individual's physical, cognitive, and emotional energies in the performance of job.

Literature states that engaged employees are the strategic asset of an organization, who need to be retained through organizational engagement. It emphasizes performance-based rewards and provides them with the opportunity to develop, grow, and perform at their full potential. Employee engagement is referred to as positive employees' emotional attachment and employees' commitment. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. The organization must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee." Engaged employee consistently demonstrates three general behaviours which result in job satisfaction as well as improve institutional performance: Say - the employee advocates for the organization to co-workers, and refers potential employees and stakeholders. Stay - the employee has an intense desire to be a member of the organization despite opportunities to work elsewhere. Strive - the employee exerts extra time, effort and initiative to contribute to the success of the organization. When organizations pay special emphasis on providing employees with internal career opportunities, proper training programmes, security for employment, clear job descriptions, and promoting participative decision-making, employees engage themselves more at the workplace, as such when employee perceive positive levels of organizational collaboration, they are intrinsically encouraged towards exerting considerably higher levels of effort. Job engagement and organizational engagement are the measures to be adopted for employee engagement as stated in the literature while Social Exchange theory will be adopted, this theory was used to explain how responsibilities created through interactions

between parties, who are in state of collective interdependence, accept some form of exchange, are engaged and committed in an organization.

Job engagement is a fundamental concept in the effort to understand and describe, both qualitatively and quantitatively, the nature of the relationship between an organization and its employees. It is an employee's enthusiasm and involvement in his or her job, people who are highly engaged in their jobs identify personally with the job while organization engagement deals with the extent to which employees bring their full and complete self into the performance of organization-based tasks, activities, events, assignments, projects and so on that they have to do as a member of their organization. Office managers in University of Ibadan find it difficult to fully engage themselves in their job due to how stressful the job is.

Another factor that could influence employee engagement is managing the stress that result from performing their duties. Stress is defined as a psychological and physical reaction to prolonged internal and/or environmental conditions in which individual's adaptive capabilities are over extended. It is an adaptive response to conscious or unconscious threat and can affect an individual emotional, physical and social wellbeing as well as pose a threat to one's health if not dealt with or managed well.It is affirmed that stress shows itself in a number of ways. For instance, office managers who is experiencing a high level of stress may develop high blood pressure, ulcers and other associated problems which could inhibit the job performance of such employee (Shuwa, 2021).

Anger, anxiety, depression, nervousness, irritability, aggressiveness, and boredom which could arise from high level of stress could lead to low employee performance as this could also lead to a decline in self-esteem, resentment of supervision, inability to concentrate, trouble in making the decision and work dissatisfaction. The experience of work stress is a challenge to the health and safety of workers and to the healthiness of their organizations. Management of institutions should have a policy for the management of workers' health, also employees should device strategies on how to manage stress. Stress management is the ability of employees to deal with the pressure of work as well as that of work without any effect on their psychological, physical and emotional well-being. It has been revealed that when employees are able to manage stress that emanates from work they tend to be more productive at work (Sokpuwu, 2022).

Stress management should not emanate from the employee alone, employers of labour have a lot to do to ensure that their employees are not over stressed at work as this could inhibit their level of productivity. It is expedient that employers of labour should apportion to their employees' job that they could finish before the close of every work day. Giving employee time to explore and go for vacation is a way where they could manage stress that could emanate from work as this could reduce the pressure and tension that have been accumulated from works and make them to be fresh to duty when they resume work which could in turn boost their job performance. Some of the measures of stress management include emotional labour and job hassles. These measures were adapted from job demand theory by Demerouti,(2014).

Despite the fact that several studies have been done on engagement of employees, the problem of workplace engagement still persist because there are several factors

influencing workers' engagement. Many researches have been done in Europe, America and Africa on stress management having relationship with employee engagement. Many of these studies were also conducted in business organizations and very few in educational institutions. The study also will provide empirical evidence on stress management taken as factor that could have significant influence on employee engagement among office managers in University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Literature Review
Theory and Hypotheses Development
Kahn's (1990) Theory of Engagement
Kahn (1990) is widely credited with the first application and use of engagement theory to the workplace (Harter et al., 2002; Rich et al., 2010). The term engagement used specifically to describe a worker's involvement in various tasks at work was first published in Kahn's article the "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work" which appeared in a 1990 edition of the Academy of Management Journal. In his ethnographic study, Kahn (1990) interviewed 32 employees, 16 summer camp counselors and 16 financial professionals, to explore how their experiences with various work variables (i.e., manager satisfaction, role clarity, availability of resources) influenced their experience and involvement with work tasks, ultimately influencing preeminent thoughts about what would be known in the popular press as employee engagement. An emerging construct at the time, Kahn cast a wide net of scholarly inquiry to inform his framework including the use of previous, well-researched organizational constructs such as social identity theoryand emerging literature on emotion in the workplace (Hochschild, 1979). Kahn wrote that engagement in work was thought to be a motivational variable spanning the extrinsic and intrinsic continuum, promoting the use of an employee's full self in their work roles. Kahn (1990) went on to define engagement as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence, and active full role performances". In addition to using one's full self in work, Kahn suggested that an employee could be physically engaged, emotionally engaged, and cognitively engaged and that these states of being were affected significantly by three psychological domains: meaningfulness, safety, and availability (Kahn, 1990).

The first study to examine Kahn's (1990) conceptualization of engagement suggested that all three of Kahn's (1990) conditions were important constructs in the development of engagement. Using a sample of 203 employees from a large insurance firm, results indicated that engagement had a positive relationship to meaningfulness (r = .63), availability (r = .29), and safety (r = .45). After 2002, Kahn's conceptualization, although widely cited as foundational scaffolding, was scarcely used in framework development until a recent resurgence. In 2010, specifically using Kahn's framework, Rich et al. (2010) used a sample of 245 firefighters to provide empirical evidence that engagement mediated the relationship between value congruence, perceived organizational support, core self-evaluation, and the two outcome variables, task performance and organizational citizenship behavior. In addition, of interest to HRD

researchers, Rich et al. found that intrinsic motivation, job involvement, and job satisfaction failed to explain higher level of variance than engagement, suggesting that engagement is still in need of further refinement and theory building.

Last, using a sample of 283 employees in multiple fields of industry and Kahn's framework, Shuck (2010) suggested that job fit, affective commitment, and psychological climate were all significantly related to employee engagement and that employee engagement was significantly related to discretionary effort and intention to turnover. Moreover, affective commitment and two of Kahn's dimensions of engagement (i.e., meaningfulness and availability), as measured by the May et al. (2004) scale, were found to be unique predictors of intention to turnover ($\beta = -.21$, $p < .001$, $\beta = -.19$, $p < .05$). Of interest to HRD researchers and practitioners alike was evidence suggesting that three subscales of the psychological climate measure (i.e., Supportive Management, Contribution, and Challenge; Brown and Leigh, 1996) predicted unique variance in the outcome variable discretionary effort; employee engagement failed to predict any unique variance in the discretionary model proposing a significant shift from contemporary conceptual models of engagement that suggest a casual link between the two constructs (see, for example, CLC, 2004; Kular, Gatenby, Rees, Soane, & Truss, 2008; Macey et al., 2009; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Maslach et al., 2001; Towers Perrin, 2003, 2007).Although dominant in the early 1990s, Kahn's conceptualization of engagement, specifically that employee engagement is an internal state of being affected by forces external to the employee, is emerging once again as a popular theoretical framework for future studies. In view of the above discussion, this hypothesis was formulated;

H_1: Stress management have positive and significant impact on employee engagement of office managers in University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.
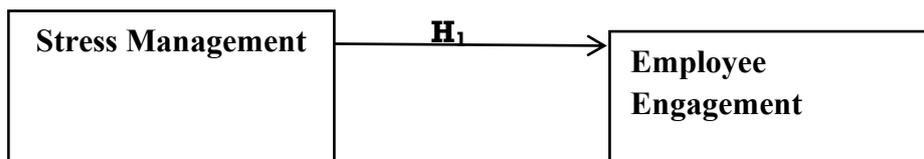

Fig.1: Source: Researcher, 2025

Employee Engagement
Employee engagement is a good tool to help every organisation to strive to gain competitive advantage over the others. People is one factor that cannot be duplicated or imitated by the competitors and is considered the most valuable asset if managed and engaged properly. This point has been emphasised by Baumruk (2024), in that employee engagement is considered to be the most powerful factor to measure a company's vigour. Katz and Kahn (1966) have referred to the concept of engagement in their work related to organisational effectiveness. However, it was mentioned in general as one of a number of needs to be developed to provide an innovative and co-operative work environment leading to performance and effectiveness. In 1990 Kahn (1990) introduced the concept of employee engagement, giving his now famous

definition quoted in the introduction, namely, "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". Kahn added that three psychological engagement conditions are necessary for an employee to be rightly engaged: meaningfulness (work elements), safety (social elements, including management style, process, and organizational norms) and availability (individual distractions). Another popular description that appears is by the Gallup organization's Buckingham and Coffman (2019) who commented about engagement "the right people in the right roles with the right managers drive employee engagement". They also argued that a fully engaged employee is one who could answer yes to all 12 questions on Gallup's workplace questionnaire.

Employee engagement has received a great deal of attention in the last five years, especially in the popular press and among consulting firms. It has often been touted as the key to an organization's success and competitiveness. Indeed, Schaufeli and Salanova (2017) claim that engagement is "essential" for contemporary organizations given the many challenges they face and Macey et al. (2019) argue that organizations can gain a competitive advantage through employee engagement. Numerous writers have sung the praises of engagement as a key driver of individual attitudes, behavior, and performance as well as organizational performance, productivity, retention, financial performance, and even shareholder return. In fact, Macey et al. (2019) have shown that among a sample of 65 firms in different industries, the top 25% on an engagement index had a greater return on assets (ROA), profitability, and more than double the shareholder value compared to the bottom 25%. However, it has also been reported that employee engagement is on the decline and there is a deepening disengagement among employees today (Bates, 2024; Richman, 2016). For example, roughly half of all Americans in the workforce are not fully engaged or they are disengaged leading to what has been referred to as an "engagement gap" that is costing U.S. businesses $300 billion a year in lost productivity. Given the importance of employee engagement to organizations, combined with the deepening disengagement among workers today, a key issue is how to promote the engagement of employees.

Leiter and Maslach (2018) view engagement as the opposite pole of burnout. They define engagement as "an energetic experience of involvement with personally fulfilling activities that enhance a staff member's sense of professional efficacy" and consider it to be comprised of energy, involvement and efficacy. Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, and Bakker (2022) also view engagement as the conceptual opposite of burnout but view these constructs as independent states with dissimilar structures that must be measured with different instruments. They regard engagement as "a positive fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption". Rothbard (2019) similarly regards absorption as a critical component of engagement (the other component being attention). Schaufeli and Salanova (2017) note that being fully absorbed in a role comes close to what Csikszentmihalyi (2019) calls "flow." They suggest that the distinction lies in the fact that whereas engagement is a persistent work state, flow is a more complex concept that involves momentary peak experiences that can occur outside of work. Schaufeli and Salanova (2017) suggest that engaged employees are energetically and effectively connected to their

work. This can occur through the investment of one's "self" in work activities. In his work on personal engagement Kahn (1990) suggested that engagement involves "the harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles; in engagement people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". By contrast, disengagement involves an extrication of organizational members' selves from their work roles. "In disengagement, people withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances" (Kahn, 1990).

Kahn (1990) further notes that, Personal engagement is the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's "preferred self" in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active, full role performances. Engagement involves high levels of energy and identification with one's work, in contradistinction to burnout which involves low levels of both (Schaufeli&Salanova, 2017). When engaged people become physically involved in their tasks, cognitively alert, and ardently connected to others in ways that demonstrate their individuality (e.g., thoughts, feelings, values, etc.). Engagement allows people to simultaneously express their preferred selves and completely satisfy their role requirements (Kahn, 1990). More generally, engagement means to be psychologically present when occupying and performing an organizational role (Kahn, 1990, 1992). When people are psychologically present they feel and are attentive, connected, integrated, and focused in their role performances (Kahn, 1992). People vary in the extent to which they draw on themselves in the performance of their roles or what Kahn (1990) refers to as "self-in-role." Thus, when people are engaged they keep their selves within the role they are performing.

Stress Management

The psychological structure of employees is directly reflected in the work they do and their work lives. Therefore, stressful employees mean that the organization is stressful. All kinds of problems caused by stress reflect in business relations and business success by affecting the performance of the individual directly. The studies, examining the relationship between stress and performance in organizations, have accepted the existence of four approaches. There is an inverse relationship between stress and performance, and it is assumed that performance will decrease as the stress level increases(Nina Munira, 2018). Employees who want to reduce their stress can waste their time and do unwanted behaviors. It is affirmed that job performance will increase as job stress increases. The challenges, concerns, and competitive environment in the workplace are opportunities for the employee to put forward constructive actions and improve his/her performance. High-level stress means high competitiveness, thus, high performance. The relationship between stress and performance is inverse u-shaped and consists of a combination of positive and negative relationship models in general. While stress that increases until a certain level improves performance, the ability to work efficiently decreases rapidly if stress exceeds the critical level. Although there is a psychological agreement between the employee and the organization, there is no relationship between stress and performance. According to this model, employees know that they will receive a certain wage for their

performance. The presence or absence of stress does not affect performance(Nina Munira, 2018).

All kinds of discomfort, psychological and mental problems experienced due to stress are directly reflected in employee performance, business relations, and business success. The mental and physical condition affecting the productivity, activity, health, and work quality of employees is occupational stress, and this stress, which exceeds the optimum limit, may decrease the performance of the organization since it creates discomfort in employees(Weerarathna, 2016). The exposure of individuals to excessive stress in the work environment leads to both an increase in costs (an increase in business absences, health expenditures, and insurance expenditures) and a decrease in organizational performance, as well as in job satisfaction, by decreasing the amount of goods and services produced per unit time. The stress experienced also has consequences that are closely related to the organization, such as the individual's late arrival to work, increase in his/her absenteeism, increase in the labor turnover rate, alienation of the employee to work and workplace, and decrease in his/her performance.

Numerous studies have been carried out on occupational stress and job performance. For instance, a study found that stress-causing factors such as workload, career progress, facilities and the work setting were significant predictors of academic staff job effectiveness(Hansen, 2017). Likewise, illustrated the effect of stress on employees' performance using an inverted U-type curve. The study revealed that employees' performance increases as stress increases. However, when the stress becomes excessive, the performance of employees will reach a peak and then begin to decline. Nevertheless, a significant positive relationship between work stress and job performance was found by scholars(Hansen, 2017). These studies argue that stress and job performance of academic staff increase or decrease in the same direction but to varying degrees.

Other studies have shown that occupational stress contributes to low performance of duties, poor productivity, increased absenteeism, poor health and aggression, creativity and innovation(Turgut¸ 2016). Nevertheless, a growing body of literature shows that stress and workload are significant predictors of teachers' effectiveness. On the contrary, a study has revealed that stress due to workload has no significant influence on the professional effectiveness of teachers. The difference in the results of various studies is attributable to the type of occupation understudied or the type of stress considered. However, in the current study, we investigated the extent to which occupational stress (such as remuneration, workload and the provision of institutional amenities) influences the job performance of the academic staff of two Nigerian public polytechnics.

Workload is a factor that has been found to affect the performance of university academic staff(Ayaz¸2019). Under a manageable workload, employees are likely to be motivated to perform, overcome or accomplish tasks. However, a high amount of

workload in terms of the quantity (amount of work) and quality (difficulty or complexity of the task) tend to affect performance. Moreover, expressed that employees have different capacities to perceive and respond to their workload. While some employees can perform well under a particular workload level, others may be negatively affected. Author stated that internal and external factors could impact the reaction to workload (Usoro,̧2018). According to them, external factors include burdens from outside employees' bodies, such as the quantity, difficulty and intensity of job tasks, hours spent on task, and the work situation. Internal factors refer to conditions within employees due to reaction to external factors. Internal factors include somatic factors in age, gender, body type or health status and psychic factors such as motivation, experience, desire, satisfaction and interest in others. It was discovered in their study that academic employees were highly stressed by a variety of factors, including their workload, research, and professional growth, as well as administrative concerns(Agu, 2021).

A study on 2015 Trends in Global Employee Engagement. The study employed a qualitative approach and it was revealed how companies can create a culture of engagement by investing and helping leaders whose interest is on building skills, empowering others and challenging individual's accountability to take possession of solutions and their own engagement(Pourteimour, 2021). The study shows that the role of human resource professional is to support the leaders of organization in achieving engagement agenda. Here, they identified the senior leaders and the individuals themselves as critical stakeholders required for creating a culture of engagement. Aon Hewitt company's leaders attributed their success to talent management and engagement of two key variables – culture and leadership Pourteimour, 2021).

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design as it attempts to study the subset of a population at a point in time and to determine the impact of workplace stress management on employee engagement among office managers in University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The research instrument (questionnaire) used was administered to a total of 276office managers in University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Complete enumeration was used for the sample size.To test the hypothesis formulated, the inferential statistics through linear regression analyses was used. The data collected for the study were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 29. The hypothesis in the study is tested at level of 0.05 significance.

Presentation of Test of Hypothesis

The only null hypothesis which states thatthere will be no significant impact of workplace stress management on employee engagement of among office managers in University of Ibadan, Nigeria was tested using linear regression analysis. In the analysis, the values of employee engagement were regressed on the values of workplace stress management measures. The data for stress management was generated by summing responses of all variable items respectively while that of employee engagement of office managers in University of Ibadan, Nigeria was

generated by adding responses of all items used to measure the variable. The regression test results are presented in Tables 1.

Discussion of findings

Table 1a: Impact of workplacestress management (control over job, support fromcolleagues, support from supervisor, psychological well-being) on employee engagement of Office Managers in University of Ibadan

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.660a	.436	.418	8.01246
a. Predictors: (Constant), control over job, support from colleagues, support from supervisor, psychological well-being				

Table 1b: Impact of workplacestress management (control over job, support fromcolleagues, support from supervisor, psychological well-being) on employee engagement of Office Managers in University of Ibadan

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6056.999	4	1514.250	23.587	<.001b
	Residual	7832.340	122	64.200		
	Total	13889.339	126			

Source: Field Survey, 2025
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement
b. Predictors: (Constant), control over job, support from colleagues, support from supervisor, psychological well-being

Table 1c: Impact of workplacestress management (control over job, support from colleagues, support from supervisor, psychological well-being) on employee engagement of Office Managers in University of Ibadan.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	90.762	11.186		8.114	.001
	Control over job	2.291	.368	.431	6.220	.001
	Support from colleagues	-2.133	.496	-.316	-4.299	.001
	Support from supervisor	-1.327	.482	-.207	-2.756	.007
	Psychological well-being	.003	.597	.004	.055	.956
a. Dependent Employee Engagement						

Table 1a, 1b and 1c show the impact of workplace stress management (control over job, support from colleagues, support from supervisor, psychological well-being) on employee engagement of office managers in University of Ibadan, Nigeria. The most potent measure of workplace stress management practices was control over job (Beta = .431, t= 6.220, p<0.05), followed by support from colleagues (Beta = -.316, t= -4.299, p<0.05), support from supervisor (Beta = -.207, t= -2.756, p<0.05) while psychological well-being was not significant (Beta = .004, t= .055, p>0.05). This implies that control over job, support from colleagues and support from supervisor tends to enhance the level of employee engagement of office management in University of Ibadan, Nigeria by 43.1%, -31.6 and -20.7% respectively. It was also revealed that the four measures of workplace stress management practices combined accounted for 41.8% (Adj.R^2= .418) variance to the prediction of employee engagement. The result from the regression analysis shows that there was a significant impact of workplace stress management (control over job, support from colleagues, support from supervisor, psychological well-being) on employee engagement, $F_{(4, 122)}$ = 23.587, p<0.05. This implies that workplace stress management had significant impact onemployee engagement of office managers in University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Therefore, $H_0 1$ is rejected.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it could be affirmed that office managers are given adequate support from colleagues, employers of labour and having a control over one's job could make office managers to be more productive as this could make the goals and objectives of office management to be achieved. It could be concluded therefore that workplace stress management and have significant impact on employee engagement of office managers in University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

i.   To enhance the level of stress management, it is expected that office managers should be able to create knowledge through observation of the working environment. Office managers should also seek work support from their colleagues and the management.

ii.   For effective and improved engagement, office managers should solve problems, share knowledge with colleagues, collect and arrange office practices information to enhance their performance.

iii.   Management of University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria should create an enabling working environment for office managers and also be respected as this could go a long way in enhancing their job performance.

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