

WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH AND JOB PERFORMANCE OF OIL SERVICING FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT

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ABSTRACT	KEY WORDS
<p>The objective of this paper is to investigate workplace mental health and job performance of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt. The study adopted a cross sectional research approach, which is a form of the quasi experimental research design in testing the relationship between the variables under study. Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient and partial correlation were used in testing the hypotheses. The study shows a positive relationship between job performance and staff mental health in oil servicing firms. The relationship between employee mental health and job performance has been one of the key concerns in workplace. However, extant studies suffer from incomplete results due to their focus on developed economies' contexts and the unclear path of employee mental health's impact on performance. In this paper, we investigate the mechanism of employee mental health influencing job performance. We use the data of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt to test these hypotheses. Drawing on a sample of 10 firms from Port Harcourt, we find that employee mental health positively impacts job performance, and such relationship is mediated by innovative behavior and work engagement. The findings not only enrich the discipline's knowledge on mental health in an emerging economy setting but also extend the implications of mental health, innovative behavior, and work engagement to job performance.</p>	<p>Employee Mental Health, Quality of work life, fair compensation and Safe work condition.</p>

INTRODUCTION

Workplace mental health refers to the psychological well-being of employees within an organization. It encompasses their emotional, cognitive, and social well-being in relation to their work environment. Job performance, on the other hand, refers to the manner in which an employee performs a position of employment which includes an analysis of the employees' attendance at work, attitudes, effort, knowledge, behavior and skills. The relationship between workplace mental health and job performance is significant and mutually influential.

The World Health Organization defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”. Over the years, researchers have developed a variety of operational definitions. For example, Montano et al. define mental health as a continuum of neurophysiological and cognitive states related to thinking, mood and emotion, and behavior including negative and positive mental health states. Sharma et al. define mental health as a positive expression, which is the absence of anxiety, social dysfunction and the presence of condition. The relationships between mental health and job performance have received increased attention in the organizational literature. Employee mental health is positively correlated with job performance. This view is consistent with the happy-productive worker hypothesis that suggests that mental health is positively related to job performance. Specifically, mentally healthy employees with positive affective states can improve cognitive flexibility and find more solutions to problems in work tasks. Thus, employees with good mental health perform better on work tasks than those with poor mental health. Moreover, positive affective states are associated with individuals building good interpersonal relationships which enable them to receive help from their leaders and colleagues at work. Studies also showed that good social relationships are an important source of job-related information and knowledge. In Beer et al. (1994) model of human resource management, it is acknowledged that work systems cannot only affect commitment, competence, cost effectiveness and congruence but also have long term consequence for workers' well-being, there is some evidence to indicate that work systems designs may have effects on physical health, mental health and longevity of life itself. Conducive work environment ensures the wellbeing of employees which invariably will enable them exert themselves to their roles with all vigour that may translate to higher productivity. At the same time, several meta-analytical findings indicate that poor mental health such as anxiety, depressive symptoms and job stress has a negative impact on job performance.

Aims and Objectives of The Study

The research aim was to ascertain the effect of workplace mental health on job performance of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt, River State. While the specific objectives are to;

1. To examine the extent of relationship between quality work life and job performance of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt.
2. To examine the extent of the relationship between safe working condition and job performance of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt.
3. To examine the extent of the relationship between fair compensation and job performance of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Mental health: Mental health is the “foundation of wellbeing and effective functioning for both the individual and the community (WHO, 2005) and is central to human behaviour across all domains, including the workplace. An organization’s output depends on how effectively it functions, including how effectively its people, or human capital, functions. This means that mental health and job performance are inherently interconnected (Peccei & Van de Voorde, 2016). Despite a widespread understanding that “good health is good for business,” organizations and managers still tend to give

priority to organizational performance instead of mental health (Van De Voorde, Paauwe, & Van Veldhoven, 2012). Businesses and governments prioritize organizational performance, but often prioritize mental health in an ad hoc manner. Health and wellbeing play a role in individual and their job performance. A recent analysis of sickness presenteeism describes it as an individual act that aims to balance the limitations of a health condition against an employee's performance demands to satisfy that employee's responsibilities toward both work and health (Karanika-Murray & Biron, 2019). As such, presenteeism includes both the employees' reaction of going to work sick instead of staying at home to recover and the managers' actions to balance employees' mental or physical health with their performance (work tasks, deadlines, demands, etc.). There are many reasons why mental health takes a back in some organizations. These may relate to cost and outcomes; organizational structures and ownership; management of change vs. daily operations; and attitudes, skills, and mental models, among other things. Organizational performance is immediate and yields tangible outcomes for businesses and the economy, organizations grant it higher priority and thus overshadows mental health and its effect on employees' job performance (Pfeffer, 2019). To oversimplify, organizations typically bear the primary and immediate cost of the organization, whereas employees carry the primary and immediate cost of mental health, for example in terms of work-life balance (Karanika-Murray & Cooper, 2020). Many organizations lack knowledge and skills to address mental health and its relationship with job performance, particularly in smaller, resource-constrained organizations. Managers who need or want to support employee mental health typically rely on peripheral training and unintegrated methods. In cases where managers seek to better understand and learn how to manage workplace mental health issues, they may find this process too restrictive and difficult to navigate, as well as too time-consuming and distracting from day-to-day work (Ipsen, Gish, & Poulsen, 2015). More research into the inseparability of mental health and job performance is needed if we want to improve employee health, wellbeing, and job performance. Future research should have three aims: (1) to expand on the case for re-coupling mental health and job performance; (2) to describe new structures and processes that can address the need for mental health and job performance to consider in tandem; and, (3) to examine the mechanisms that describe the interrelationship between mental health and job performance. To achieve these goals, we believe that we must collaborate across disciplines, including management, occupational health, work psychology, mental health, and intervention science. By focusing on the complementarity of mental health and job performance, we can create a chain of benefits for both employers and employees, but also for families, the workforce, healthcare, and society as a whole

Workplace Mental Health

The World Health Organization defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community". Over the years, researchers have developed a variety of operational definitions. For example, Ford et al. suggest that mental health refers to an individual's affective experiences and behavior. Montano et al. define mental health as a continuum of neurophysiological and cognitive states related to thinking, mood and emotion, and behavior including negative and positive mental health states. Sharma et al. show that mental health is a positive expression, which is the absence of anxiety, social dysfunction and the presence of condition. Based on these definitions, scholars have developed a variety of measurement instruments that include

both positive and negative terms in order to describe mental health more accurately. Although definitions and measurements differ among scholars, it is widely accepted that positive affective states are often described as ‘good’ mental health, while a state of emotional suffering such as depression and anxiety is often used to refer to ‘poor’ mental health.

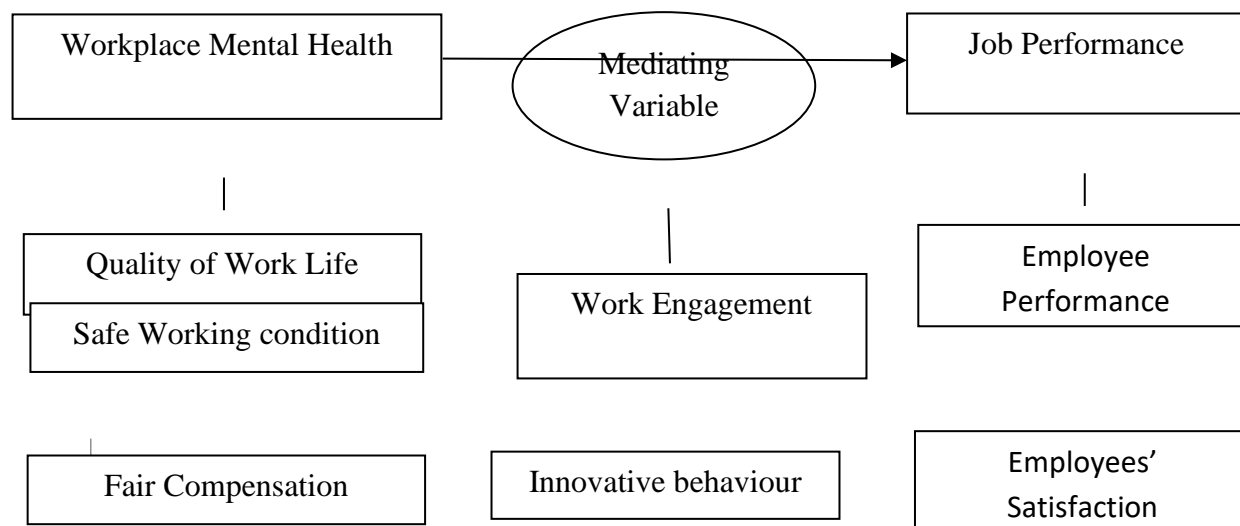


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework on Workplace Mental Health and job performance of oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt.

Source: Researcher’s Desk, 2023

Employee Mental Health and Job Performance

The relationships between mental health and job performance have received increased attention in the organizational literature. Employee mental health is positively correlated with job performance. This view is consistent with the happy–productive worker hypothesis that suggests that mental health is positively related to job performance. Specifically, mentally healthy employees with positive affective states can improve cognitive flexibility and find more solutions to problems in work tasks. Thus, employees with good mental health perform better on work tasks than those with poor mental health (Taris & Nielsen, 2019). Moreover, positive affective states are associated with individuals building good interpersonal relationships which enable them to receive help from their leaders and colleagues at work. Studies also showed that good social relationships are an important source of job-related information and knowledge. Finally, many studies also support this hypothesis. For example, in a meta-analytic study from 111 independent samples obtained from a search of the literature, Ford et al. indicated that psychological health was a moderate-to-strong correlate of work performance. Similarly, (Zacher, Jimmieson and Winter) showed that employees’ mental health had a positive effect on work performance in the sample of 165 employees providing in-home eldercare. At the same time, several meta-analytical findings indicate that poor mental health such as anxiety, depressive symptoms and job stress has a negative impact on job performance.

Quality of Work Life (QWL).

Quality of Work Life refers to the favourableness or unfavourableness of a job environment for people and invariably affects their mental health which in turn affects their job performance. QWL means the

sum total of values, both material and nonmaterial, attained by a worker throughout his career life Barker (2018). This includes aspects of work-related life such as wages and hours, work environment, benefits and services, career prospects and human relations, which is possibly relevant to worker satisfaction and motivation. (Bindu & Yashika, 2013). Oil company workers in Nigeria are essential to the means of production (Drucker, 2010); they deserve to be treated with respect and given proper welfare packages and incentives (Noguera, 2005). These will improve their sense of worth, boost their self-esteem, financial status and act as, a sort of motivation to drive them to have more passion for their job, increasing their productivity (Thorsen, 2006). This is what is expected to be pursued by oil company employers who look beyond instant profit making as opposed to enduring sustainable business earning of profits in perpetuity (Deeprase, 2006). Lack or inadequate welfare packages and other incentives leads to poor worker's motivation which greatly affect their outcomes and productivity hence, there is need for employers to give staff welfare package and other incentives for the benefits of the employees, employers and the organization (Okereke & Daniel 2010).

H₁: *There is no significant relationship between quality of work life and job performance in oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.*

Safe Working Condition

It is widely accepted in our society as well as enforced by law, that workers should not be exposed to physical conditions that are unduly hazardous or detrimental to their health (Walton, 1975). Thurman (1977) also mentioned health and safety as important aspects. Unsafe and hazardous working conditions cause problems to both employers and employees. There may be little advantage to the employer in the short term but in medium and long terms, it adversely affects their mental health which directly affects their job performance a productivity. It is comprehensively accepted that employees should not to be exposed to working condition, which can adversely affect their physical and mental health. Consequently, the results of employer concern, union action, and legislation have promoted favorable working situations through focus on noise, illumination, workspace, accident avoidance as well as the implementation of reasonable work hours and age limits for potential employees (Orpen, 1981). The work environment that is able to fulfill employees' personal needs is considered to provide a positive interaction effect, which will lead to good mental health (Shahbazi et al., 2011).

H₂: *There is no significant relationship between safe working condition and job performance in oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.*

Fair Compensation

The sum of money employees received for their mental or physical work or both, according to social criteria, volume of work and similar jobs. This is fundamental to QWL. Human beings work for livelihood. Therefore, success of rests of the initiatives depends upon fulfillment of this. In view of the central importance of money to meet the needs of oneself and one's family, it seems very probable that incomes judged to be inadequate would be associated with health and satisfaction (Warr, 1987). There should be a uniform or consistent payment guideline for employees to follow for registered social employees. Employees perceive high QWL jobs to have god benefits, pay well, provide assistance for planning their career and exist in a work environment and context that they perceive as fair(Huang et al., 2007).

H3: *There is no significant relationship between fair compensation and job performance in oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.*

Work Engagement and Innovative Behaviour as Mediators

Finally, we propose that mental health has an effect on work engagement and innovative behavior, which, in turn, is positively related to job performance. In other words, work engagement and innovative behavior mediate the relationship between mental health and job performance. Specifically, according to the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, positive emotions expand people's thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources including self-efficacy and resilience. In addition, positive mental health leads to higher work motivation. Employees with positive affect will set high goals for work and expect that engaging in work generates positive outcomes. Finally, positive affect also leads to a heuristic and global information processing pattern that allows employees to concentrate on an ongoing activity, which is an important aspect of work engagement. In contrast, poor mental health such as depression and anxiety is associated with overestimations of risk and underestimations of self-worth, which may lead to lower effort when working. A positive emotional state signals that everything is going well and the current situation poses no serious threat. These reactions, in turn, encourage employees to engage in active efforts to try novel things such as innovation. In addition, innovative behavior is a multi-stage process from idea generation to implementation of new and useful ideas within an organization, which is filled with high uncertainty and risks. Employees with good mental health have confidence to overcome obstacles in innovation processes and persist longer in efforts to develop and implement innovative ideas. In summary, the better one's mental health, the higher their work engagement and innovative behavior.

H4: *Work engagement mediates the relationship between mental health and job performance.*

H5: *Innovative behavior mediates the relationship between mental health and job performance.*

Methodology

Data Collection and Samples Characteristics

The present study used a cross-sectional survey technique, which is a quasi-experimental research strategy, to investigate the behaviour, opinions, or other observable manifestations within a selected sample group. Survey was conducted to test the hypotheses in this study. In order to let participants fully understand the purpose of this survey, important information were provided through online questionnaire. Participants were anonymous and they could quit at any time during the survey. Therefore, this study did not collect any data without consent.

Several employees from different companies were interviewed. This step is more about the core concepts of this study, including job performance and employees' mental health. Based on a small-scale survey, we revised the questionnaire and a formal questionnaire for this study was generated. The process could ensure the accuracy of the questionnaire. Finally, we collected 239 valid samples. These samples came from different departments, including production, Human Resources, Finance, Procurement, Health, Safety, and Maintenance Departments of the oil servicing companies.

Measurement

We utilized a seven-point Likert scale to measure the core variables in this study. All scales of the related variables have been tested in other studies.

Dependent variable: Job performance.

We utilized four items to measure the variable of job performance. Example items include “I am satisfied with my job performance”, “I could adequately complete assigned duties” and “I try to work as hard as possible” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.858$).

Independent variable: Workplace mental health.

Employee mental health used nine items which includes “I am always very nervous and feel stressed”, “I always feel unhappy or depressed” and “I always could not concentrate when I do something” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.952$).

Mediating variables: Work engagement and employee innovative behavior.

First, we used four items to measure work engagement. Example items include “I am passionate about my work”, “I feel full of energy when I am working” and “Time flies when I’m working” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.849$). Second, we used eight items to measure the variable of employee innovative behavior. Example items include “Always search for ideas for new technologies, processes, and/or products”, “Always generate creative ideas” and “Always promote and support ideas to others” (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.958$).

Validity and Common Method Bias

Firstly, we test the possible problem of common method bias. According to a study of Podsakoff and Organ, Harman’s one-factor test could be utilized. This method has been widely used in previous studies. The results show that there is no significant problem of common method bias because the largest factor in this study only explained 38.121% of the entire variance. Secondly, the validity of the samples is conducted. The results show that all factor loadings are greater than 0.7 and none were below 0.6. Thus, the validity of the samples is very high in this study.

Data Analysis and Results

Regression statistical analysis was used in this study. First, we calculate the correlations among core variables of this study. The results are shown in [Table 1](#). The coefficients are not high. Second, the descriptive statistics are calculated. We can see that there is no significant problem with the mean and S.D. (standard deviation) of the core variable. All the correlation coefficients do not exceed 0.7. Third, the multicollinearity issue may impact the results. Consequently, we calculate the coefficients of variance inflation factors (VIFs). The results show that there is no VIF that exceeds 10. This indicates that there is no significant multicollinearity based on the view of Hair et al.

Table 1 The results of the correlation matrix and descriptive statistics:

Note: * $p < 0.001$; * $p < 0.005$**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	S.D.
Firm age	1							2.978	1.064
Number of employees	0.676 ***	1						3.830	1.420
Education background	0.162 *	0.359 ***	1					2.760	0.790
Work experience	0.202 *	0.186 *	-0.074	1				5.800	4.214

Employee mental health	−0,015	−0.041	−0.056	0.135	1			4.657	1.458
work engagement	0,060	−0.11	−0.073	0.095	0.235 ***	1		4.873	1.288
innovative behavior	−0.036	−0.122	−0.042	0.069	0.382 ***	0.572 ***	1	5.188	1.210
job performance	0.027	−0.031	−0.049	0.162	0.292 ***	0.524 ***	0.609 ***	5.219	1.170

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2023 (SPSS output)

Fourth, we apply hierarchical linear analysis (HLA) to test the hypotheses proposed in this study. Seven models are created and the results are shown in [Table 2](#) and [Table 3](#). We tested the quality work life, the safe working condition and fair compensation. The results verified that the influence of the variables is not significant. Then, the results indicated that H1 was verified. The coefficient for employee mental health is 0.256, which is significant at $p < 0.01$. (Model 2). Therefore, the influence of employee mental health is positive. Model 3 was built to test H2a and H2b. From the results of model 3, both coefficients for safe working condition and fair compensation were positive and significant. The results show that safe working condition and fair compensation are positively related to job performance.

Table 2 The results of regression analysis (model 1 03). Note: * $p < 0.001$; $p \geq 0.05$**

Variables	Dependent Variable: Job Performance		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Quality work life		0.045	0.019
Safe working condition		0.032	−0.003
Fair compensation		0.126	0.113
Independent variable			
Employee mental health		0.256 **	
Mediating variables			
Work engagement			0.309 **
Innovative behavior			0.295 ***
R^2		0.094	0.313
Adj- R^2	0.001	0.058	0.280
F-value	1.038	2.642 *	9.628 ***

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2023

Table 3 The results of regression analysis (models 4-7).

Variables	Job Performance		Work Engagement	Innovative Behavior
	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Quality work life	0.008	0.023	0.161	0.129
Safe working condition	−0.035	0.051	−0.023	−0.217
Fair compensation	0.034	−0.012	−0.005	0.098

Work experience	0.113	0.105	0.030	0.048
Independent variable				
Employee mental health	0.129	0.108	0.284 ***	0.335 ***
Mediating variables				
Work engagement	0.447 ***			
Innovative behavior		0.444 ***		
R^2	0.273	0.262	0.103	0.142
Adj- R^2	0.239	0.227	0.068	0.109
F-value	7.949 ***	7.524 ***	2.949 **	4.252 ***

Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2023.

The results show that the impact of employee mental health on work engagement is positive (Model 6: $\beta = 0.284$; $p < 0.001$). Additionally, the impact of employee mental health on innovative behavior is positive (Model 7: $\beta = 0.335$; $p < 0.001$).

Model 4 was built based on model 2, which was applied to test the mediating role of work engagement. The results of model 4 indicated that the coefficient for work engagement is significant (model 4, $\beta = 0.447$; $p < 0.001$). However, the coefficient for employee mental health was not significant (model 4, $\beta = 0.129$; ns). From the results of model 2, model 4 and model 6, we could see that the positive mediating effect of work engagement on the relationship between employee mental health and job performance is significant. Therefore, hypothesis 3a is supported by the samples.

Model 5 was built based on model 2, which was applied to test the mediating role of innovative behavior. The results of model 5 indicated that the coefficient for innovative behavior was significant (model 5, $\beta = 0.444$; $p < 0.001$). However, the coefficient for employee mental health is also not significant (model 5, $\beta = 0.108$; ns). From the results of model 2, model 5 and model 7, we could see that the positive mediating effect of innovative behavior is significant. Therefore, hypothesis 3b is supported by the samples.

The endogeneity problem may be driven by some unobservable characteristics of the firm and employee. Therefore, we consider several control variables in the model. We control the firm age, the number of firm employees, the educational background of employees, and the work experience of employees. Moreover, job satisfaction is considered as a proxy variable of employee mental health. We conduct the hierarchical linear analysis (HLA) and find that Hypotheses 1–3 are supported by data. Therefore, the results show there is not a significant endogeneity problem.

Discussion

The present study pursued three goals in extending the extant knowledge on the relationship between workplace mental health and job performance. First, was to investigate how employee' mental health influences job performance in oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt. In line with previous theories and research in developed economies, the study predicted and found that employee mental health also exerts a positive influence on job performance. This finding indicates that the mental health of employees is an important factor to predict job performance. Moreover, the result that employee mental health positively affects job performance is robust and valid.

Secondly, to enrich our insights into the antecedents of job performance, it was predicted and found that the quality work life, safe working condition and fair compensation positively affect job performance. It is plausible that job performance is enhanced because employees who are more dedicated to work and exhibit more innovative behavior are more effective in meeting the demands of firms, thereby leads to better development of the firm. Importantly, this result extends the findings on factors that promote job performance.

Thirdly, employee mental health is indirectly associated with job performance via innovative behavior and work engagement, which addresses tasks associated with work effectiveness. The positive affect state inherent to mental health is conveyed through innovative behavior and work engagement that are important for work demands. In turn, these two behaviors are positively associated with job performance.

Theoretical Implications

This study examines the relationship between workplace mental health and job performance in oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt. It finds a positive relationship between mental health and job performance, contributing to the literature on workplace mental health and overall performance.

This study explores the relationship between employee mental health and job performance, revealing that work engagement and innovative behavior play a positive mediating role. Employees' work engagement and innovative behavior are identified as salient types affected by mental health, further extending the relationship between mental health and job performance.

Managerial Implications

The managerial implications of this study are reflected in the following aspects. Firstly, employees (or managers) should pay attention to mental health problem and make necessary adjustments. Poor mental health may lead to absenteeism and low productivity. For employees in a highly competitive environment, the mental health problem is becoming a big challenge for them to improve job performance. It is important for them to maintain their mental health. This requires them to adjust their mental state. Employees with good mental health support enterprises to achieve high organizational performance. Therefore, companies should be concerned about their employees' mental health and foster a healthy mentality for them.

Limitations and Future Research

There are still some limitations which should be taken into account in future studies. Firstly, the data and samples of this study were collected only in Port Harcourt. There are many other companies in Rivers State, Nigeria and the World as a whole. In the future, more samples from other companies could be considered to test the model. Additionally, future studies could compare the results of different countries or regions. Secondly, work engagement and innovative behaviors was identified as the mediating variables of the impact of workplace mental health on job performance. Are there any other more important mediating variables to be considered? This question should be addressed by future research. Thirdly, we do not consider contextual factor(s) in this study. The relationship between employee mental health and job performance may be influenced by some contextual factors, such as perceived environment, individual personality, and so on. Therefore, future studies could identify certain moderating variables to further explore the relationship between workplace mental health and

job performance. Finally, this study does not consider the impact of different companies or organizations. In different companies, the situation of employees' mental health may be different, such as the IT, manufacturing, etc. Hence, future studies could consider the results of different firms' organizations, as well as test the model in them.

Conclusion

Based on existing research gaps, this study explored the impact of workplace mental health and job performance in oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt. Considering that few studies in the literature focus on the context of Oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt, a portion of Rivers State, this study uses samples in oil servicing firms and finds that employee mental health plays an important role in improving job performance. These oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt should try to maintain employee mental health to achieve high job performance. Furthermore, more insights were thrown on the employee mental health–job performance relationship. The paths of how employee mental health influence job performance are revealed in this study. The results show that work engagement and innovative behaviors play positive mediating roles in the relationship between employee mental health and job performance in oil servicing firms in Port Harcourt. These findings reveal the relationship between employee mental health and job performance and further enrich the literature on employee behaviors. Furthermore, this study extends the research of employees' characteristics and their influences on job performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are provided;

1. Organizations should ensure that they make the mental health of their workers a top priority in the workplace and thus boost the productivity of the firm.
2. Organizations should ensure that the workplace is more conducive so as to boost the satisfaction of workers which could hence heighten their job performance.
3. Employees in the oil and gas firms should be given stimulating incentive packages in order to enhance their job satisfaction which will thus boost their positive psychological state necessary in enhancing their mental health.
4. Organizations should create a safe working condition in which the employees are able to carry out official work even in the convenience, this will enhance their psychological wellbeing which in turn impacts on their job performance.
5. The management of the oil and gas firms should give proper attention to fair compensation for their employees by providing incentive packages, this will enhance their satisfaction and thus make them to operate diligently to enhance the firms' productivity.

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