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ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AMONG STAFF IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN ENUGU NORTH SENATORIAL ZONE, ENUGU STATE

[1]Oparaocha, Ndubuisi Onesimus & [2]Akaebe, Chioma Eunice
[1]Department of Criminology and Security Studies, University of Nigeria Nsukka Enugu State Nigeria
[1]Department of Sociology/Anthropology, University of Nigeria Nsukka Enugu State, Nigeria
[1]ndubuisi.oparaocha@unn.edu.ng & [2]chioma.akaebe@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

The study investigated personality traits, psychological needs satisfaction as elements of intra-conflict management and relationship satisfaction among staff of three institutions of higher learning in Enugu North Senatorial zone. The population of the study was drawn from these institutions, namely; University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), University of Medical and Applied Sciences (SUMAS) and Federal Polytechnic Ohodo (FEDPOD). A total of 200 staff participated in the study (68 males and 132 females), with the age range between 31 – 65 years and the mean of 23.5. Three instrument were used which include the Big Five-Personality Inventory, Basic Psychological Need Scale and Relationship Satisfaction Scale. The study employed a cross-sectional survey design and multiple regression was used in the statistical analysis. The results showed that personality traits (neuroticism) negatively predicted relationship satisfaction (β= -.18, t = -2.32, P < .05) which suggests that staff high in Neuroticism tend to hold more negative expectancies in relational activities and openness to experience also significantly predicted relationship satisfaction (β= .15, t = 2.14, P < .05), which implies that openness in relationship is a prerequisite for intra-conflict resolution among the studied population. More so, psychological need of competence significantly predicted relationship satisfaction (β= .18, t = 2.31, P < .05), which implies that self-confidence had significant and impactful role in staff's intra-conflict management and relational activities.

Keywords: Organizational Conflict Management, Personality traits, Psychological needs satisfaction, Relationship Satisfaction & Institutions of higher learning

Introduction

Organizational conflict management focused on the processes and strategies used to manage and resolve inharmonious curiosity, desires, values, thoughts, objectives, customs, influence, resources and disagreement within a group, organization or community. According to Rahim (2001), intra-conflict was described as "the collective incompatibility or disagreement between two or more divisions, tasks, resources, information, and so on". Thus,

when social entities, like humans, teams, organizations, and communities interrelate conjointly in achieving set goals, to an extent, their interactions would become intense, unharmonious, varying, and even hostile. Managing such situations entails proposing thoughtful and considerate conditions that will undo the adverse influence of their interactions thereby increasing desirable outcomes among such entities. Conflict scholars, like Kent McClelland and Warren Mansell outlined specific methods in solving intra/inter persons conflict which includes negotiation, bargaining, arbitration and mediation etc. To buttress this, conflict management according to Thakore, (2013), is an art of balancing negative outcomes, impacts or consequences of human interactions to a positive and desirable goals and outcomes for the overall good of the society. This may entail a tailored and contextual approaches, designed to minimize hostile aggressiveness that is often associated with conflict situations, thereby, engaging in the specified approaches of conflict resolutions in order to promote social interaction and unity among group interactions.

In friendly relationship, intra-conflict management according to Van Niekerk, (2012) relates this to an individual's judgment about the positivity of shared interactions, which is seen as feeling of been in a close personal relationship and belonging together of people of same mind. This also is referred as an accustomed and varying affective connections that bond individuals with another in relation to the formed knowledge and experiences of others. This satisfactory bond is an intrapersonal involvement that triggers physical or emotional contentment among individuals, which is regarded as bond, companionship, good communication, effective communication and conflict resolving strategies.

In human relationships, the meaning and level of intimacy varies within and between relationships, affection begins core center for "confidence" that unites persons. Therefore, emotional-balances retained intra/interpersonal relationship and create good work and organizational behaviors (Freihart, McMahon, Hahnel & Meston, 2023). Also, in anthropological research, intimacy is considered the product of a successful seduction, a process of rapport building that enables parties to confidently disclose previously hidden thoughts and feelings (Oparaocha, 2017)..

Describing relationship satisfaction in the context of intimate relationships has often been conceptualized as adjustment, which has traditionally been measured by assessing relationship behaviors such as conflict management (Cramer, 2000). Relationship satisfaction entails a critical role in overall human involvement, this mostly involves feeling of liking or loving, emotional and personal support between one's friends, physical or sexual attraction, romance and sexual relationships, (Miller & Perlman, 2008). Relationship satisfaction involves an inherit desire to be mutually distinct and organized accomplices in a friendly rapport. Consequently, bonding problems are found in people who have difficulties in friendly attachment because of their adverse previous experiences that marred relationship satisfaction. Individuals often experience the human precincts among their friends and develop a fear of adverse consequences which disrupts their intimate relationships (Perlman, 2007). By this, relationship satisfaction allows a free flow of shared and organized intimal bond among people to express their feelings and built intimate attachments among themselves.

Psychological needs are the mental needs that motivate a person to achieve goals and perform certain activities (Sheldon & Gunz, 2009). They are distinct from physical needs, which have more to do with meeting requirements to survive and remain healthy. Human motivation theory address psychological needs as part of

innate of needs which includes safety, security, self-esteem and self-actualization (Taormina & Gao, 2013). Maslow in this theory, proposed that human motives are organized into a hierarchy of needs, according to priority in which basic needs must be met before the less needs are aroused, therefore, when an individual accomplishes a specified need reasonably, this satisfaction will activate innate wants of the next hierarchy. In sequence to relationship satisfaction needs, which basically are not subjective well-being or physiological needs but innate feelings (companionship, openness, caring, loving, communication etc) are expressed as "experiences and expectations" one brings to a relational activity also has a hierarchy order of importance which are paramount to relationship satisfaction among individuals. Thus the satisfaction of this innate needs also tends to a higher need in the hierarchy of the relational needs satisfaction.

Statement of the problem

Organizational conflict management in the 21st century among institutions staff of higher learning has been faced with more challenges than ever before. These challenges are not unique to any specific institution but affect all institutions of learning regardless of their size and structure. Intra-conflict management and relationship satisfaction among staff and students is constantly challenged by the increasing number of factors such as physical violence and aggression, in-coordinated friendship and harsh intimal responses which influence the total behavioral relationship existing in these institutions. Despite the vast quantity of research on conflict resolution and organizational relational ethics, there has been no consensus in the literature on how relationship satisfaction should be measured (Fincham & Rogge, 2010). Thus several measures have been created, which try to capture the essence of this construct including the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS, Spanier, 1976), Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988), Scholars like Fincham & Rogge, (2010) have advocated for the use of a two-dimensional approach for measuring relational activities that will examines both positive and negative dimensions of interpersonal quality rather than on solely positive focus. Randall and Bodenmann, (2017), looked at stress and its association with love consummation. Buhler, et al, (2021) and Meek, et al, (1998), investigated life contentment among human endeavors, looking at communication, love and relationship satisfaction. None of these scholar have examined organizational intra-conflict management and relationship satisfaction among staff in the institutions of higher learning. Therefore, this study tends to fill this gap. Thus this work focus on intrapersonal conflict management, behavioral dispositions psychological needs and relationship satisfaction among staff(s) of selected institutions in Enugu North senatorial zone, Nigeria.

Research Questions

i. What are the psychological factors that helps workers cope with intra-conflict issues in tertiary institutions?
ii. What are the factors that promotes relationship satisfaction among staff(s) of higher institutions?
iii. What are the effects of personality traits and psychological needs on workers' relationship satisfaction in higher institutions?

Study objectives

The general objective is to unravel the effects of intra-conflict management and relationship satisfaction among staff of institution of higher learning in Enugu North Senatorial zone, using University of Nigeria, Nsukka; (UNN), State University of Medical and Applied Sciences (SUMAS) and Federal Polytechnic Ohodo.

The specific objective of the study is as follows:

i. To ascertain whether psychological needs will undermine relationship satisfaction among staff(s) of institutions of higher learning.
ii. To determine whether personality traits will predict relationship satisfaction among workers in tertiary institutions.
iii. Explore methods of intra-conflict management among staff(s) in institutions of higher learning.

Theoretical Framework

To understand the dynamics of this study effectively, Equity and Expectancy Theories was adopted as the theoretical framework to the study. These theories proposed that a person's motivation is based on what the individual considers to be fair when compared to others (Redmond, 2010). When applied to intra-conflict management and relationship satisfaction, Equity theory emphases on an individual's "effort-compensation" and "exchange relationship" as well, on the individual's effort to lessen feelings of inequitableness that may rise from a close interaction. To buttress this in line with Adams, (1963) opinion suggests that motivation in relationship may be achieved when an individual awareness of positive outcome in social relations are satisfied. In relational comparison, individuals' desires to be recognized and appreciated adequately for every effort made in an intimate relationships and the outcomes they experience will also match their input in such relationship. That is, an individual belief in what is equitable and inequitable will disrupt their motivation, attitudes, behaviors and general relationship with others. This theory helps to unveil why highly affectionate relationship may get broke and well paid staff of reputable organizations may feel that they are not equitably rewarded, measuring among their colleagues in other organizations, therefore, these shows that people perception is subjected to their feelings. As we discuss this theory, it is important to distinguish between equity theory and expectancy theory, as both constructs overlaps each other. Expectancy theory propose that motivation is belief-effort outcomes that lead to positive goals or desires while equity theory represent cognitive-relational mechanisms to relationship satisfaction that define approaches individuals will explore when perceived that efforts are not in commensurate to the obtained outcomes or prospects. These assumptions are enshrined on the principle that people calculate costs and benefits in determining course of action (Stecher & Rosse, 2007). Thus, we are dealing with individual motivation, which is perceived-efforts that leads to the reward they expect; such as kindness, love, caring, appreciation, respect etc. Therefore, in considering valence of relationship satisfaction, when individuals perceived positive outcomes (desired–reward relationship), they will be prompted to modify their conduct to achieve their desired outcomes. However, the theory tries to evaluate the outcome-input ratio comparison process and the cognitive behavioral mechanisms to restore perceptions of equity in relationships. (Stecher & Rosse, 2007).

On the other hand, staff that felt overpaid compared to colleagues (under-paid) may give in the break-time to increased input as a compensation for overpaid reward against other workers who did not get such reward. In these instances, workers became fed up as a result of perceived inequity thereby reduced or improved input to attain fairness. This forms of organizational work related approaches are strengthened by the worker's perception of under/over-reward mindset. For instance, when workers felt that they are underpaid compared to their colleagues in other agencies (under-reward), this may rise thoughts of stealing from the organization to compensate their underpaid labor. Doubtlessly, workers may as well consider enforcing moral principles to push and

achieve their demands, such as protesting for increment in wages or annual holiday bonuses. Also, workers that are overpaid compared to their labor and energy in an organization may give charitably to such organization in order to reduce outcome.

Organizational work-relational practices comprise stirring workers' effort to desirable outcome/rewards in an organization through behavioral changes that can be positive, (grateful, kindly, lovely, thankful contentedness) or negative attitudes such as hostile, rude, ungrateful insatiable etc. To maintain perceived work inequalities are subjected to whether workers perceives unfairness as a result of under-reward or over-reward. Consequently, if they perceive it as under-reward, it may diminish their performance (output) and if it were seen as over-reward, this will certainly increase their organizational commitment (input). Therefore, a good rational maintaining procedure to choose is a different comparative example. That is, social interactions can lead a staff of different work environment to imitate organizational policy of their comparative orders which is not in consonant and enshrined on he's work and ethical policy, thereby reducing input and outcome in their performance. That is, staff(s) may feel that a co-worker has been over-rewarded and this motivates such staff to work even during none official hours to commensurate rewards. In opposite, workers can forcefully mandate other staff(s) to workless in accomplice to their demands. To measure up rewards, workers' strength to control input and outcome of their comparative other may be insignificant because workers primarily strives to attain recognitions and acceptance of their employers before commanding conformity among their colleagues.

Organizational conflict management are processes that involved developing perceived justifications for the unfairness that exists in the organization-work conundrum among workers. Making an equitable and undistorting discernments, that are commensurate to work-inputs and reward expectances; by changing the comparative methods which attempts to re-frame perceptions of situational context. In most cases, contextual processes can require less effort than cognitive processes; however, both can be difficult to accomplish due to the necessity of distorting individuals' perception. For instance, teacher in a private elementary school could perceive unfairness in wage remunerations compared to colleagues at government owned elementary schools, even though they are engaged in the same profession and live in the same region, with the same occupational experience. Thus, the teachers may employ contextual processes to reinstate equity instead of cognitive processes. The private owned elementary teacher may believe that the government owned elementary teachers has more qualifications or well-trained to compare with their counterparts in the private elementary schools. By this principle, there is no physical change of work-inputs or reward-expectances, however the private owned elementary teachers contextually and cognitively justifies wage remunerations between them and their counterparts on the basis of additional qualification and expertise in performance for the higher rewards and bonuses that other received. Therefore, this provides clarification on equitable comparison, which decreases the teacher's perception of inequity and under-reward within the domain of their profession.

Conceptual Clarification

The intra-conflict issues in respect to this study referred to "personality traits and psychological needs satisfaction". An understanding of this concept is of great benefit to the study. To broaden our knowledge to understand needs satisfaction and relationship

integration among organizational workers, we hereby explore the need towards solving inherent problems associated with intra-human activities between academic-work demands and relationship obligations among workers in the institutions of higher learning.

Primarily, personality traits are referred as internal factors associated with life satisfaction and consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, or actions that distinguish people from one another (Larsen & Buss, 2005). Trait has been defined thus; as fixed biological inherit structure, inborn psychological attributes or factors that elicits behavioral pattern of individuals in social relations. There is emerging consensus that five broad factors capture most of the variability in normal behavioral pattern. This is referred as the "Big Five Personality traits". Its domain consists of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Openness to experience and Neuroticism.

Bechler, et al (2021), research suggests that behavioral attitudes people cropped into social relations are related to that person's satisfaction or dissatisfaction and determines the functionality of such relationship. Because character forms habits individuals display or deduce in challenges, therefore, the trait an individual exhibit will influence their interactions within a relationship (Robins, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2000). Thus, habits are held in high importance to a functional organizational unity but seen a distal predictor of relationship quality that shapes human interactions which in turn promote cordial attraction.

Psychological needs are referred as physiological, sociological and innate needs which an individual strives to meet for an utmost survival, as measured and described into three domains or subscales of needs, namely; competence, autonomy and relatedness that are necessary for the adoption and wellbeing of an individual {(Basic Psychological Need Scale, (BPNS) developed by Deci and Ryan 2000)}.

More so, in a study conducted by Kraus, Cote and Keltner, (2010) described education relationships using criteria like, type of couple, length of time or age, as indicators of the study, showed that individuals belonging to upper-level of education were more open, socially involved and self-centered, while individuals belonging to the lower-level were less sociable, but socially dependent, thus individuals belonging to lower levels are more empathic than those belonging to upper levels and they are accurate in judging spontaneous emotions from intra-conflict situations within their job interactions.

Methodology

Descriptive research design was adopted for the study; this is mostly used when the aim of the study is to discover, discuss and clarify certain phenomenon. Sample size for the study was 250 workers from the University of Nigeria Nsukka, State University of Medical and Applied Sciences Igbo-eno, and Federal Polytechnic Ohodo, all in Enugu North Senatorial Zone. This number provides statistical valid data for meeting the study objectives. Three research objectives that was converted to questions guided this study. Instruments for the study were: 1). Big Five Inventory Scale, developed by John and Srivastava (1999), 2). Basic Psychological Needs Scale, developed by La Guardia, Ryan, Couchman and Deci**,** (2000). The items in these questionnaires were in sub-domain. That is part "A" examines individual traits contribution in intra-conflict management among workers in tertiary institutions. Domain "B" explores the effects of psychological wellbeing of workers in response to their relationship satisfaction. Cluster "C" investigates staff(s) coping strategies on intra-conflict issues in their work demands and other conflicting engagements. Section "D" seeks information on the effect of organizational

intra-conflict curriculum on workers in institutions of higher learning and "E" measures relational mechanisms of staff(s) in relationship engagements in their work-place.

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

The researcher did re-validated the instruments for the study by conducting a trial tested on 20 working staff from St. Theresa Secondary and Urban Girls Secondary Schools in Nsukka metropolitan region. The Cronbach Alpha values obtained; .89 for cluster A, .78 for cluster B, .81 for cluster C, .78 for cluster D and .77 for cluster E respectively. The overall reliability of the instrument was .81. The results indicated that the various sections of the instrument are consistent.

Design and Statistics

Multiple regression was used to analyze the data after the data were collated. Each of the independent variable (personality traits and psychological needs) was regressed on the dependent variable (relationship satisfaction). Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used for data analysis. Results were presented in tables.

Result Presentations

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix showing the predictive roles of personality trait and psychological need satisfaction on relationship satisfaction.

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Extraversion	25.00	4.84	1										
Agreeableness	28.39	5.19	.15*	1									
Conscientiousness	26.10	4.96	.28**	.31**	1								
Neuroticism	22.83	5.33	.30**	.30**	38**	1							
Openness	33.89	6.86	.14*	.13	.07	.16*	1						
Autonomy	23.44	3.54	-.06	-.02	.05	.02	-.02	1					
Competency	19.94	3.29	.02	-.03	-.06	-.04	-.05	.44**	1				
Relatedness	28.09	4.15	.06	-.00	.07	.00	-.02	.24**	.35**	1			
Gender	1.66	.47	-.01	-.10	.02	.03	.00	.11	-.08	.00	1		
Age	1.26	.48	.10	.17*	.15*	.09	-.04	.09	-.00	.05	-.11	1	
Relationship Sat	29.92	6.91	-.03	-.15*	-.09	-.19**	.10	.03	.14*	.05	.10	-.04	.001

***points of significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed). *points of significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Table 1 above shows that extraversion correlate with agreeableness (r = .15, p < .05), Conscientiousness (r = .28, p < .01), neuroticism (r = .30, p < .01) and openness (r = .14, p < .05). Agreeableness positively correlate with Conscientiousness (r = .31, p < .01), neuroticism (r = .30, p < .01), and age (r = .17, p < .05), but negatively correlate with relationship satisfaction (r = -.15, p < .05). Conscientiousness positively correlate with neuroticism (r = .38, p < .01), and age (r = .15, p < .05). Neuroticism positively correlate with openness (r = .16, p < .05) but negatively correlate with relationship satisfaction (r = .19, p < .01). Autonomy correlate with competency (r = .44, p < .01) and relatedness (r = .24, p < .01). Competency correlate with relatedness (r = .35, p < .01) and relationship satisfaction (r = .14, p < .05). Age correlate with relationship satisfaction (r = .4, p < .05).

Table 2: Analysis showing Beta (β) coefficient levels of personality traits and basic psychological needs satisfaction as predictors of relationship satisfaction.

					Model summary		
					R	R^2	
Variables	B	Std. Error	β	t	AR^2		
Extraversion	.02	.10	.01	.20			
Agreeableness	-.16	.09	-.12	-1.67			
Conscientiousness	.02	.11	.01	.22			
Neuroticism	-.23	.10	-.18	-2.32*			
Openness	.15	.07	.15	2.14*			
Autonomy	-.03	.15	-.01	-.22			
Competency	.39	.17	.18	2.31*			
Relatedness	-.19	.12	-.11	-1.59	.31	.10	.05

Dependent Variable: Relationship satisfaction Note * P < .05

Regression Table shows that neuroticism significantly but negatively predict relationship satisfaction (β= -.18, t = -2.32, P < .05). The result equally indicates that openness significantly predict relationship satisfaction (β= .15, t = 2.14, P < .05). More so, competency significantly predict relationship satisfaction (β= .18, t = 2.31, P < .05). The Table also shown that other personality traits variables such as: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and autonomy did not predict relationship satisfaction. The finding also shown that basic psychological needs of competency and relatedness are highly associated with relational satisfaction and, are implicated for 5% variances on relationship satisfaction among workers. This was indicated in the model summary values of R (.31), R^2 (.10) and AR^3 (.05) respectively.

Discussion of findings

The present study investigated intra-personal conflict and relationship satisfaction among workers in selected tertiary schools in Enugu North senatorial zone. It was hypothesized that personality traits and psychological needs satisfaction will not significantly predict relationship satisfaction among undergraduate students. After an analysis of data using hierarchical multiple regression, the result indicated that personality traits domain of neuroticism negatively predicted relationship satisfaction while openness to experience positively predicted relationship satisfaction among workers in institutions of higher learning in Enugu.

The findings of the study provide support to the first objective of the study that states that psychological needs satisfaction will undermine relationship satisfaction among workers in institutions of higher learning in Enugu. The psychological needs domains of competence significantly predicted relationship satisfaction with a variance of (β= .18, t = 2.31, P < .05), which implies that self-confidence had a significant role and impactful in workers conflict management and relational activities. This finding is in consistent with ideas from positive psychology and from self-determination theory in particular (Deci & Ryan, 2000) that feeling of competent and effectiveness, free to choose on issues of personal importance, and in possession of strong social relationships, are particularly important psychological inputs leading to the experience of psychological wellbeing. This also extends support for the wellbeing benefit of need satisfaction in core developmental settings for adolescents, family, and peers as stated by Sheldon, et al, (2009) in reference to leisure activities and context.

The findings provide support for the second objective of the study which states that personality traits will significantly predict relationship satisfaction. The personality trait of openness to experience positively and significantly predicted relationship satisfaction among the study population with a variance of (β= .15, t = 2.14, P < .05), while personality trait of neuroticism negatively predicted relationship satisfaction with a variance of (β= -.18, t = -2.32, P < .05), which suggests that workers high in neuroticism tend to hold more negative expectancies in relational activities thus the objective was accepted that workers personal traits is tantamount to their level of relational satisfaction. However, the finding is in consistent with the previous studies (Buss, 1991; Geist & Gilbert, 1996), which reported that extraversion has been positively associated with anger and anger intensity in both individuals and their partners with the tendency to express feelings in response to conflict situation. Also the finding is in consistent with the study conducted by Heller, et al, (2004), Geist and Gilbert, (1996), which reported that those high on neuroticism do not tend to express their anger and they avoid arguments. Therefore, because those high on neuroticism tend not to express their anger, we do not expect to find a positive association between neuroticism and relationship satisfaction. Robins, et al, (2000) conducted variety of studies on individual's stable personality traits which in fact associated with his/her relationship satisfaction. Across the literature, it appears that emotional stability is the personality trait with the most robust links to relationship satisfaction, apparently neuroticism is the dominant, assertive, domineering, and forceful trait that comes into play in intra-conflict situations and it has been related to preference for both dominance and competition in conflict resolution strategies.

Conclusion

Institution that lacks intra-persons' unity may find it difficult to function maximally as an organization. Most conflictual incidence that exist in organization workforce is a direct influence of personality traits and psychological needs outburst. In the words of Watson, et al, (2000) "an individual trait is directly an influencer to their relational

expectancy, this represents a horizontal association between relational activities and relationship satisfaction". Buttressing on Watson's position, it will deduce that relational expectancy and satisfaction are sinusoidal in organizational wellbeing if domineering and neurotic traits are found, these challenges are not unique to a particular institution of higher learning but it cuts across to all formal organizations of human endeavors thereby impacting negatively to the organizational and workers interest.

Additional, this study unveils the needs of workers' wellbeing by proposing for equilibrium between work-demands and relational engagements as pattern of social integration that will foster healthy organizational attitude thereby reduces work-load conflicts that instigates negative expectancies among workers. It will foster relational cooperation among workers thereby enabling them to manage inter/intra personal conflicts and social expectancies that exists in work-organizations

Lastly, the paper had shown applied suggestions for social bonds among workers in institutions of higher learning and suggests emotional and psychological strength to address the issues of intra/inter-conflict concern, leveraging on openness to experience and competence (self-confidence) as a prerequisite for conflict management.

Recommendations

This study recommends the followings:

i. Mental and emotional training should be provided in all institutions of higher learning; thus, enabling staff(s) to cope in challenging and unwanted circumstances.
ii. Organizations should provide basic needs of workers, for this will exonerate most of the trauma workers face in their work-demands and relational engagements.
iii. Supportive environment at work; for this will ameliorate anxiety and build a good rapport, mental health among workers.

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