

Vol. 3, No. 1, April, 2025 Edition

Lagos Journal of Psychology

www.lagosjournalofpsychology.com

Published by the Department of Psychology,
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Lagos.

ISSN: 2756-3510

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor-In-Chief: Prof. Oni Bamikole Fagbohungbe (Industrial Psychology)
Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Lagos.

Co-Editor-In-Chief: Prof. Ibinabo Agiobu-Kemmer (Developmental Psychology)
Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Lagos.

Editors: Prof. Sulemon Adebayo (Social Psychology)
Department of Psychology, Ekiti State University,
Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

Prof. Bolanle Ogungbamila (Industrial Psychology)
Department of Psychology, Adekunle Ajasin University,
Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria

Prof. Femi Lawal (Industrial Psychology)
Department of Psychology, Lagos State University,
Ojo, Lagos State

Dr. Gabriel Akinbode (Industrial Psychology)
Department of Psychology, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos.

Dr. Alex Igundunnasse (Social Psychology)
Department of Psychology, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos.

Dr. Busura Aroyewun (Clinical Psychology)
Department of Psychology, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos.

Dr. Wakil Asekun (Social Psychology)
Department of Psychology, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos.

Dr. Gbenusola Akinwale (Developmental Psychology)
Department of Psychology, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos.

Editorial Consultants:

Prof. Olatunde Makanju	(Sport/Physiological Psychology)
Prof. G. A. Sote	(Industrial/ Organisational Psychology)
Prof. Kayode A. Oguntuashe	(Developmental Psychology)
Prof. Esther Foluke Akinsola	(Developmental Psychology)

Table of Content

1. **Impact of self-concept and body dis-satisfaction on students' fear of negative evaluation in University of Ibadan**
   Shyngle Kolawole Balogun, Ayomipe Ajoke Temola & Adebayo Victor Adeyemi 5-23

2. **Psycho-educational intervention and stress management among business persons amidst crises situations**
   Ijang Bih Ngyah-Etchutamb 24-45

3. **Shifting gender norms and sexual/gender-based violence, wealth access, decision-making and gender equality in Nigerian tertiary institutions**
   Oluwatoyin Ilesanmi, Damilola Ibironke Adefisoye, Lanre Ikuteyijo Oluyemisi Obilade, Akanni Ibukun Akinyemi, Oyeyemi Babalola & Olutoyin Mejiuni 46-77

4. **Standardization of theory of mind task battery (TOMTB) in Lagos State**
   Olufolakemi Victoria Adedeji, Kehinde O. Ayenibiowo & Ibinabo S. Agiobu-Kemmer 78-93

5. **From anecdotes to science: The characterization of mind in Africa and its diaspora**
   Kayode A. Oguntuashe & Olufolakemi Victoria Adedeji 94-109

6. **Household financial resources as a determinant of openness to substance use among undergraduates of the University of Lagos**
   Sylvester Ororume Atiri, Simon Omonigho Umukoro & James Otieno Ekele 110-128

7. **Spousal communication among dual-income early career couples as predictor of employee's behaviour at work: An empirical study of selected banks in Lagos**
   Gabriel A. Akinbode 129-141

8. **Weight and age as correlates of negative self-image among undergraduate female fitness centre users at the University of Lagos**
   Uzochukwu N. Israel, Sylvester O. Atiri & A.M. Akande 142-150

9. **Differences in men's educational Status, ethnicity and women's educational pursuit after marriage**
   Malomo Bolajoko Ibiyemi, Ajala Muniru Alimi & Oluyoye Onyeka Maureen 151-174

10. **Organisational citizenship behaviour as a catalyst to continuous improvement and economic revitalisation in Africa**
    Elizabeth Ibukunoluwa Olowookere 175-189

Psycho-educational intervention and stress management among business persons amidst crises situations

Ijang Bih Ngyah-Etchutambe Ph.D.
Department of Educational Psychology, University of Buea, Cameroon
ijangetchu@gmail.com

Abstract
The outbreak and ravaging effects of crises situations like the Covid-19 pandemic and armed conflicts in Cameroon created a lot of fear and panic in people in the Buea Municipality. This was intense among business persons who felt exposed as they could not stay at home in quarantine given the Covid-19 restrictions, but had to serve the public on a daily basis as a source of livelihood. Local business people in the Buea Municipality exhibited constant fear of being infected by Covid-19 and affected by the ravaging socio-political crises in the Region. On this basis, the study aims to find out whether a psycho-educational intervention on stress management among business people can relieve stress in crises situations. Specifically, the study seeks to find out: 1) the extent to which training on unhooking negative thoughts, acting on values and grounding can enhance business people's ability to manage stress and 2) the extent to which such training influences progress in business. A sequential explanatory design was used to firstly, obtain data on the degree of stress from 40 randomly selected business persons through a cross-sectional survey in the Buea municipality. Secondly, a quasi-experimental single group pre- and post-test design was used to do a psycho-educational intervention on 12 business persons with highest scores on stress. The findings revealed that the intervention had a significant effect on the degree of stress and business progress as it reduced the level of stress by 0.72%, that is, from a mean of 2.58 in the pre-test to 1.86 in the post test and also a 0.72% increase in business progress from a mean of 2.40 in the pre-test to 3.12 in the post test. Practical orientation on how to identify and unhook negative thoughts, identify and stay focused on values and engagement in grounding is essential in building competencies that can enable people manage stress and thrive in adverse situations.

Keywords: Psycho-Educational intervention, stress management, well-being, crises situations, Business persons.

Introduction

Stress from crises situations like the Covid-19 pandemic seemed to be more deadly than the virus of the pandemic itself. Previous research holds that the outcome of other infectious disease, epidemics and disasters like hurricanes and floods are mostly adverse and was accompanied by psychological reactions that encompass anxiety, acute stress, addictive behaviours, and post-traumatic stress symptoms, alongside increased suicidality, self-blame, and major depression (Noris, 2005). Given that past research is a harbinger of future outcomes, stress from crises situations like the Covid-19 definitely had a toll on affected populations. At the core of these entire conditions lies elements of one of the most basic and

primal human emotions--fear (Polizzi, Lynn, and Perry, 2020). Fear of infection in the presence of others, of contact with contaminated surfaces, and of passing too close to another human being evoked an increasingly familiar shudder of mistrust of others, avoidance, and withdrawal from everyday activities, thereby shrinking people's world and constraining opportunities for essential human contact and social support, which are necessary for adaptive functioning (Bonanno, et. al., 2007). Business people tend to fear for their lives and those of their loved ones. Uncertainty seems to retard business as its operators' fear to invest, travel to get goods and interact with customers, which emits stress. This paper addresses techniques that can build stress managing competence and ability to thrive within crises situations. It presents literature on the problem and an empirical situation on how business persons developed stress management competencies within the Covid-19 crises.

Stress and Business within the Covid 19 pandemic

Stress is a natural, physiological response that involves a complex interaction between the mind, body, and the environment (American Institute of Cognitive Therapy, 2020). It is the body's natural response to feeling under threat or pressure. It can be motivating for short bursts of time. At other times, stress can be overwhelming and less helpful to the situation we are facing. When people are stressed, their bodies produce the hormone, cortisol, which activates the sympathetic nervous system to help humans prepare to quickly 'fight or flight' (CBT Resource, 2020). Activation of the sympathetic nervous system and the release of hormones from the adrenal gland promote a series of physiological responses, including increased heart rate, muscle tension, alertness, increased respiration rate, decreased gastrointestinal activity, and an inhibited inflammatory response. Over the long-term, however, chronic and sustained activation of the stress response can have damaging effects on the body's immune system's ability to work at its best (American Institute of Cognitive Therapy, 2020). Just as the Yerkes-Dodson law of arousal states, alertness or arousal only motivates a person to an optimal level after which motivation decreases and causes stress (Yerkes and Dodson, 1908). Over alertness induces stress and affects efficiency and well-being. Chronic, high levels of stress have been associated with many serious physical and psychological difficulties, including insomnia, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, obesity, depression, and anxiety disorders. Warning signs of stress are many, relative and can be physical, behavioural and psychological as exhibited on Table 1.

Table 1: **Warning Signs of stress**

PHYSICAL	BEHAVIOURAL	PSYCHOLOGICAL
Muscle tension	Hurrying	Irritability
Headaches	Increased accidents	Decreased emotional control
Exhaustion/fatigue	Decreased productivity	Often worried
Weight changes	Increased consumption of alcohol or drugs	Feeling overwhelmed
Sleep disturbances	Unhealthy eating patterns	Easily frustrated
Teeth grinding	Isolation	Poor concentration
Frequent bouts of illness	Cigarette smoking	Forgetfulness
Stomach aches	Procrastination	Thoughts of running away
Hypertension	Conflicts with others	Loss of sense of humor
Sweating or trembling hands	Restricted breathing	Difficulty making decisions
Sexual dysfunction		Crying spells
Diarrhea or constipation		Intense bouts of anger
Back pain		
Restlessness		
Indigestion		

Source: American Institute of Cognitive Therapy (2020)

Living in difficult situations may lead to increased feelings of stress, anxiety and fear, which are normal reactions to challenging situations. However, sometimes these feelings can overwhelm us and hit a tipping point, where it impacts our ability to function. It can make people stop doing the things they know are good for them, engage in poor habits and negative thoughts (Mansfield and Hershkop, 2020). Despite the fact the corona virus disturbed humanity, it had the potential to greatly slow down the Chinese economy and that of the entire world. Data within the period of the Covid-19 pandemic indicated a substantial decline in China's output (UNCTAD, 2020). Given that China is the central manufacturing hub of many global businesses, any decline in its output is expected to affect other countries through regional and global value chains (UNCTAD, 2020).

Since 2017, business in the ssouth-west region of Cameroon has not been very smooth given the socio-political crises in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon. The alarming rate of insecurity, government curfews and "ghost towns" has adversely affected businesses. This alone has been a source of stress to the people. The Covid-19 pandemic simply added salt to an existing injury as the people tend to worry not only about their safety, but also about their health and that of their family and friends. As for business people, they have to be

additionally concerned with the sustainability of their businesses, including access to necessary resources and finances. These concerns altogether constitute stressors in their own right, especially given the uncertainty of the how and when the crisis will end. With such uncertainty, business people resorted to activities untypical to them, such as spending way too much time watching the television, socializing with family and friends, and drinking excessively. What is more worrisome is the fact that this uncertainty has also been linked to wantonly unprofessional behaviour such as the inability to honour engagements, tardiness to functions and indebtedness resulting from borrowing but failing to repay creditors (CBT Resource, 2020). This suggests that concerns with Covid-19 kept business people in particular and many people in general locked in a cycle of stress, worry and tension. Meaningful initiatives to deal with these problems must include sound psychological interventions. The best-known of these falls under the broad category of psycho-education. A brief discussion of these strategies, which have been employed to relief people of stress, is in order.

Psycho-educational Intervention

Psycho-education is a form of therapeutic intervention that combines psycho-therapy and education. It can be used with individuals, families, and groups, and implemented on its own or as a supplemental treatment to other ongoing interventions (Williams, 1997). It combines psycho-therapy with education to help people deal with a targeted problem in their life. It was often applied to people diagnosed with mental health conditions (or life threatening/terminal illnesses) (Lukens, & McFarlane, 2004). It has been implemented in a variety of settings, ranging from mental health clinics to occupational training. Psycho-education focuses on providing valuable information to clients, and helping them improve awareness, skills, and communication related to the target problem. It applies therapeutic interventions from other theoretical models such as cognitive therapy, behavioural therapy, psycho-analysis and interpersonal therapy. Our discussion here is confined to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy as a Psycho-educational intervention strategy to relief people of stress from the Covid 19 situation.

The Cognitive Behavioual Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is an umbrella term for a wide range of evidence-based cognitive and behavioural psycho-therapies that involve techniques and strategies to help

address unhelpful thinking and behaviour across many psychological issues, including anxiety and depression (WCCBT, 2020). Cognitive Behaviour Therapy focuses more on the current situation and its solution, rather than the past. It replaces ways of living that do not work well with ways of living that work, giving people more control over their lives (ACBT, 2020). With the CBT, the thoughts, actions and circumstances that influence the amount of stress experienced are assessed. In the case of people, who are stressed, the assessment involves a combination of the people's perception of threat or danger and a challenge in their ability to cope with the situation. Based on the assessment, the therapist helps the patient develop a strategic plan to help better manage the stress. The plan usually involves strategies that can be used to modify stress producing thoughts and to improve on coping capabilities. For example, in the case of someone suffering from catastrophizing (viewing the current Covid situation worse than what it is) and gets very frightened, the patient could benefit from exercises to challenge automatic thoughts. Also, following instructions on diaphragmatic breathing can be helpful (WCCBT, 2020). Stress management plans work effectively only when they are being tailored to a person's particular needs, issues and resources (WCCBT, 2020).

Stress management techniques

Several CBT techniques such as unhooking from negative thoughts, grounding, and acting on our values have been used in stress relief therapy. Coupled with this, other strategies like respecting government measures can be effective in keeping people calm within the Covid-19 situation.

Unhooking from negative thoughts

Unhooking from negative thoughts involves cognitive restructuring, that is, a step-by-step process whereby negative thoughts are identified, evaluated for accuracy, and then replaced (Hart & Hart, 2010). It is a key part of the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy treatment plan. Negative thoughts distract us from our daily activities and keep us worried. Such thoughts and emotions like anger, hatred and bitterness produce potent chemicals that promote cellular degeneration, formation of tumor cells and weakening of the immune system. Being in such negative state leaves people at high risk to diseases like cancer and Covid-19 (Castillo, 2020). In such cases, the viral RNA overwhelms the immune system and takes over the coding, decoding, regulation and gene expression. The virus, which cannot replicate on its own outside its host, now multiplies exponentially inside the host and ravages the lungs and other

vital organs of the body (Castillo, 2020). It is, therefore, essential to eliminate negative thoughts, so as to remain safe and healthy within the Covid-19 pandemic. Unhooking from negative thoughts according to WHO (2020), begins by noticing the difficult thoughts and feelings, naming them silently and refocusing on the activities we are engaged in each time the negative thoughts reappear. Negative thoughts could result from filtering (filtering out the good and focusing only on the bad), over generalizing - taking one bad example and assuming it to be true for all other situations, black or white thinking - all or nothing, for example, "if a perfect cure for Covid -19 is not gotten by June, everyone will perish", catastrophic thinking- assuming the worst will happen.

A therapist helps a client identify, when the thoughts and feelings are inappropriate to the situation and when such thoughts actually contribute to stress. In that case, clients are trained on methods that they can use to free themselves of such thoughts and revise their actions to a level appropriate to the situation (ACBT, 2020). In noticing negative thoughts, it is essential to write them down in a journal and then assess the thoughts in terms of whether they are helpful or not. The next step is to choose a helpful thought to replace the unhelpful ones. Also, write down helpful messages to correct the negative thoughts. When this is done regularly, accurate, helpful thoughts will naturally step in (Cuncic, 2020). WHO (2020) exhibits practical steps and exercises to be followed in noticing and unhooking from negative thoughts (see appendix B).

Grounding

One of the main psycho-educational intervention techniques employed in this study to manage stress among business persons is grounding. Grounding is the ability for people to use their breath to direct the energy from the body in to the earth. Much like electricity needs a ground to be directed, human energy needs to be grounded to recharge, be mindful and stay connected. These challenges can better be navigated in crises situations by learning how to ground (Sweeney and LeFevre, 2020). Controlled breathing techniques effectively reduce physical tension, anxiety, and overall stress level. It involves a series of exercises that trains the body and mind to become gradually more relaxed (ACBT, 2020). Similarly, Stress, Trauma and Resilience (STAR) (2020) presents grounding as a technique that helps people reorient to the here and now, bringing them into the present. Sensory awareness techniques are easy to use, when one feels overwhelmed, intensely anxious or distanced from the

environment. The 5-4-3-2-1 grounding exercise process recommended by STAR (2020) reliefs people of stress as persons feel calmer and more at ease after the process reflected below:

- Describe five (5) things you see that are familiar to you in the room.
- Name four (4) things that you can feel ("My feet on the floor" or "The cool air on my face").
- Name three (3) things you can hear right now (people around you, or the traffic outside).
- Name two (2) things you can smell right now (focus on smells you like).
- Name one (1) good thing about yourself.

Sweeney and LeFevre (2020) also proposed two 3-4 minutes mindfulness exercises that brings calm, reduces stress, and keeps the mind focused. Firstly, the balancing the breath technique which is considered the fastest way to calm the central nervous system, when stressed through breath through alternate nostril breathing. It connects the right and left hemispheres of the brain optimizing the mind for learning. Secondly, the intentional grounding in a seated position technique, a modified grounding exercise that connects people to the present, where they can operate out of their strengths and not stress. The procedure for this technique involves:

- Sit in a chair with your back straight and your feet flat on the floor. Place your hands in a relaxed position on your thighs.
- Imagine sending the energy of your breath down your spine, into your legs, and put out your feet directly into the ground. Feel your feet on the floor and gently push your feet into the ground, while remaining mindful of your breathing. Do not hold your breath.
- Notice when you start to feel your legs getting charged. It will feel as if the energy is filling them up. Keep sending your energy down your body with your awareness on your exhale. Imagine you are breathing down through your spine, through your legs, into your feet, and into the ground.
- Once you feel the charge in your legs, slowly release your legs by no longer pushing your feet into the ground. Take a few more breaths in and out slowly.
- Relax your muscles. This brings your awareness into your body, back into the present.

The World Health Organization, (2020) also x-rays practical illustrations, exercises and audio records involving step by step procedures of the grounding technique essential in relieving stress (See appendix C).

Acting on our values

Identifying and acting on our values can also serve as a relief of the stressors from the Covid-19 situation. Personal values can be identified by posing questions such as: What is important to you? What makes you feel good, even when confronted with a situation you can not fully control? What do you want other people to say about you and how you responded at this time? How do you want to remember what you did or did not do? What do you want to be known for? The answers to these questions often reveal to the person deeper motivations and what matters to them so they can pursue meaningful goals and activities under the darkest of circumstances (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 2012) and achieve a resilient outcome in the long-term.

General strategies

Polizzi et al., (2020) argue that in the throes of the Covid-19 pandemic, people can exert a measure of control by many means. As just a few examples, they can take medicines as prescribed; get adequate sleep; find time for laughter; arm themselves with factual information regarding the virus and take needed precautions and steps to adapt to a fluid situation; limit or increase exposure to news, depending on preference; ensue the availability of food; plan activities each day and anticipate potential short-term stressors; and checking on friends and loved ones. Keeping a diary of daily events, goals, and life lessons learned from adversity can also be helpful, as studies have shown that expressive writing and disclosure of emotional experiences confer psychological and physical benefits (Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999).

Furthermore, behaviour change in terms of respecting government measures such as improving hand hygiene, physical distancing, disinfecting surfaces, wearing masks, or reaching out to the most exposed in remote areas does not only play a key role in tackling the Covid-19 pandemic, but gives people some prevention assurance that keeps them hopeful. Also, the many restrictions placed on social interactions in work places such as physical distancing as a result of Covid-19 was important in helping people create and adjust to new

daily routines. Having a predictable routine can reduce anxiety and improve focus and productivity (Mansfield and Hershkop, 2020). Creating new bonds or reviving existing ones through human contact or through telephone calls, whats app and other social media devices and applications may not only alleviate stress, sadness and anxiety, but also set the stage for pro social behaviour and empathy (Alloway, Runac, Qureshi, & Kemp, 2014). This one-two punch of decreased negative emotionality and enhanced positive emotions facilitates coping and recovery. Psycho-educational intervention especially with CBT has proven to be effective at relieving people of stress in crises situations as reflected in the following research outcomes.

Anclair et al (2018)'s study on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and mindfulness for stress and burnout: a waiting list-controlled pilot study comparing treatments for parents of children with chronic conditions highlighted the value of CBT in stress management. The study was aimed at investigating the effectiveness of CBT interventions on stress and burnout among parents of children with chronic conditions through a quasi-experimental design with 28 participants- parents with children under 18years with chronic conditions. The CBT intervention was based on cognitive theory to change thoughts and emotions in relation to stress-related problems and on behavioural techniques to enhance behavioural change. The participants met twice a week for a period of two months, but they were instructed to carry out home practice for about 15 minutes a day. The results revealed that treating a group using CBT is an efficient intervention to reduce stress levels and burnout in parents of children with chronic conditions. Similarly, Dambrun, et. al's (2024) study on the effect of short mindfulness meditation practice on positive mental health revealed that attentional meditation increased various positive emotions such as gratitude, interest, hope, pride, elevation, and awe through induced body awareness, meta-awareness, and self-transcendence which in turn increase positive mental health.

Ghazavi et al., (2016)'s study on the effect of cognitive behavioural stress management program on psychosomatic patients' quality of life proved that Cognitive behavioural stress management program administrated in a study group of 70 psycho-somatic patients in Isfahan for 8 straight sessions of a 90-minute weekly program for two months led to a noticeable improvement in the patients' quality of life. The intervention program sessions consisted; introduction of stress, explanation of the connection between thoughts and feelings, relaxation training, self-induction, cognitive distortions, and implementation of effective

coping responses.

Also, coping-activities called behavioural activation that has to do with engaging in hubbies such as solving puzzles; reading; listening to music; singing; playing an instrument; watching television; learning a language; playing Internet games; and preparing for how life will change for the better following the 9/11 attack are diverting and spark positive emotions that researchers found to be critical to resilient outcomes and recovery after 9/11. They facilitate the ability to bounce back from negative experiences (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003), reduce the psychological burden imposed by prolonged distress, and free-up cognitive resources to contend with everyday stressors and adjust to fluctuating situational demands (Bonanno, Brewin, Kaniasty, & La Greca, 2010). Similar patterns of coping and resilience were also used in managing emotional responses to natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods (Bonanno, et. al, 2020).

Problem and Objectives

Summarily, the CBT intervention and other psycho-educational intervention strategies has proven to be efficient in managing stress as it has helped to improve the quality of life of psycho-somatic patience in Isfahan, reduced stress levels and burnout in parents of children with chronic conditions in the United States and sparked positive emotions, resilient outcomes and recovery after the 9/11 attack in the USA. The Covid-19 pandemic is a similar crisis, though, a more severe situation that left humanity perpetually worried and confused. What to do to get the situation under control has been the bone of contention in the entire world. Based on the over-arching issue, this paper aims to find out whether psycho-educational intervention strategies can also alleviate people of stress from the Covid-19 saga. The work is delimited to business persons in the Buea municipality of the south-west region of Cameroon due to the sudden decline in business activities in the area from 2017 as a result of the Anglophone crisis, and later, the Covid-19 situation, which kept business person in distress. The study, thus, aims respond to the following research questions:

a) To what extent does psycho-educational intervention influence stress management among business persons during the Covid-19 pandemic?
b) To what extent does psycho-educational intervention influence progress in business amidst the Covid-19 situation?

Methodology

A sequential explanatory design beginning with a cross-sectional survey to obtain data from a sample of 40 business people randomly selected from a population of over 525 small and medium size business owners in the Buea municipality (Business in Cameroon, 2020). Secondly, a psycho-educational intervention on stress management was conducted on 12 business persons drawn from the survey participants, who scored very high on stress and were willing to participate in the intervention. The quasi-experiment constituted a single group only pre and post-test design. The pre and post-test was composed of indicators of stress and progress in business.

Instruments and description of study area

A structured questionnaire with very few open-ended items was used to measure the degree of stress resulting from Covid-19 experienced by business people. The instrument was designed based on the indicators of stress that can be expressed cognitively, emotionally and socially. The instrument contained three sections. The first section (A) requested for demographic information such as the age and sex of the respondent, location, duration and type of business. The second section (B) was based on stress. It constituted statements on indicators with the options very often, often, rarely and never. Respondents were required to choose the best option that applied to their state for each of the statements in the section. Different stress levels with respect to doing business in the era of Covid-19 were indicated, including the following: I worry excessively, I find it difficult to engage in pleasurable activities, and I cannot effectively concentrate (see details at the appendix). Section C was centered on the state of their businesses in terms of progress and the strategies they have been using to cope. This section of the questionnaire contained a number of Likert scale items with the same modalities as in the section on stress (B). It elicited information on the extent to which the business operators registered success in their undertaking in the Covid-19 era. Also, section C contained one open-ended question, which required the participants to list out all the strategies they have been using to cope with the prevailing circumstances.

The area of the study, Buea is the headquarters of Buea Sub Division and the capital of the south-west region in Cameroon. The Buea municipality has a surface area of 870 sq.km; it contains 67 villages, four distinct identified urban spaces (Buea station, Soppo, Molyko/Mile 17 and Muea). It is a highly complex community caught between a blend of urban, semi urban, rural and traditional settings (PNDP, 2012). Buea Municipality is bounded to the north

by tropical forest on the slope of Mount Cameroon (4100 m above sea level). The mountain range extends to the beautiful sandy beaches of the Atlantic Ocean. The town also shares boundaries with other major towns like the City of Limbe to the South-West, Tiko municipality to the South-East, Muyuka Municipality to the East and Idenau District to the West. With an equatorial climate, temperatures are moderate with a slight seasonal variation (rainy and dry season). Buea is one of the fastest growing towns in Cameroon today with a mixed cosmopolitan setting and has a moderate economy with agricultural, administrative, business, tourism and the financial sector taking the central stage of the town.

Ethical concerns

Anonymity and confidentiality were respected as participants consent was sought before engaging them in the research. They were also assured that every piece of information they provided will be kept confidential and used only for the purpose of the study. Their freedom to engage and disengage in the process at any time was also guaranteed.

Description of the intervention

The psycho-educational intervention was carried out for two weeks through both face-to face and online interactions at group and individual levels. A WhatsApp group was created where interesting and engaging videos, pictures, audios and practical exercises on stress and the different techniques to manage it were shared with participants. Participation was monitored and those that were not active were followed up through calls, private text messages and face-to-face contact to get them fully involved in the process. Some participants shared their worries, doubts and questions on the forum. Others shared theirs privately to the trainer. They were all guided and clarifications made to their doubts and worries. Each participant was met face-to-face on at least three occasions. The first was to administer the pretest and seek their consent to participate in the intervention, the second, to follow them up with the intervention and third, to administer the post-test. After the intervention the post-test which was a repeat of the pretest on stress was administered. The Pre- and post-test were analyzed using frequencies, tables, means and percentages with the help of Excel 2020 and SPSS version 21 for windows.

Treatment/intervention Programme

The intervention lasted for two weeks. The table below exhibits the content, objectives and different activities carried out by the trainer and business persons that participated in the intervention.

Table 2: Intervention plan

Day/Time	Content	Objective	Trainer's Activities	Participant's activities	Resources
Day 1	Definition of stress	Participants should have a vivid picture of what stress is and its indicators.	-Ask questions such as; what worries you most during this pandemic? How do you feel when you are unhappy? -Share pictures, illustrations and videos on the definition and indicators of stress. -Respond to participants questions	-Read through and watch illustrations, videos and pictures on defining stress -Respond to and ask questions	Phones, internet, videos and pictures
Day 2	Stress management techniques. The Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). -Grounding	Participants should develop an understanding on how negative thoughts about Covid-19 influences their feelings and behaviours. Participants should be able to engage in life, pay attention to others and focus on their businesses.	-Share materials on how our thoughts, feelings and behaviours are connected and, the steps, involved in the grounding technique. -Practically engage participants in the grounding technique	-Read Watch videos and pictures on CBT and grounding techniques -Listen to audios -Engage and practice the grounding technique	Pictures, videos, audios. Grounding Exercise 1 (En) Grounding Exercise 2 (En) Grounding Exercise 3 (En)
Day 3	Unhooking negative thoughts about Covid-19	Participants should be able to identity their negative thoughts about Covid-19 and follow appropriate strategies to unhook themselves from such thoughts	-Ask questions that will help them notice and name their difficult thoughts about Covid-19 -Listen to participants -Share materials and exercises that will engage them in unhooking difficult thoughts	Read, listen, watch pictures and illustrations on unhooking techniques. -Engage in unhooking exercise.	Picture illustrations Audios Notice and Name (En) Unhooking from Unkind Thoughts (En)
Day 4	Acting on our values and being kind	-Participants should be able to identify their values and follow simple strategies to live by them. -Participants should be able to notice their unkind thought of themselves and unhook themselves from such thoughts	-Explain what values are -List out a series of values for participants to choose theirs -Illustrate simple practical strategies participants can follow to live by their values	Listen, ask questions. -Reflect and identify their values - Engage in life practical exercises in living by their values	-Picture illustrations -Practical life activity
Day 5	Respecting government measures. -Other general	-Participants should understand and respect government measures -Understand the	Ask questions and probe participants to identify the measure. -listen to them -Highlight the implications of	-Respond to questions -listen and read	-Videos and text illustrating government measures

	helpful tips: -Avoid over checking on news and for symptoms of the virus	psychological implications of respecting the measures on our thoughts, feelings and behaviours	respecting the measures on our thoughts feelings and actions.		-Text highlighting psychological implications on respecting government measures.
Day 6	General overview of all the techniques examined.	Participants should be able to explain and engage in the different stress relief strategies	-Ask questions. -Listen to participant's responses. -Scafold responses	-Respond to questions -Share worries -Ask questions -Listen	Text

Findings and Discussion

The findings reveal that psycho-educational intervention equips business people with competencies to manage stress in crises situation, which also in turn lead to progress in business as shown on the subsequent figures.

Demographic Information

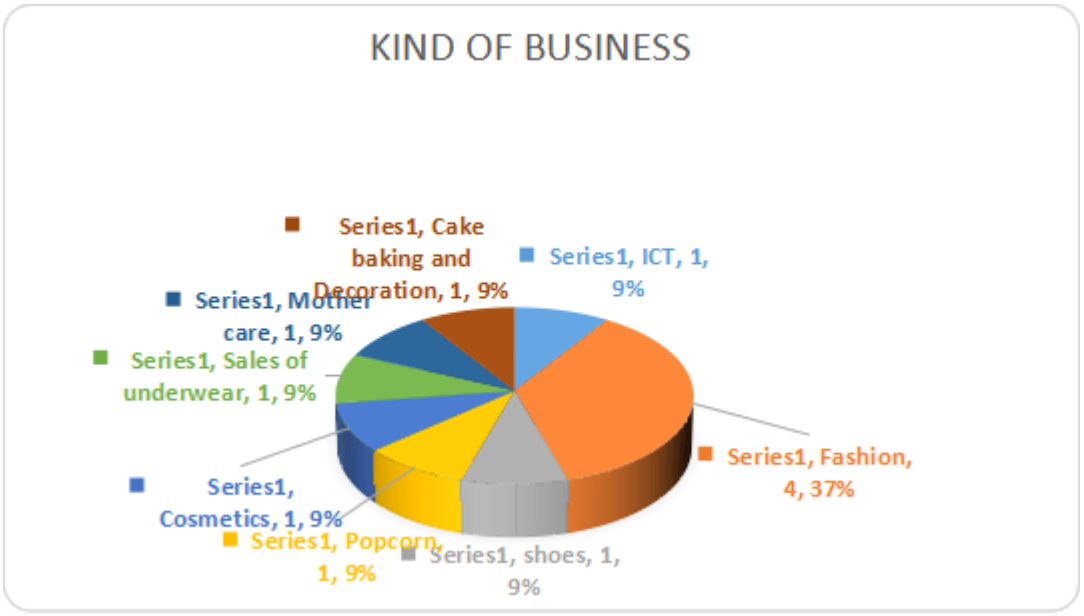


Figure 1: Kind of business

Most (37%) respondents as shown in figure I above were in the Fashion business followed by the rest; Shoes, Popcorn, Cosmetics, Sales of underwear, Mother care, Cake Baking and Decoration constituting just 9% each. Buea has been the hub of higher education institutions in the South-West region. The fact that the town is dominantly inhabited by university

students prone to fashion accounts for the sprout of fashion shops to carter for the youth clothing demands. The town is, therefore, host to many small to very big fashion shops to accommodate the growing population.

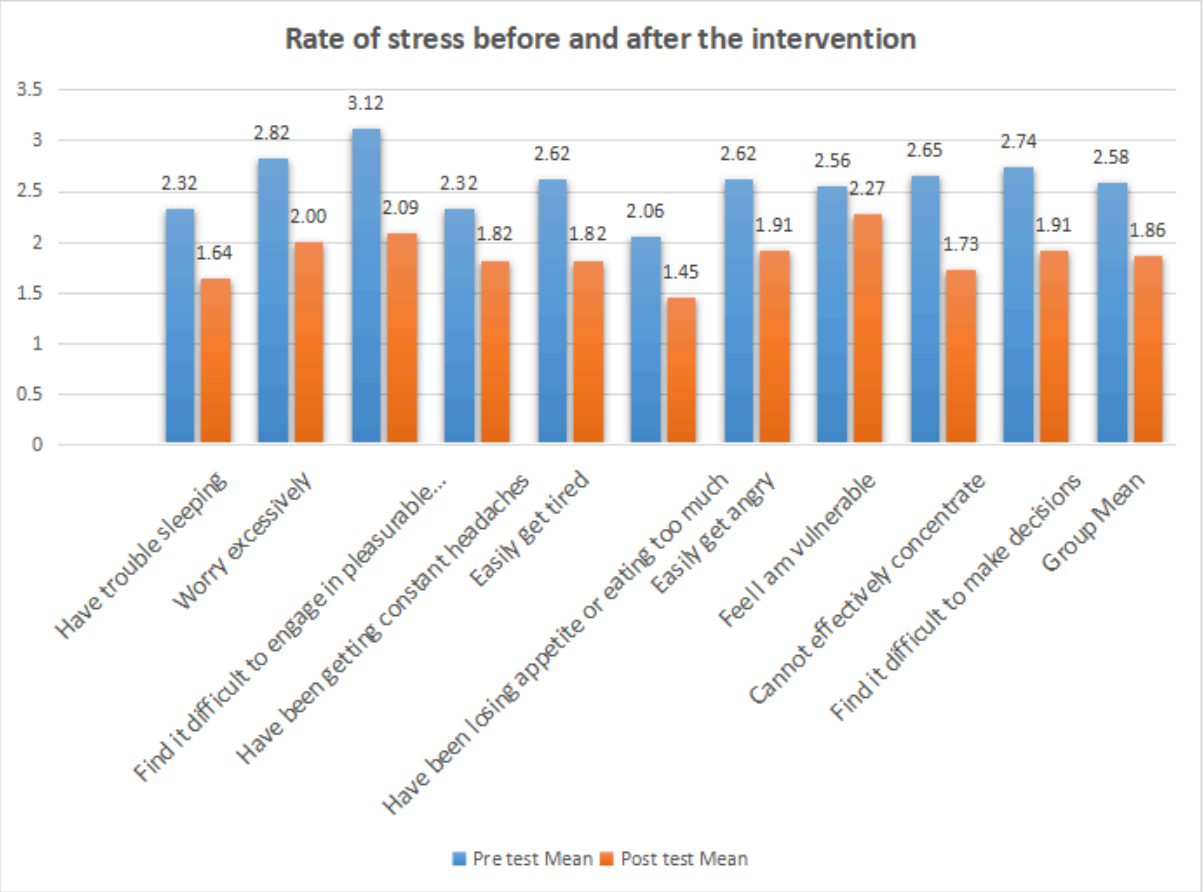


Figure 2: Rate of stress before and after the intervention

There is a significant difference of 0.72 in the overall mean scores from the pre test (2.58) to the post-test (1.86) for stress indicators. The degree of stress among business persons in the Buea municipality dropped after the psycho-educational intervention on stress management. The stress relief improvements were very high in terms of the degree to which the business persons found it difficult to engage in pleasurable activities (1.03), inability to concentrate in their businesses (0.92) and make decisions (0.83) and worry excessively (0.82). The intervention thus helped them engage more in pleasurable activities, concentrate more in their businesses, be more effective at decision making and worry less. These findings are consistent with those of Anclair, et. al., (2018) who posited that treating a group using CBT and mindfulness can be an efficient intervention to reduce stress levels and burnout in parents of children with chronic conditions. Similarly, ACBT (2020) argued that controlled breathing techniques and a series of exercises that trains the body and mind to become gradually more

relaxed, effectively reduce physical tension, anxiety, and overall stress level.

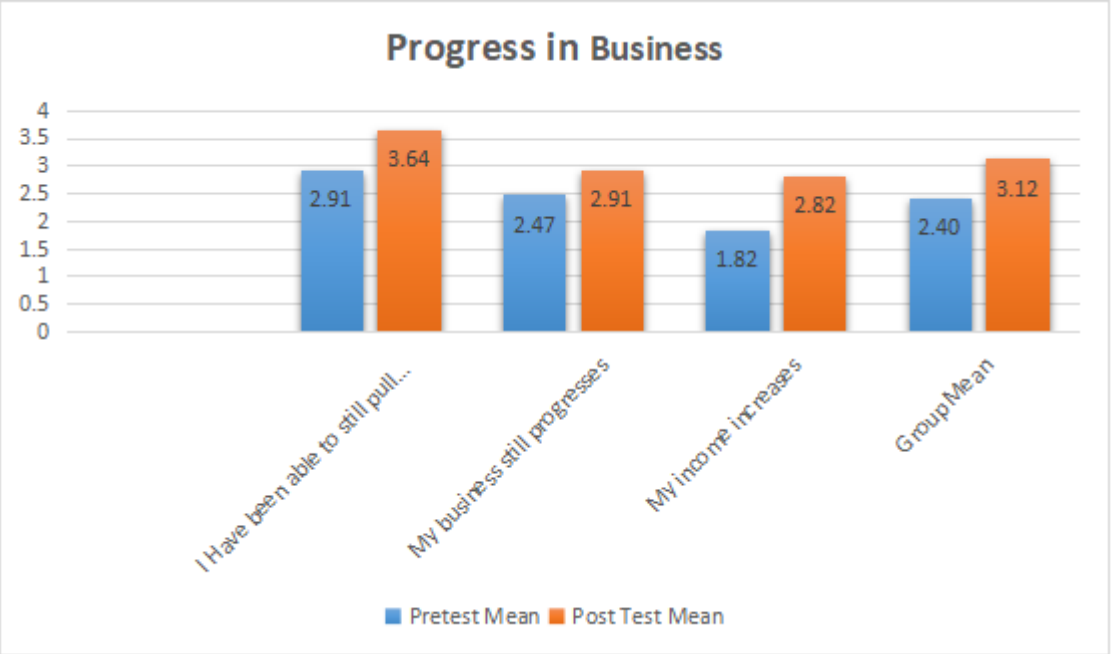


Figure 3: Progress in business

Overall, there is a 0.72 increase from the pre (2.40) to post test (3.12) mean scores in terms of business progress. This improvement in mean scores was highest in terms of increase in the business income (01), secondly, by the ability to still pull on with the business in the midst of the crises (0.73) and lastly, the rate of progress in business (0.44). This is an indication that the intervention also has an effect on business progress. Perhaps reduction in stress leaves the business person less worried, more focused on their businesses and also enables them make effective decisions that keep the business going. These findings are in line with Fredrickson, et. al., (2003) perspective that engaging in coping activities such as hubbies and rephrasing from negative to positive thoughts in disastrous situations like the 9/11 attack sparks positive emotions, resilient outcomes and recovery. Such strategy facilitates the ability to bounce back from negative experiences (Fredrickson, et. al, 2003).

Stress management techniques employed by business persons

After the intervention, participants were asked to enumerate the strategies they employed to manage or cope within the Covid-19 pandemic. The respondents highlighted the following as shown on the pie chart below:

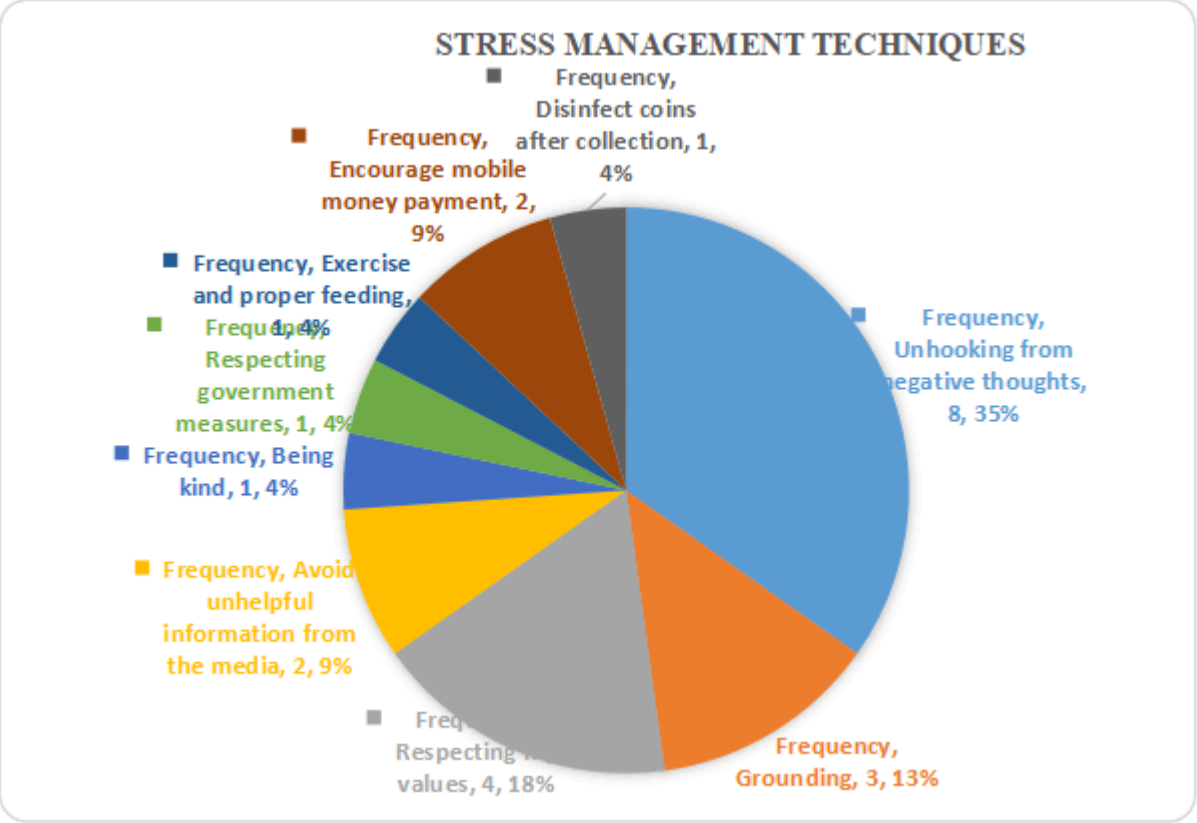


Figure 4: Stress management techniques employed by business persons to cope during the Covid-19 crises

Majority of the respondents that took part in the intervention identified "unhooking from negative thoughts" as the main strategy they used to alleviate themselves of stress amidst the Covid 19 crises. The next most used strategy was respect for their values, followed by the grounding technique and avoiding unhelpful information from the media. This is an indication that the participants effectively engaged and applied the different strategies they learned from the intervention. Having negative thoughts about the Covid-19 pandemic seems to be one of the greatest causes of stress among the respondents. It was observed that participants were particular about the "unhooking from negative thoughts" strategy. The interest and curiosity expressed through questioning and active engagement during the sessions on unhooking negative thoughts by participants attest to the preference. On this basis, an allude to the fact that identifying and unhooking from negative thoughts is one of the most effective stress relief strategies vital in enhancing well-being during the Covid-19 crises.

Recommendations

The findings revealed that, psycho-educational intervention significantly relieves business persons of stress resulting from the Covid-19 crises, enhances their well-being and progress in business. Psycho-educational intervention is thus valuable in fostering well-being of people in stressful situations like the Covid-19 and other crises. Scaling an intervention of this nature to people in varied domains (family, hospital, work places/institutions, farmers, traders, engineers…) in crises situations like pandemics, epidemics, economic recession, socio-political conflicts, wars can be helpful in fostering resilience and well-being. In scaling such an intervention, situation and context specific adaptation of the treatment is necessary for effective outcomes. For example, in terms of unhooking negative thoughts, the kinds of negative thoughts people have will be context and situation specific. This will inform and direct the techniques to help participants unhook from such and adopt more positive thoughts about the situation. Grounding techniques can be universal, as it can be applied in the same way across situations and contexts. Stress relief has a multiplier effect on people and society. It drives resilience, emotional stability, enhanced well-being and productivity at work. Alleviating stress leveraged human flourishing and advancement in society.

Conclusion

`The main preoccupation of this paper has been to find out the effect of psycho-educational intervention on stress management and business progress among business persons within the Covid-19 pandemic. Psycho-educational intervention strategies such as the CBT, unhooking from negative thoughts, grounding, acting on values and other general stress alleviation tips have been examined in relation to how they have been used in other situations as a stress relief therapy. A sequential explanatory design was used to collect primary data on stress from business persons of the Buea municipality in the South-West region of Cameroon within the Covid-19 pandemic. Some very stressed participants were employed in a psycho-educational intervention to improve on their situation. It was found at the end that Psycho-educational intervention had a significant influence in relieving business persons of stress within the Covid-19 crises and also led to progress in business. Business persons, thus, need psycho-educational intervention in crises situations that cause stress, so they can be emotionally stable and more effective in business. This work is, however, limited only to business persons in the Buea municipality. The intervention can be scaled to persons in other works of life experiencing stress in other contexts.

References

Alloway, T., Runac, R., Qureshi, M. and Kemp, G. (2014). Is Facebook Linked to Selfishness? Investigating the Relationships among Social Media Use, Empathy, and Narcissism. *Social Networking*, 3(3), 150-158.

Anclair, M., Lappalainen, R., Muotka, J. and Hiltunen, A. J. (2018). Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and mindfulness for stress and burnout: a waiting list-controlled pilot study comparing treatments for parents of children with chronic conditions. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences,* 32 (1),389-396.

Association of Cognitive and Behavioural Therapy (ACBT), (2020). The impact of behvioural and cognitive therapies. http://www.abct.org/Information/?m=mInformation&fa=fs_STRESS

Bonanno, G. A., Brewin, C. R., Kaniasty, K. & Greca, A. M. L. (2010). Weighing the costs of disaster: Consequences, risks, and resilience in individuals, families, and communities. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 11(1), 1-49.

Bonanno, G. A., Galea, S., Bucciarelli, A., & Vlahov, D. (2007). What predicts psychological resilience after disaster? The role of demographics, resources, and life stress. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 75(5), 671-682.

Bonanno, G.A., Maccallum, F., Malgaroli, M. & Hou, W. K. (2020). The Context Sensitivity Index (CSI): measuring the ability to identify the presence and absence of stressor context cues. *Assessment*, 27(22)61–73

Business in Cameroon, (2020). Major Projects - Agriculture - Energy - Mining - Industry – Services – Finance. https://www.businessincameroon.com/pdf/BC91.pdf

Castillo, R. (2020). Negative thoughts make you more prone to Covid- 19. https://lifestyle.inquirer.net/362813/negative-thoughts-make-you-more-prone-to-covid-19/#ixzz6V4AleSqb

Cuncic, A. (2020). Six tips to change negative thinking . https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-change-negative-thinking-3024843

Dambrun, M., Hanley, A. W., Garland, E. L., De Oliveira, P., Stinus, C., Pellerin, N., Corman, M., & Juneau, C. (2024). The effect of a short mindfulness meditation practice on positive mental health: Self-transcendence as a mediating process. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 14(3), 3635, 1-22. https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v14i3.3635

Fredrickson, B. L., Tugade, M. M., Waugh, C. E. & Larkin, G. R. (2003). What good are positive emotions in crisis? A prospective study of resilience and emotions following the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11th, 2001. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(2), 365.

Ghazavi, Z., Rahimi, E., Yazdani, M. and Afshar, M. (2016). Effect of cognitive behavioural stress management program on psychosomatic patients' quality of life. *Iranian Journal of Nursing and Midwifery Research*, 21(5): 510–515. doi: 10.4103/1735-9066.193415.

Hart, S. L. & Hart, T. A. (2010). The future of cognitive behavioural interventions within behavioural medicine. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy: An International Quarterly*, 24(4), 344–353.

Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K. D., & Wilson, K. G. (2012). *Acceptance and commitment therapy: The process and practice of mindful change,* (2nd Ed). The Guilford Press.

LeFevre, A. & Barataud, M. (2020). Comportement acoustique de Nyctalus azoreum sur l'île de São Miguel (archipel des Açores). *Plume de Naturalistes*, 4, 27-42

Lukens, E. P., & McFarlane, W. R. (2004). Psychoeducation as evidence-based practice: Considerations for practice, research, and policy. *Brief Treatment and Crisis*

Intervention, 4, 205-225.

Mansfield, J. and Hershkop, S. (2020) COVID-19: Practical cognitive behavioural strategies to manage your mental health **https://health.sunnybrook.ca/covid-19-coronavirus/manage-your-mental-health/**

Ministry of Economic Planning and Regional Development (PNDP) (2012). *Buea Communal Development Plan*. https://www.pndp.org/documents/04_CDP_Buea.pdf

Norris, F.H. (2005). Range, magnitude and duration of the effects of disasters on mental health: Review update. *Research Education Disaster Mental Health. Disaster Effects*, 1-23.

Pennebaker, J. W., & Seagal, J. D. (1999). Forming a story: The health benefits of narrative. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 55(10), 1243-1254.

Polizzi, C., Lynn, S. J. and Perry, A. (2020). Stress and Coping in the time of Covid-19: pathways to resilience and recovery. *Clinical Neuropsychiatry*, 17(2) 59-62.

Stress, Trauma and Resilience (STAR), (2020). Coping with COVID-19: Grounding yourself. **https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/blog/grounding-yourself**

Sweeney, D. and LeFevre, M. (2020). Coping with covid-19: Two simple grounding exercises to reduce stress.https://www.dianesweeney.com/coping-with-covid-19-two-simple-grounding-exercises-to-reduce-stress/

The American Institute of Cognitive Therapy (2020) https://www.cognitivetherapynyc.com/stress.aspx

The CBT Resource (2020) Managing stress and worry during the COVID-19 outbreak. https://www.insighthealthcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Managing-stress-during-the-COVID-19-outbreak-.pdf

United Nations Conference on Trade And Development (UNCTAD) (2020). *Global trade impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic.* https://www.preventionweb.net/publications/view/70732

Williams, C. A. (1997). Psychoeducation. In N. K. Worley (Ed.), *Mental health nursing in the community*. St. Louis, MO: Mosby.

World Confederation of Cognitive and Behavioural Therapies (WCCBT), (2020). http://www.alamoc-web.org/cbt.pdf

World Health Organization, (2020). *Doing what matters in times of stress: An illustrated guide.* CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo

Yerkes, R. M., & Dodson, J. D. (1908). The relation of strength of stimulus to rapidity of habit formation. *Journal of Comparative Neurology and Psychology*, 18, 459-482

APPENDIXES

A) **Pre and post test Questionnaire**

STRESS AMIDST COVID 19 AMONG BUSINESS PEOPLE IN THE BUEA MUNICIPALITY

This questionnaire seeks to obtain some basic information about your thoughts, feeling, and behaviour towards the COVID 19 pandemic. The main aim of this study is to develop strategies that can be used to manage stress among business people during this period. I assure you that every information you provide will be treated confidentially and used basically for the purpose of this research.

A) **Demographic data**

Age: 18- 29 [ ] 30-39 [ ] 40-49 [ ] 50-59 [ ] 60 and above [ ]

Sex: Male [ ] Female [ ]

Kind of business_____

Location of business_____

For how long has the business existed? _____

B)Stress

Please indicate with a tick (√) in the boxes provided information on your business experience during this COVID 19 pandemic in terms of whether you; Very Often (VO), Often (O), Rarely (R) or Never (N) experience the following:

S/N	As a business person during this Covid 19 pandemic, I;	Very Often	Often	Rarely	Never
1	have trouble sleeping.				
2	worry excessively.				
3	find it difficult to engage in pleasurable activities.				
4	have been getting constant headaches.				
5	easily get tired				
6	have been losing appetite or eating too much.				
7	easily get angry.				
8	feel I am vulnerable.				
9	cannot effectively concentrate.				
10	find it difficult to make decisions.				

B) Stress management techniques

S/N	Despite the situation of the COVID 19 pandemic;	**Very Often**	**Often**	**Rarely**	**Never**
1	I Have been able to still pull on with my business.				
2	My business still progresses.				
3	My income increases.				
4	I respect the government measures put in place to stop the spread of the virus.				

5) What strategies have you used to cope with the COVID 19 situation? List as many as possible.

Optional

1) Would you like to receive training on stress management during this COVID 19 Pandemic? Yes [ ] No [ ]

If yes, respond to question 2 and 3 below

2) Name

Telephone number