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Managing Stressed Employees at Milk and Dairy Suppliers in East Africa: Evidence from Southwestern Uganda

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Milk production systems are intensifying due to market dynamics and increasing rivalry for production components, necessitating a correct comprehension of the new production tendencies and little effort have been done. More than 1.3 billion people are employed by it, and it generates around 40% of the world's agricultural gross domestic product. In Uganda, the dairy milk industry contributes 80% of the gross domestic product and this plays a crucial role in the lives of many Ugandans as a source of food, income, and work. The aim of this study is rethinking how to manage stressed employees at milk and dairy suppliers. It was guided by specific objectives which include; assessing the challenges facing workers and suggesting possible solutions to ease the proper working environment. It was found that currently, roughly 14.2 million cattle, 16 million goats, 4.5 million sheep, 47.6 million chickens, and 4.1 million pigs account for the livestock production in Uganda. Work-family conflicts, poor supervisors at work, poor counselling at departmental levels by the managers were the major challenges affecting employees at milk and dairy suppliers. In addition, employees have a feeling of belonging after being given a voice, which promotes solid working relationships and this reduces stress at work.

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INTRODUCTION

Employee performance can be defined as the act of a person successfully completing the task that has been assigned to them while staying within the norms of appropriate resource use (Brayfield & Crockett, 1955; Hameed & Waheed, 2011; Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020; Asbari et al., 2021). Globally, milk has evolved over the past 15 years from being “simply” an embodied food product to a tradable good (Newman & Nahman, 2020). Newman and Nahman (2020) add that an extension of this history with its own distinct set of economic and political ramifications is the production, politics, and economies of the human milk markets.

Milk and dairy products have historically played a large role in African diets, and they continue to play a substantial and growing role in the diets of the expanding population in both rural and urban regions (Dirar, 1993; Fratkin, 2013). Milk products often contain a lot of nutrients (Wurzinger et al., 2009), including high-quality proteins, minerals, vitamins, and energy-rich fats. As a result, milk offers the perfect habitat for a wide range of food-borne bacteria and zoonotic pathogens to develop (Schönfeldt & Hall, 2012).

Small-scale farmers control more than 90% of the cattle in the country, and the Ugandan dairy industry has recently experienced significant growth (Didanna et al., 2019). Milk production systems are intensifying due to market dynamics and increasing rivalry for production components, necessitating a correct comprehension of the new production tendencies (Hughes et al., 2022). According to Staal and Kaguongo (2003) report, the limitations and traits of the Ugandan dairy sub-sector are very

similar to those in many other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia: feed constraints combined with soil nutrient deficits (Muringai et al., 2021), poor farm management and poor farmer access to information (Balehegn et al., 2022), inadequate and variable market access (Ragasa et al., 2018), and largely unregulated markets motivated by consumers demand low-cost and traditional product (Phiri et al., 2022).

In the districts of Kabale, Rubanda, Kisoro, Rukungiri, and Kanungu in South Western Uganda, dairy farming is one of the agricultural activities that is frequently carried out (Waiswa et al., 2021). Ugandans engage in both large- and small-scale agriculture (Turyasingura & Chavula, 2022). However, the tradition is declining as a result of land fragmentation brought on, in part, by the rapid population growth, which has disturbed and alarmed farmers (Turyasingura et al., 2022).

However, this issue also forced farmers to abandon their farming methods, endangering their ability to support themselves (Turyasingura et al., 2022). The few remaining dairy farms are struggling due to a worried, unhappy, and poorly equipped crew, demanding inquiries on how to break this deadlock and recommendations to save them (Lee, 2020).

Although dairy producers confront a range of challenges (Dex et al., 2000), this article will mostly focus on the troublesome employees that make up the workforce and the public face of the sector (Unay-Gailhard & Bojnec, 2019). Thus, there aren't troubled workers are a performance time bomb for an organization; if not helped amicably, their resentments may spread across the entire business, with terrible results that will affect the reputation

and productivity of the firm (Rose & Thomsen, 2004). There isn't a single definition that describes a disturbed employee in detail, but several academics have offered related mutual defences (Des Pres, 1980).

Due to problems like alcoholism, racism, uncomfortable working conditions, drug addiction, marital problems (Bickford, 2005), and mental agony, a stressed employee's judgment becomes muddled (Ajayi, 2018). As a result, their morals and instincts are ignored, which causes them to lose focus on their forthcoming duties (Armstrong, 2003). Performance is just one of the many organizational outcomes that are impacted by psychological stress (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Avey et al., 2011). Because businesses want their employees to perform better, anything that interferes with their ability to focus on the demands of their jobs must be resolved amicably (Stasz, 1997).

Not just the person who is affected but also co-workers, managers, and, in many situations, family members can suffer greatly from job stress. Stress on the job has a negative impact on a worker's health and well-being. According to Dahlin et al. (2022), there are numerous detrimental repercussions of job stress on both people and businesses.

Workplace performance can be impacted by personal issues (Rodriguez & Walters, 2017). There can be problems with the finances, the children, or the marriage. Both workplace conflicts and stress from the job can alter an employee's behaviour (Ilies et al., 2007). Abuse of drugs or alcohol by employees will surely lead to subpar performance (Grant, 2022). People who are under stress may suffer unfavourable effects from a variety of family and work-related concerns (Boles et al., 1997).

The dairy industry has changed significantly since the 1990s, with yearly milk production more than doubling, supply now outpacing demand, prices

rising steadily, and cattle populations rising over time (Gerosa & Skoet, 2012). The burden of having been in an abusive marriage will follow the employee to work, which may result in animosity and poor work (Narrod et al., 2011). It can be difficult for a worker whose emotions are so disconnected from the demands of the job; numerous unfavourable feelings will keep causing such a disturbed worker to lose concentration on the task at hand (Vasant & Zhang-Yue, 2010). Performance gradually suffers as a result of frustration and demonization.

In addition, it can be difficult when a person's emotions are so out of alignment with the requirements of the job (Smith et al., 2018); a worker who is feeling a lot of negative emotions frequently loses concentration on the task at hand (Hennekam et al., 2020). Performance gradually declines in the presence of frustration and demonization. How effectively people perform at work is directly impacted by financial issues (Hennekam et al., 2020).

The relationship between a worker's financial volatility and stress has to be further investigated pertaining to those who frequently feel anxious and confused at work as a result of other obligations or situations (Dima et al., 2021). Thus, the difficulties they run into can range from not being able to accomplish their jobs to being ill and unable to perform their duties leading to some workers, especially those employed by the government, regularly get given extra responsibilities.

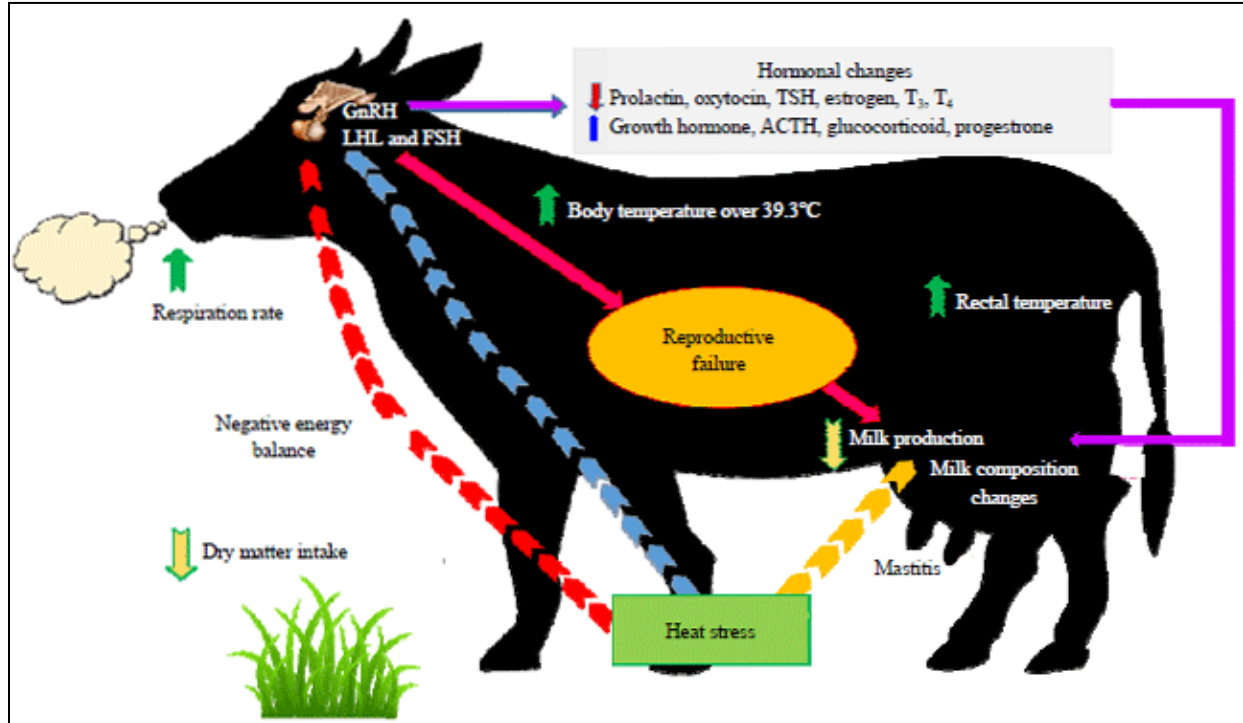
DAIRY MILK PRODUCTION IN UGANDA

According to Pragna et al. (2017), for the impoverished, raising livestock contributes/increases milk and is the major source of revenue that helps them meet their daily social and economic demands. More than 1.3 billion people are employed by it, and it generates around 40% of the world's agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The livestock industry, which

contributes 80% of the GDP and 18% of Uganda's agriculture, plays a crucial role in the lives of many Ugandans as a source of food, income, and work (Nduhura et al., 2022). However, heat stress reduces

milk production which affects employees supplying the milk and some end up losing their jobs causing stress at work (Ross & Altmaier, 1994).

Figure 1: Heat stress in cows that leads to employee stress at work

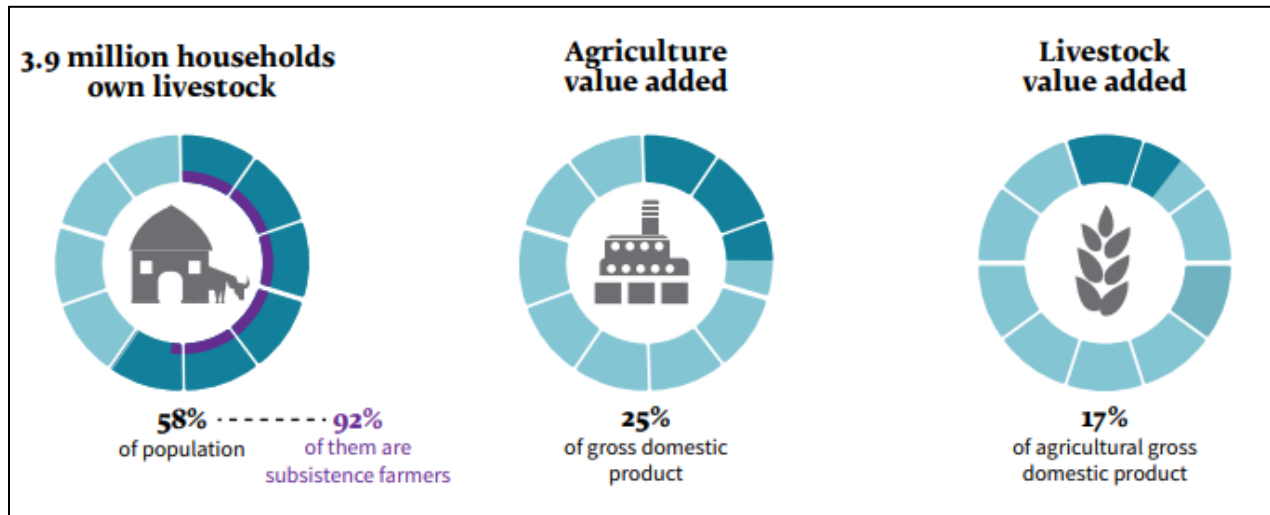


Over the past 20 years, Uganda's milk output has significantly expanded, rising from 160,000 litres per day in 1993 (the year that liberalization started) to over 2.5 billion litres in 2018 (Atuheire & Guya, 2021). Since 2000, production has increased at a 7% yearly pace, largely due to post-conflict restocking operations that have increased the nation's supply of cattle (Kinsey, 2004). Today, over 90% of the nation's cattle stock is managed by smallholder dairy farms with an average of 7 cattle (Campbell et

al., 2019). Kozicka et al. (2020) report that there are currently roughly 14.2 million cattle, 16 million goats, 4.5 million sheep, 47.6 million chickens, and 4.1 million pigs in Uganda (Tumusiime et al., 2022).

Dairy and egg exports account for USD 80 million of all livestock exports, with meat and meat products (USD 6.2 million) coming in second. Exports of live animals are rare (Gekić et al., 2022).

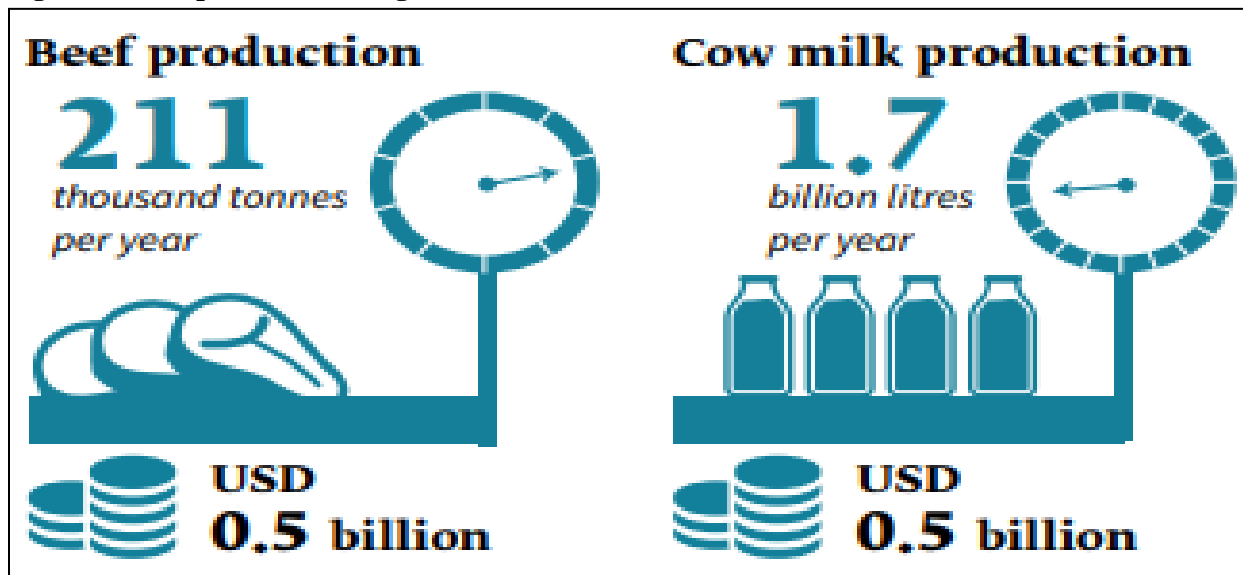
Figure 2: Income from milk supplying in different sectors



Cattle production in Uganda is the largest segment of the livestock industry (Magunda, 2020). Of the 14.2 million cattle in the country, 13.3 million are native or indigenous breeds. The nation’s herd of 11.9 million cattle is raised for meat. The cattle sector contributes over 40% of the value of livestock

output and around 7% of the value of agricultural production (Zane & Pica-Ciamarra, 2021). The revenue, food, draft power, insurance, savings, social capital, and other goods and services that the cattle sector provides benefit the populace.

Figure 3: Milk production in Uganda



The “Cattle Corridor,” which runs diagonally through Uganda from the pastoralist Ankole region in the southwest to the Karamoja region in the northeast, is where the majority of cattle are located (Magunda, 2020). Cattle are the primary source of

subsistence and the foundation of the local economy in Karamoja pastoral areas. The predominant livestock production system is agro-pastoral, sometimes known as mixed crop-cattle farming. However, climate change has also led to milk

reduction among cattle keepers, and little effort has been made in line with the study conducted by Turyasingura et al. (2022) on the effect of climate change and water resources. To support this, animals also need water for drinking, but due to climate change, water has been reduced, affecting daily milk supplies in Uganda.

Locating Problematic Workers

- Every organization has a supervisor whose job is to make sure that the working conditions for the employees are good and to identify any potential problems that might affect their performance.
- Employee stress may be given greater consideration depending on the nature of the cause. To avoid any negative employee reactions, management must ensure that their counselling departments have stronger human resource departments.
- This scale assesses psychological stress indicators such as feeling overworked, lacking the resources and tools needed to complete jobs or projects, and typically being unable to handle the quantity of work.
- Work-family conflicts are allegedly another forerunner to employee stress in a firm. Family problems are a major factor and cause undesirable emotions, which ultimately interfere with employee attention. Job stress has also been proven to be detrimental to businesses and people.
- Several academics have advanced a variety of repercussions of excessive work or hefty workloads. Reluctance to report for duty and a sensation of continual pressure are signs of stress brought on by a heavy workload. Numerous studies have been done to establish how much workplace stress affects employee performance, and they show that it has a significant impact. The worker becomes unproductive at work

as a result of feeling exhausted.

Solutions For Uneasy Employees

- ✓ Employees will have a feeling of belonging after being given a voice, which will promote solid working relationships. Employees encounter emotional difficulties as well and feel compelled to express their problems, making the conversation less personal. Every married employee knows how important it is to feel empathetic and empathic. The highest level of care is needed for employees who are under stress from drug usage or marital problems, for example, since they feel rejected, management must make sure they get along well with them.
- ✓ Avoid making assumptions. Employees who are unhappy must be heard since even the slightest issue handled incorrectly could have disastrous consequences for both the employee and management. Even though these divisions are crucial for lowering or eliminating employee stress, businesses rarely set up departments to manage employee complaints. Giving the overworked employees a practical solution would provide much-needed relief. Refresher training for employees. Dairy farm products demand specialized handling and expertise; higher performance will result from providing staff with the right tools.
- ✓ Favourable Government policies. The establishment of environmental protection-focused government policies is both essential and crucial. However, there should be a balance between conservation and the ability to maintain a living. To save this vulnerable and crippled dairy farm economy, the government should gazette some marshes for dairy production and conservation. Turyasingura et al. (2022) in his study also recommended that ecosystems and economic systems face serious risks due to the world's rapid environmental and economic transformation. This has also affected daily milk supplies resulting in employee stress

at work.

CONCLUSION

Employees are critical human resources for dairy management. The employer should undertake some initiatives to make the labour force more productive and remunerative to ease the stress of the working environment. In Uganda, particularly in the southwestern parts, there is a paucity of research findings on how to manage stressed employees at milk and dairy suppliers. This would help researchers and policymakers understand the gaps, stress at work, and issues, as well as develop strategies to address the challenges that workers face. Proper management can lead to happy cows, happy employees, and reduced stress on a dairy farm.

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