

## **Influence of Occupational Stress on Teachers' Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Nyeri County, Nyeri South Sub County Kenya**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The cost of occupational stress has been very high in many organizations. Stress can undermine the achievement of goals, both for individuals and for organizations. Managers are in dilemma over what interventions need to be employed to minimize the cost associated with occupational stress on organizational performance. This study investigated the influence of occupational stress on performance of teachers in Nyeri South Sub-County, Nyeri County. This study employed descriptive survey research design. Data collection was undertaken using questionnaires which were issued to teachers and principals from 12 out of 34 schools. There was a total of 72 respondents, 12 were principals while the rest were other teachers. Stratified random sampling and simple random sampling was used to pick schools and teachers respectively. The data was analyzed using statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics involving frequencies and percentages was used to explain the findings of the study. The study established that the teachers have many activities to carry out in the process of executing their main duty of teaching. These include preparing professional documents including: lesson plan, schemes of work, records of work and student progress record as well as administering, marking and analyzing examinations. In carrying out other duties other than teaching, some respondents indicated that they are not very comfortable, while others indicated that they are comfortable. Regarding interpersonal relationship majority felt that it was good but some indicated that it was bad and very bad in some cases. The study established that most of the resources were adequate or satisfactory but other resources were inadequate in some schools. Most respondents indicated that there were administrative factors that affect teachers negatively. Communication was either good or bad. The study also established that the academic performance of most of the schools in Nyeri south sub –county was average, with a few being above average while the rest were below average. The study specifically recommends that the government should ensure that there are enough teachers in schools to avoid work overload and that the various stakeholders should ensure that there are adequate resources to create a conducive environment. Team building and conflict resolution seminars and workshops should also be held to enhance good interpersonal relationships and those in administration should attend more seminars and workshops concerning administration including the principals, deputy principals and the heads of departments in the schools.*

**Key Words:** *occupational stress, organizational performance*

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### **I. Introduction**

Teachers working in primary and secondary school system contend with multiple stressors on daily resulting in varying levels of occupational stress. The nature of work is changing and job stress poses a threat to the health of the workers and in turn, the health of organizations, Teachers experiencing stress are unlikely to perform well, since their job satisfaction and motivation levels are affected and they manifest unwanted behavior including absenteeism, mistakes during work and violence at work. Furthermore they are likely to experience more health related physical and psychological complaints. According to Hanushek (2007) teaching is a highly stressful career and teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate.

Teachers are responsible for so many activities other than teaching, including planning, marking of internal examinations, writing reports, ensuring cleanliness, maintaining discipline in class and outside the class, supervising meals as well as attending to co-curricular activities. They deal with time pressure and heavy workload. Poor relationship with their seniors and colleagues can lead to occupational stress. In some cases, teachers contend with poor working conditions that include; lack of teaching resources and physical facilities like school buildings

In Kenya, from the researchers' point of view occupational stress is noted in secondary schools, as reflected by the high incidences of teachers caning students to the extent of harming them and at times causing death. Substance abuse especially of alcohol is becoming very common among teachers most likely resulting from high levels of stress. In Nyeri South sub-county there are instances where teachers raise their voices in

addressing students and make disparaging remarks, concerning individual students or even the whole class; this may be a manifestation of underlying stress (Sub County education office 2015). There is no study that has been carried out to try and explain how stress affects productivity in Nyeri South sub-county. In conclusion there is gap in knowledge pertaining to occupational stress and performance in secondary school in Nyeri county specifically Nyeri south sub-county.

### **Occupational Stress**

Occupational stress is stress caused by an occupation. Teaching related stress commonly termed as “teacher stress “ is defined as a teachers experience of unpleasant negative emotions, such as anger , anxiety ,tension, frustrations , or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher (Kyriacou and Chien, 2004).

A study carried out by Cooper And Marshall (1976) ,found that teachers who ranked their occupation stress as “high” experienced a greater incidence of heart attack, stroke and reported more mental health illness than individuals in other occupations who also identified their stress as “high”. The impact of teacher stress can include implications on their ability to teach, their personal life, and their interaction with the students according to Adam (1999). Teacher stress therefore affects both the teachers and students in the learning process. Academic staffs have a major role to play in achieving the objective of an institution (Rowley, 1996). Stress is widely accepted to have opposite effects on an individual both positive and negative.

### **Work Condition /Environment**

According to Tahabo Fako (2010), there is increase and expansion in education while resources levels have not kept pace. Lack of resources makes teachers’ work more difficult and may increase their workload and stress levels. Somerset (1971) carried out a study based on Uganda elementary schools and observed that variation in performance among schools are due to differences in quality of schools. According to Kenya National Development Plan 2000-2008, the government had plans to improve education by improving the physical quality of schools.

### **Workload**

There are many causes of stress in an organization, but many researchers argue that main cause of occupational stress is workload (Topper, 2007). Increase in workload in an organization without taking into account the availability of staff to carry out the task, may lead to occupational stress. Therefore, the workload increase should correspond with the availability of workforce.

Kyriacou & Chien, (2004) found that according to primary school teachers in Taiwan, the most effective action that schools and government could take to reduce teachers’ stress was to decrease teachers’ workload. (Toppler, 2007) argues that workload due to shortage of staff is a major stress factor among employers in various organizations, additional hours at home marking, preparing, assessing work. In many cases, employees found themselves in a position where work had to be taken home to fulfill and sustain a professional standard; this reduces the opportunity for restorative psychological detachment from job (Timm, et al., 2007). (Susan, 2005) reported that teachers experience intense pressure from parent, students and the education system to ensure students obtain high levels of education. She also reported teachers spend a lot of time helping students cope with personal problems leaving less time for the individual.

### **Administrative factors**

Tehrani (2002) argued that stress is caused by using unsympathetic organizational culture, poor communication between managers and employees. Lack of involvement of employees by management will make employees feel stressed .Kirkcaldy, Trimpoo and Williams (2002) argued that cause of stress include inadequate guidance and support from supervisors, lack of consultation and communication, lack of encouragement from supervisors, isolation, discrimination and favoritism. Role ambiguity refers to uncertainty, on the part of employees about key requirements of job and about how they are expected to behave in these jobs. (Nhundu, 1999).Role ambiguity can result from deficient information available (Conley and Woosley, 2000). Teaching is an occupation that demands many roles (McCormick, 1997). Role demands can be stressful for a teacher for many reasons; for instance when organizational members expectations about a teacher’s behavior are unclear (role ambiguity). (Nwadiani, 2006)Role conflict is also stressful. Role conflict occurs when different groups or persons with whom an individual interact hold conflicting expectations about individuals’ behavior (Nwadiani, 2006). Role conflict can result from inconsistent information (Consley and Woosley, 2000). Lack of effective communication within an organization is also stressful. (Larson, 2004, Brown and Uehara, 2008)

### **Interpersonal Relationship**

Interpersonal relationship at work serves a critical role in development and maintenance of trust and positive feeling in an organization. Although quality of interpersonal relationship alone is not enough to produce worker productivity, it can significantly contribute to it. While poor interpersonal relationship may lead to stress, stress can also cause poor workplace relation and loss of productivity. Bullying in the work place can also contribute to stress. Tehrani (2002) argues that stress is caused by bullying and harassment among other factors. Being invited at workplace or not being invited to social events may be humiliating and may lead to interpersonal relationship problem. According to Baker, Isreal and Schurman (1996), social support from supervisor has more influence on employee satisfaction and mental health than support from co-workers. Social support is an important resource that enables an individual to cope with stress and prevent burnout (Bonfiglio, 2005). (Merbler, Schlichte & Yssel, 2005) found out that, when relationship is poor, attrition is increased'. Bland (1999) noted that stressors that seemed to be common among employees in workplace include relationship problems with partners, boss and colleagues.

### **General Objective of the Study**

The study aimed at determining the cause of occupational stress among teachers and investigate and its influence on their performance in public secondary schools' in Nyeri South Sub-County.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To determine the work overload of teachers.
- To determine the type of interpersonal relationships teachers have.
- To determine the work conditions teachers are subjected to.
- To identify administrative factors which affect teachers work.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Descriptive survey was used in this study. Descriptive survey is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering questionnaire to a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2003). Descriptive survey design aims at enhancing observation of relationships between variables, and also enhances one to observe phenomena as they occur in their settings. It can be used when collecting information about people's attitudes opinions, habits or any of the variety of education or social issues. (Orodho & Kombo, 2002). Singleton et al 1993 noted that descriptive survey design facilitates faster collection of information. The study was conducted in public schools in Nyeri South Sub-County. The study aimed at determining how interpersonal relationship, administrative factors, workload and work conditions influence performance of teachers. The study was carried out in public secondary schools in Nyeri South Sub-County in Nyeri County. Nyeri South Sub-County has more schools as compared to other sub-county in the County. The target population of this study was the teachers and principals in all the 34 public secondary schools in Nyeri South sub-county.

Stratified random sampling was used and the three administrative divisions in Nyeri South Sub County were used as strata from which 12 schools were selected using simple random this represented 35.3% of the total population. From each school teachers were randomly picked to participate in the study. There was a total of seventy two sampled respondents. Twelve were principals for the twelve secondary schools representing 35.3% of all principals and sixty were subject teachers representing 16.3% of all the teachers out of 368 teachers. The random sampling involved assigning each school a number, writing each number on a piece of paper and placing them in a container from where the required number was picked at random. Data for this research was collected using questionnaires. In regard to validity Piloting helped establish if the instruments measured what they intended to measure. To test reliability of the instruments the researchers used test-retest technique. This involved administering the same instrument twice to the same group of subjects in pilot study after two weeks. The scores obtained in the first and second trials were correlated mathematically to establish the reliability of instruments. The correlation was high, indicating that the instrument was reliable.

## **II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Effect of Occupational Stress on Organizational performance**

The study investigated the opinion of principals and teachers on the extent that occupational stress was manifested in their schools. The study established that occupational stress affected 65% of the principals to a large extent possibly because of the nature of their job while only 40% of the teachers experienced stress to a large extent, this might be an indicator that teachers experience less stress compared to principals. On average principals experienced more stress compared to teachers, this could be due to the nature of their work.

### **Effect of Work Load of Teachers on Organization Performance**

The first research objective sought to find out the work load of teachers in public secondary schools in Nyeri South Sub- County. The teachers work load was measured by 8 items that looked at the teacher/pupil ratio, number of lessons per teacher per week, number of remedial lessons per week and number of examinations per subject. Also included in the teachers work load was preparation of professional documents, namely; lesson plans, schemes of work, records of work and student progress record. Questionnaires were administered to the sampled teachers and principals. Their responses are provided as follows.

### **Effect of Average Teacher-Student Ratio on Organization Performance**

The principals and teachers responses on the average teacher/student ratios were analyzed on a scale of 1:30, 1:40 and 1:60. The findings were that 49% of the principal and 50% of the teachers indicated that teacher /students ratio is 1:30, while 9% of the principals and 32% of the teachers indicated that the teacher/students ratio is 1:40, 37% of the principals and 9% of the teachers indicated that the teachers /student ratio is 1:60. Any other ratio was indicated by less than 10% of the teachers and principals. This indicated that some classes were too large for teachers to comfortably manage. Individual attention of the students can be very difficult. Marking of assignments and examinations can be very involving and tiring for teachers. Teachers were likely to have worked beyond official working hours and sometime do some official work at home. This could be very tiring leading to stress and also burnout.

### **Effect of Average Number of Lessons per Teacher per Week**

The study investigated the average number of lessons per teacher per week on a scale of below 20, 20-25, 26-30 and over 30. The principals and teachers responses showed that 60% of the principals and 50% of the teachers indicated that teachers had 20-25 lessons per week while 35% of principals and 40% of the teachers indicated that some teachers had 26- 30 lessons per week, whereas 5% of both had over 30 lessons. 5% according to teachers had below 20 lessons per week. These are teachers who may have been relieved some lessons by student- teachers on teaching practice but the lessons belongs to them officially hence according to the principals there are no teachers with less than 20 lessons. Teachers having a high number of lessons are likely to experience stress and this may impact on their performance.

The study looked at the teachers and principals opinions as to whether teachers prepared lessons plans. The responses indicated that 70% of teachers and 35% of principals indicated that teachers prepare lesson plan, 30% of the teachers and 65% of principals indicated that teachers do not prepare lesson plan. Failure by teachers to prepare lessons plans may influence delivery of curriculum and subsequently curriculum.

### **Effect of Preparation of Schemes of Work and records of work on Organization Performance**

The response of principals on preparation of schemes of work and records of work was that 90% of principals and 100% of teachers indicated that teachers prepare schemes of work and records of work. It is only a few principals (10%) who indicated that teachers do not prepare schemes of work and records of work and this failure could be as a result of work overload. This failure might negatively impact on performance.

### **Effect of Students' Progress Records effect on Organization Performance**

Principals and teachers responses pertaining to maintenance of students' progress records indicated that 95% of teachers keep the record while 90% of principals are of the same opinion, it is only 5% of teachers and 10% of principals who indicated that teachers do not keep student progress records. This failure might be attributed to work overload.

### **Effect of allocated Remedial Lessons on Organization Performance**

The study investigated allocated remedial lessons to teachers in public secondary schools in Nyeri South Sub County. The response from the teachers was that 82% of indicated that they are assigned remedial lessons while 83 % of principals are of the same opinion with only a small percent of both teachers and principal indicating that teachers are not assigned remedial lessons. The responses of the principals and teachers on the number of remedial lessons per week according to 82% of principal and 60% of teachers, teachers are assigned 1 or 2 remedial lessons per week, while 18% of the principal and 30% of the teachers indicated that three lessons per week are assigned. 10% of the teachers indicated that they are assigned four lessons per week. This indicated that teachers spend most of their time in class. This could be very tiring considering that they had very many other activities to carry out in the day. At the end of the day, the teachers could be very exhausted and stressed.

### **Effect of Number of examinations per subject per term on Organization Performance**

Concerning exams, 90% of teachers indicated that three exams are done per term, while 10% indicated that more than three examinations are done per term with 9% of teachers indicating that two examinations are done while 55% of the principals indicated that three exam are done, 36% indicated that they have more than three examinations .From this it is clear that most of the time teachers are either setting or marking exams. This can be very involving considering that there are other activities that teachers are involved in. This could lead to carrying of exam papers home for marking to meet deadlines. The teachers who had a busy day have no enough time to relax when he/she gets home. This situation may remain the same throughout the term which could lead to work stress which is likely to affect their performance.

### **Effect of Allocation of other Duties to Teachers on Organization Performance**

Concerning this issue 100% of the principals and 80% of the teachers were in agreement that teachers are allocated other duties other than teaching. 20% of teachers indicated that they are not allocated other duties.

### **Effect of Teachers Comfort in Carrying out other Duties on Organization Performance**

In regard to teacher's comfort 90% of the principals felt that teachers are to a large extent comfortable carrying out other duties, 45% of teachers had the same opinion but some felt that they were not comfortable. Most of the principals may not have realized that teachers were not comfortable because at the end of the day, they could carry out those duties. But from the above figures, it was clear that they were not comfortable. It is likely that they carried out these duties because they had no option. The nature of work done by teachers seems not to be specific. They had several duties to perform, in the process of carrying out their main duty of teaching. It is not easy to give the job description of teachers. The figures above on teachers workload indicates that teachers experience work overload as they execute their duties. This could be the main cause of occupational stress in secondary schools.

### **Effect of Interpersonal Relationships among Teachers on Organization Performance**

According to principals and some teachers the interpersonal relationship was either very good or good, while 20% of teachers felt it was bad, while a few indicated that it was very bad. This indicates that the principals may not be in touch with what was happening to the teachers. Some teachers indicated that their interpersonal relationships were either bad or very bad. This shows that principals and teachers perceive things differently and the consequences are likely to be dire.

### **Effect of Communication in Schools on Organization Performance**

Concerning communication 18% of the principals indicated that it was very good, while 82% indicated that it was good.10% of the teachers indicated that communication was very good while 65% indicated that it was very good, unlike the principals, 20% of the teachers indicated that communication was bad while 5% felt that it was very bad. Principals and teachers are not in agreement. Principals felt that communication was either very good or good. The way principals perceived communication is quite different from the teachers. Lack of proper communication could have led to other problems in teachers which could lead to stress.

### **Effect of Teachers Work Conditions**

25% of the principals and 8% of the teachers indicated that classrooms are large enough to a very large extent, while 42% of the principals and 50% of the teachers indicated that classrooms are large enough to large extent. 33% of the principals and 35% of the teachers indicated that classrooms are large to a small extent. It only 7% of teachers who indicated that the classroom are large to very small extent .This shows that the size of classroom is not a problem in most schools but for some it is a problem which can lead to congestion.

### **Effect of Adequacy of Resources on Organization Performance**

The study investigated the adequacy of school facilities and teaching learning resources in secondary schools. The findings according to principals were that most of the resources were either adequate or satisfactory. It is only a few who admitted shortages in some areas such as library, playground, textbooks, wall maps and charts and library books. 20.5% of teachers indicated that laboratories were inadequate, while principals did not indicate inadequacy.

Teachers felt the inadequacy more than the principal. This could be due to the fact that they are the ones who use these resources directly. 32.6% of the teachers indicated that laboratory chemicals are inadequate in their school while principals did not indicate inadequacy at all. This showed that there was no proper communication between the teacher and principals. This is because they are not in agreement in a number of areas where there is inadequacy or even adequacy. Inadequacy of laboratory and chemicals can disable the science department. The teachers were still required to perform in the absence of these facilities. This definitely would strain the teachers, hence influence their performance negatively.

Concerning staff houses 77% of the teachers indicated inadequacy, indicating that most teachers resided away from school and this may have been a challenge to the teachers who attend early morning remedial lessons and late evening classes. They also had extra-curricular activities to attend to which required them to remain in school until the evening. The principals did not realize this inadequacy and hence were likely not to do anything to salvage this situation.

#### **Effect of Administrative Factors on Organization Performance**

75% of principals agreed that there are administrative factors that affect teachers negatively, while a lower percentage (55%) of teachers' agreed. 25% of principals felt that there were no administrative factors that affect teachers, while 45% of teachers had the same feeling. While 75% of principals admitted that there were administrative factors that would affect teachers negatively, 50% of them felt that these administrative factors affected teachers to a small extent. Most of them were likely not to take these effects seriously. It was only less than 10% of principals who felt that administrative factors affected teachers to a large extent.

Less than 10% of both principals and teachers indicated that administrative factors affected teachers to very large extent. 35% of teachers felt that they are affected to a large extent, while 20% of principals had the same feeling. 50% of the principals indicated that administrative factors affected teachers only to a small extent, while 35% of teachers were of the same opinion. 20% of the principal indicated that administrative factors affected teachers to a very small extent while 15% of teachers were of the same opinion.

#### **Effect of Extent of Teachers Involvement in Decision Making on Organization Performance**

As per the findings 8% of the principals indicated that they involved teachers in decision making to a very large extent, while 92% indicated that they involved teachers to a large extent. 6.2% of the teacher indicated that they were involved to a very large extent while 45.5% of the teachers indicate that they were involved to a large extent. 36.3% of the teachers indicated that they were involved to a small extent while the remaining 12% were involved to a very small extent. While principals felt that they involved teachers in decision making in the school, teachers had different feelings. Some felt they were not involved.

All principals indicated that the extent to which teachers are involved in decision making has no influence on teacher's performance. 70.5% of the teachers were in agreement with the principals while 29.5% felt that the extent to which they are involved in decision making has no influence on their performance.

#### **Schools Academic Performance**

The academic performance of the schools was average according to 73% of the principals the rest are above average. According to teachers about 20% of schools perform below average but according to principals there no schools below average. The two do not agree in as far as performance is concerned. Teachers are well placed to comment on performance since they are the ones who mainly implement the teaching and learning in schools.

### **III. Conclusion**

The purpose of the study was to determine the cause of occupational stress among teachers and investigate its influence on their performance in public secondary schools in Nyeri sub-county. Most of respondent admitted that stress was a reality in their schools. Increased workload as indicated in the findings may have lead to occupational stress. Interpersonal relationships were not very good among the teachers, while some schools suffered from inadequate resources. There were some administrative factors that affected teachers negatively for example decision making and lack of effective communication. The academic performance of most of the schools involved in the study was average indicating that much needs to be done to improve performance. This study is a justification that occupational stress influences teacher's performance in public secondary schools in Nyeri south, sub-county. All education stakeholders should create an environment that will reduce occupational stress amongst the teachers so as improve on their performance.

#### **Recommendations**

- i. The government should ensure that there are enough teachers in schools to avoid work overload
- ii. The various stakeholders should ensure that there are adequate resources to create a conducive environment for teaching and learning
- iii. Team building and conflict resolution seminars and workshops should be held to enhance good interpersonal relationships.
- iv. Those in administration should attend more seminars and workshops on the area of administration. These include the principals, deputy principals and the heads of various departments in the schools.

- v. Stress management seminars should be organized for teachers by management of schools to promote their mental health.

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