



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO STRESS AMONG PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN VIHIGA DISTRICT, KENYA

Caroline Ayoti and\* Moses Wesang'ula Poipoi

Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, P.O Box 190-50100,  
Kakamega, Kenya.

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#### ABSTRACT

The study was carried out to identify the factors contributing to stress in teachers in public secondary schools in Vihiga district. The objectives of the study were: to identify the causes and effects of stress in teachers in public secondary schools in Vihiga District. The theoretical framework used in the study was adopted from the one propounded by Jerrold. The research design for the study was descriptive survey. The sample size for the study was 16 teachers. The researcher used interview schedules and questionnaires as the data collection instruments. The method of sampling that the researcher employed was stratified random sampling in order to give all divisions in Vihiga District an equal chance of selection. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages were used. The findings of the study were that stress was caused by; heavy workload, lack of clarity of duties and responsibilities, poor management, substandard equipments and insufficient salaries. The effects of stress were: Poor relations with the students and administration, lack of unity, absenteeism, loss of motivation and teacher transfer. The recommendations of the study were: school administrators should be encouraged to embrace consultative leadership; and there is need to induct school administrators on counselling.

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## INTRODUCTION

Stress is defined as worry and pressure that is caused by having too much to deal with. Medical science emphasizes that stress is the body's general response to any demand made on it. It is a consequence of or a general response to an action

or situation that places special physical or psychological demands or both on a person it involves the interaction of a person and that person's environment. Woodman (1995), asserts that physical or psychological demands from the environment that cause stress are called stressors. These stressors have a variety of form but they have one thing in common. They create stress or the potential for stress when an individual

\*Corresponding author: [wesangulamp@yahoo.com](mailto:wesangulamp@yahoo.com)

perceives them as representing a demand that may exceed his or her ability to respond. Stress is caused by several factors including workload, time pressures, deadlines, long working hours, conflicts between work and death of a family member, failing a course, finding a new love interest, loss of financial aid, major injury or illness, parents, divorce, change in eating or sleeping habits, among others. Personality traits can be related to stress. An individual with low esteem is likely to experience stress in demanding work situations than a person with high esteem. Too much work to do and not enough time or resources to do it can be stressful. Too little work may also cause stress. Differing expectations of or demands on a person's role at work. Heavy travel demands or commuting to work over long distance, failure to advance as rapidly as desired and poor working relationships and interactions with subordinates, peers and supervisors are other causes of stress. Physiologically stress leads to increased blood pressure, increased heart beat rate, sweating, hot and cold spells, breathing difficulties, muscular tension and increased gastrointestinal disorder. Emotionally, it may lead to anger, anxiety, depression, lowered self esteem, poor intellectual functioning leading to inability to concentrate and make decisions, nervousness and irritability. Stress may lead to job burnout. This refers to the adverse effects of working conditions where stressors seem unavoidable and sources of job dissatisfaction and relief from stress seem unavoidable (Woodman, 1995). In Vihiga District, most public secondary schools do not perform well in national examinations. This could be resulting from stress experienced by teachers. Stress among teachers has an effect on performance of schools because teachers who are burdened by stress will not be in a position to teach students in an optimal manner due to stress which makes them to have apathy towards their work. Therefore, the study seeks to identify causes and effects of stress to teachers in secondary schools in Vihiga District and identify remedial measures towards the same.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study was limited to teachers in public secondary schools in Vihiga District Western

Province. The study population was 46 secondary schools in the district and the study period was between the months of July and September. The theoretical framework used in the study was adopted from the one propounded by Jerrold (2002). The dependent variable is stress while independent variables were the causal variables. They included; environmental factors, organizational factors, individual and individual differences. Descriptive survey design was used in conducting this research. Gay (1976) defines descriptive research survey as collecting data in order to test hypothesis or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. Descriptive survey design was chosen because it is appropriate for educational fact-finding and yields a great deal of information which is accurate. The study population comprised of 496 teachers of public secondary schools. The study employed stratified random sampling. Stratified random sampling is a sampling technique where the population is classified into a number of strata and each stratum is sampled independently. Stratified random sampling method was used to ensure that all divisions have been equally represented in the study sample. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data on causes, effect and solutions to stress in teachers of public secondary schools in Vihiga. The choice of questionnaire was made because they are useful in reaching a large group of respondents within a short time with little cost. Responses were determined for face validity by considering whether the responses gave information. Quantitative data was appropriately coded and tabulated and frequencies and percentages generated. Qualitative data was categorised into themes and subthemes as they emerged. Tables of frequencies and percentages were used to present the analysed data.

## **RESULTS**

The respondents were asked to enumerate the causes of stress in their work and their responses are as presented in Table 1. The 45% of the respondents attributed insufficient salaries to be a stressor while 15% cited poor management, substandard facilities and heavy workload were

**Table 1. Causes of Stress among Teachers**

Cause of Stress	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Insufficient salaries	74	45
Substandard equipment, tools, or facilities	21	13
Poor working environment	10	6
Poor management	25	15
Lack of clarity of duties and responsibilities	13	8
Heavy workload	21	13
Total	165	100

**Table 2. Effect of Stress among Teachers**

Effect of stress	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poor relations with the students	51	31
Poor relations with the administration	43	26
Lack of unity	36	22
Absenteeism	18	11
Loss of motivation	10	6
Teacher transfer	7	4
Total	165	100

both mentioned by 13% of the respondents. Lack of clear mandate and poor working environment was mentioned by 8% and 6% of the respondents respectively. Insufficient salaries were mentioned to be a stressor because it causes dissatisfaction among teachers that they are not being sufficiently remunerated for the responsibilities they are engaged in. Substandard equipment was cited as it leads to straining of teachers who are expected to perform with insufficient inputs while poor working condition were said to generate stress as it made it not possible for teachers to work in a relaxed environment. Deficiency of a clear mandate was also cited as it made teachers not to be sure if they have accomplished all that is required of them and hence live in perpetual uncertainty. Lastly, heavy workload was mentioned as it caused teacher to always be in busy and not to have time to relax.

#### *Identification of the Effects of Stress*

The respondents of the study were asked to state the effect of stress and their responses are as shown

in Table 2. From Table 2, 31% and 26% of the respondents cited that stress leads to poor relations with students and the administration respectively while 22% said it causes disunity, 11% cited that it leads to absenteeism. Loss of motivation and teacher transfer was mentioned by 6% and 4% respectively.

Stress was mentioned to cause poor relation with both administration and students as teachers under stressful conditions are irritable and hence have frequent misunderstandings with students and administrators. Lack of unity was mentioned to be another effect of stress as teachers lack the time to build meaningful relationships with each other due to the heavy workload they have. Teacher absenteeism was cited as having been occasioned by stress as it results in teachers to have health problems that will make them not to be able to attend to their duties. The final consequence of stress mentioned was teacher transfer as teachers would see transfers as the only way to escape the stressful conditions they find themselves in.

## **DISCUSSION**

Insufficient salaries were mentioned to be a stressor because it causes dissatisfaction among teachers that they are not being sufficiently remunerated for the responsibilities they are engaged in. Substandard equipment was cited as it leads to straining of teachers who are expected to perform with insufficient inputs while poor working condition were said to generate stress as it made it not possible for teachers to work in a relaxed environment. Deficiency of a clear mandate was also cited as it made teachers not to be sure if they have accomplished all that is required of them and hence live in perpetual uncertainty. Lastly, heavy workload was mentioned as it caused teacher to always be in busy and not to have time to relax.

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build meaningful relationships with each other due to the heavy workload they have. Teacher absenteeism was cited as having been occasioned by stress as it results in teachers to have health problems that will make them not to be able to attend to their duties. The final consequence of stress mentioned was teacher transfer as teachers would see transfers as the only way to escape the stressful conditions they find themselves in. Provision of adequate salaries was mentioned as a panacea to stress as it will make teachers to get satisfied that they are being sufficiently remunerated for the work they do. The involvement of teachers in decision making was cited as it will make them to feel part and parcel of the decisions made and hence more cooperative in the implementation. Rewards and recognition for meriting contributions was mentioned as it would boost the morale of teacher to see that those who go out of their way to ensure success of the school are being recognized and appropriately rewarded. The facilitation of career development was mentioned as it would eliminate the discontent that usually sets in when teachers serve under the same capacity for a considerable period of time.

### Conclusions

From the study various conclusions were drawn. Insufficient salary was generating stress because it causes dissatisfaction among teachers that they are not being sufficiently remunerated for the responsibilities they are engaged in. Substandard equipment causes stress as it leads to straining of teachers who are expected to perform with insufficient inputs while poor working condition cause stress as it made it not possible for teachers to work in a relaxed environment. Deficiency of a clear mandate leads to stress as it makes teachers not to be sure if they have accomplished all that is required of them and hence live in perpetual uncertainty. Lastly, heavy workload causes the teacher to always be in busy and not to have time to relax leading to stress. Stress caused poor relation with both administration and students as teachers under stressful conditions are irritable and hence have frequent misunderstandings with students and administrators. Lack of unity was another effect of stress as teachers lack the time to

build meaningful relationships with each other due to the heavy workload they have. Teacher absenteeism was occasioned by stress as it results in teachers to have health problems that will make them not to be able to attend to their duties. The final consequence of stress was teacher transfer as teachers would see transfers as the only way to escape the stressful conditions they find themselves in. Provision of adequate salaries is a probable panacea to stress as it will make teachers to get satisfied that they are being sufficiently remunerated for the work they do. The involvement of teachers in decision making is another remedy as it will make them to feel part and parcel of the decisions made and hence more cooperative in the implementation. Rewards and recognition for meriting contributions will also lead to the resolution of stress as it would boost the morale of teacher to see that those who go out of their way to ensure success of the school are being recognized and appropriately rewarded. The facilitation of career development is also a remedy as it would eliminate the discontent that usually sets in when teachers serve under the same capacity for a considerable period of time.

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