

Effects of Workplace Stress on Employee Performance in the County Governments in Kenya: A Case Study of Kilifi County Government

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Abstract: The Public Service department is the nerve of service delivery to the public and due to the high demand and expectations from the public, staff needs to work over and beyond the normal routine, be able to multitask and get out of the confront zone for them to delivery. This has created a stressful environment as most staff are not used to the new system which has a lot of uncertainties and pressures. The purpose of this study was to research the impact of stress on the performance of employees of the County Government of Kilifi. The main objective was to determine workplace stress and its effects on performance. To establish the effects of Job demand of the job, salary, job security and time pressure on employees performance. The research design was a descriptive survey design and the target population research was the 2300 employees of Public Service department in the seven sub counties of the County Government of Kilifi. The study shows that Job demand was a stress fact that hindered employee's performance though the stress levels were manageable thus did not affect their performance. A strong positive correlation existed between performance and Job demand. Time pressure was a major stressor as most employees felt due to working for long hours was a major challenge in that dual responsibility of dividing their time as working long hours denies them time with their family and this posed as a big challenge. A strong positive correlation existed between time pressure for the job and performance was noted. Employee felt that to some extent Salary was inadequate but it was not a stressor which hinders their performance. Majority of employee considers their job secure and do not find job security stressful. They also noted that Job Security influence their commitment to their employer. It is therefore concluded that workplace stress affects the performance of Kilifi County employees especially time pressure. The study recommends that Kilifi County government should organize for burnout sessions for its employees and create sufficient time for them to be with their families.

Key Terms - Distress, Employee Performance, Eustress, Stress, Work place Stress.

I. INTRODUCTION

Stress is a universal element experienced by employees around the globe. Stress has become major problem for employer particularly in developing nations where the employer does not realize the impact of stress on employee performance. It is important to recognize and address properly job stress because it badly affects the employee's mental and physiological health. As there are so many resources for employees to perform excellent in their jobs but there is also some factors that hinders in their way. These factors lead to negative employee performance. Stress at work is seen as one of the major psychosocial risks of work. Work-related stress is one of the problems confronting employees. It is of great concern to employees, employers and psychologists, because of its high growing rate in ill- health, as a result of long working hours of some employees (Joseph, 2007).

According to Sayeed (2001), stress also continues to jeopardize the health of organizations. Unhealthy organizational climates reduce employee involvement and negatively affect performance at the individual and corporate level. The experience of work and stress is certainly not new in Kenya. Kenyans continue to experience stress as a result of poor environmental conditions, political uncertainty, poor working conditions and extreme levels of poverty. Ngeno (2007) concurs and further points out that employee in Kenya have to contend with low salaries, lack of involvement in decision making, heavy workload, and few opportunities for promotion. Research conducted by Munali (2005) reveals that employees are reporting increased levels of stress which has led to poor health and consequently performance. Globalization has left Kenyan suppliers facing stiff competition and aggressive cost cutting. Work place pressure is growing day by day, people face changing economic and business situations, changing customer expectations and changing expectations from their own role and position in the organization (Mohan, 1995).

This study focused on Kilifi County which is one of the six counties in Kenya. The county Government has ten department being Health, Agriculture, Education, Finance and Economic Planning, Works and Transport, Water, ICT, Industrialization and Cooperative, Lands and Public Service. The County has a total number of 2300 employee public Service being second largest

after health department. Since Public Service department is the central and the nerve of delivery to the public it is very crucial for the employees in the department to supersede the public expectations and provide efficient and effective service. Most staff in this department are those inherited from the Former Local Authority and the culture of getting out of their confront zone to deliver was a dream. Due to this the staffs in the Public Service department feel pressured and stressed in order to deliver. This study is meant to identify the effects of workplace stress on performance, and come up with proper and workable recommendations that will be able to satisfy the Public Service employees and create the right culture for them to provide excellent services. Kilifi County Government, being a devolved county requires excellent personnel who work wholeheartedly and are committed toward giving their best while at work, in order for the County to meet its mission of to provide an enabling environment and participatory resource management for efficient and effective service delivery for all. Service delivery is very crucial as the demand and expectations of Devolution is very high. The public Service department is the nerve of service delivery to the public and due to the high demand and expectations from the public, staff needs to work over and beyond the normal routine, be able to multitask and get out of the confront zone for them to delivery. People are becoming more familiar with what work-related stress is and how to manage it (International Stress Management Association and ACAS in conjunction with the HSE, 2004). Work stress is ubiquitous and has become a universal phenomenon in every work place. Work stress has become a major challenge facing organizations (Donaldson-Feilder E. Yarker J. & Lewis R (2011) and now becoming the global issue which is affecting all the countries, all categories of employees and societies (Haider & Supriya, 2007). Interest in the phenomenon of work-related stress has increased markedly during the last few years because researches have suggested an increase level of work stress among employees (Vanishree, 2014). International research efforts continue in an attempt to reduce the human and economic costs of work-related stress (Dollard, Winefield, & Winefield, 2003). The literature has shown much research works, in developed countries with regard to work related stress. However, no researches have been conducted in specific areas of work stress of employees in Kilifi County government, therefore, it is imperative to assess the impact of work stress on employees in Kilifi.

The main objective of this study will be to assess the effects of workplace stress on employees performance in the County Government in Kenya with specific focus in Kilifi County Government. The specific objectives are: (1) To establish the effects of job demand on employees performance in Kilifi County Government; (2) To determine the time pressure on employee performance in Kilifi County Government; (3) To determine the effects of salary on employee performance in Kilifi County Government; and (4) To establish the effects of Job security on employee performance in Kilifi County Government.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researcher argue that stress at workplace has an impact to performance in one way or another. Occupational stress inadvertently consequences low organizational performance (Folkman & Lazarus, 1991), Job stress although has belittling impact on any organization and individual's performance but can shape dire consequences when related to health care. (Margolis, Kroes, & Quinn, 1974). The importance of stress is highlighted nowadays by the employers to manage and reduce stress through practical guidelines in public sector but not in private organizations (Rolfe, 2005).

Systemic Stress – Selye's Theory: The popularity of the stress concept in science and mass media stems largely from the work of the endocrinologist Hans Selye. In a series of animal studies he observes that variety of stimulus events (e.g., heat, cold, toxic agents) applied intensely and long enough are capable of producing common effects, meaning not specific to either stimulus events. According to Selye, these nonspecifically caused changes constitute the stereotypical i.e. specific response pattern of systemic stress. Selye (1980) defines stress as a nonspecifically response of the body to any demand, whether it is caused by or results in, pleasant or unpleasant conditions. Selye identifies three stages of adaptation which a person goes through in his General Adaptation Syndrome 1936. They are Alarm, Resistance, and Exhaustion. These stages are associated with particular biological markers such as changes in hormone patterns and the production of more "stress hormones" and the gradual depletion of the body's energy resources.

In the Alarm stage the body recognizes a challenge or threat and goes into a "fight or flight" was actually first coined by Walter Cannon another important pioneer in modern stress theory. In resistant stage the body attempts to adopt to a challenging situation which is persisting. The coping or adaptation required physiological resources, which may eventually get depleted. If the Exhaustion stage occurs, the stressful challenge has persisted too long. The immune system is impaired, long term damage and illness result.

Psychological Stress – The Lazarus Theory: According to Lazarus stress is experienced when a person perceives that the "demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize." This called the transactional model of stress and coping. Neither the environment event nor the person's response defines stress, rather the individuals perception of the psychological situation is the critical factor. According to Lazarus, the effects that stress has on a person are based more on that persons feeling of threat, vulnerability and ability to cope than on the stressful event itself. He defines psychological stress as a "particular relationship between the person and environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her wellbeing. According to his theory there are two things that a person thinks when they are faced with a situation. These are called the primary appraisal and the secondary appraisal

The conceptual framework to be used in this study discusses the stress factor that can effect employee performance.

Independent Variables

Dependent Variables

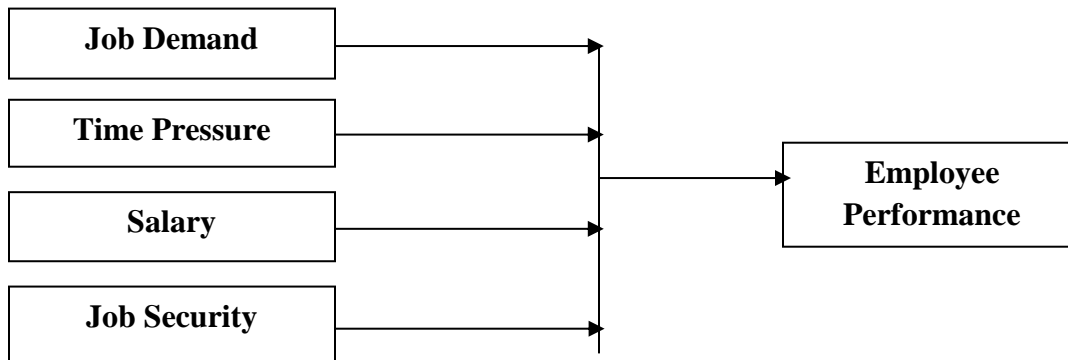


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

The diagram above shows that performance is affected by the physical job demand, time pressure, salary and job security the staff are exposed to. At a certain level the independent variable causes the staff to be in a stressed mode which hinders performance. This framework shows the relationship between staff performance and the factors that influence to their productivity.

Job demand: Most of the literature examining reduced hour (or workload) arrangements, which involve a reduction in workload or hours with a commensurate pay reduction, focus on employer interest in retaining human capital, in particular top talent (Jones & Kidman, 2001). Even if, or when, there is no effect on employees work life balance, flextime are often associated with improved organizational performance (Beauregard & Hendry, 2009).

A study in UK indicated that the majority of the workers were unhappy with the current culture where they were required to work extended hours and cope with large workloads while simultaneously meeting production targets and deadlines (Townley, 2000).

Time Pressure: Work plays an important role in the lives of most people. After all, a salaried job pays the bills and enables us to survive. Work, whether paid or unpaid, also helps us to shape our identity, gives a purpose to our existence, allows us – or forces us – to structure our time, gives us a useful way to spend our days, contributes to our social status, and finally, brings us into contact with others (Siegrist, 2010).

When an employee is unable to meet the demands of work (within the time available), a work pressure problem arises that can lead to work stress. Work stress can eventually cause the employee to feel excessively tired, exhausted and depressed, as well as to suffer physical ailments. The employee can become overstrained or, if the situation persists for a lengthy period of time, start to suffer from burn-out.

Salary: Stress is created where the employee lacks information regarding his authorities, tasks to be performed, duties and powers. Alexandros-Stamatios et al. (2003) also argued that “factors intrinsic to the job” means explore workload, variety of tasks and rates of pay. The combination of high effort and low reward at work has been found to be a risk factor for cardiovascular health, sickness absence as well as self-reported symptoms (Tsutsumi & Kawakami, 2004). Rewards are distributed to employees in three different ways: money that is adequate salary, esteem that is respect and support and security that is Job security, promotions and status consistency.

Money is an extrinsic reward and it can be used to influence employees behaviors (Darmon, 2004). Extrinsic rewards are granted by another individual, and can include salary, fringe benefits, and so on (Kreitner, 2005). Organizations that reward their members in accordance with performance typically experience fewer problems than organizations that do not. (Muczyk, et al., 2004). Bonuses, as extrinsic rewards, can be a good tool to motivate workers for better performance. When management ties their performance in with their bonuses, they take it as a challenge to generate greater performance for receiving bigger financial reward. Money is important, but it is not the ultimate tool for performance. For a lot of people, the feeling of being recognized and valued appears more important than money (Laurie, 2007).

Job security: Employees want to feel confident about their organization’s future and they want stability and steady work so they can meet their financial obligations. An employee’s sense of job security is related to whether or not they trust the leaders in the organization. To engender trust, leaders need to show consideration for the morale, welfare and well-being of their team. Leadership behavior is extremely important because there is a direct link between the perceptions that employees have of their

leaders and the performance of the organization. Job security is defined as employees desire to be retained in their current job till their retirement. Human dignity is directly related to job security as it affected the ability of employees to satisfy the basic physiological and security needs. Psychologists have recognized job insecurity as an imperative cause of stress which involved anxiety and panic.(Salami et al., 2010).

Lack of job security and job changes are source of pressures due to fear of skill redundancy and future job change. Undoubtedly uncertain job security and the fear of layoff is also an important source of psychological stress for some, especially during times of economic contraction (William, 1995).

Performance: Performance of an employee at his/her workplace is a point of concern for all the organizations irrespective of all the factors and conditions. Consequently the employees are considered to be very important asset for their organizations. (Qureshi & Ramay, 2006) A good performance of the employees of an organization leads towards a good organizational performance thus ultimately making an organization more successful and effective and the vice versa (Armstrong, 2009). The problems arise for the organizations when they start perceiving that their organizations are already performing at their level best and with great efficiency furthermore, there is no need for further improvement in their organizations (Summers & Hyman, 2005).

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to investigate the effects of workplace stress on performance. Descriptive research studies are designed to obtain precise information concerning current status phenomena and wherever possible draw conclusion from facts obtained. Information was collected from different respondents on their perception of their performance and to access the impact that stress could have in their lives.

Public service department staff from the seven sub counties in Kilifi County Government accounted for 2300 staff as the population size. The sampling technique used was random sampling with a sampling size of 10% as recommended by Mugenda et al. (1999). The study focused mostly on primary data using self-administered questionnaire and one-on-one interviews with staff who are semi- illiterate. The results from the study were analyzed using statistical package for Social Science (SPSS) and Mean average statistical procedures.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Physical Demands of Job: 30% of the respondents said that they found their job highly strenuous. 34% said that the workload was overwhelming and 36% said that their job involved multiple tasks. This shows that although the respondents found their jobs demanding but the stress levels were manageable. As shown in the figure below.

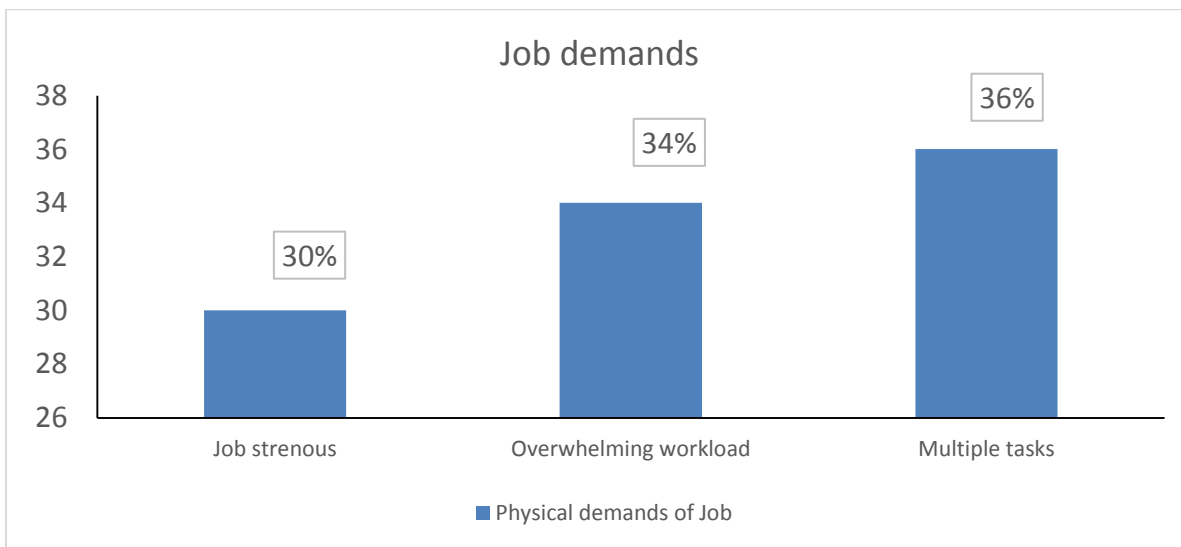


Figure 2: Job demands

Time Pressure: 22% of the respondents said that they rarely have rest periods. 10% said that working for long hours makes them less effective and 68% said that working long hours denies them time with their family. This shows that the majority are stressed with dual responsibility of dividing their time between their work and their family as shown in the table below:

Table 1: Time Pressure

Time Pressure	Frequency	Percentage
Rarely have rest periods	51	22%
Working for long hours makes them less effective	23	10%
Working long Hours denies them time with my family	156	68%
Total	230	100%

Salary: 9% of the respondents said that they would like to find a better paying job. 14% said that they consider their pay low 43% said that they consider their pay inadequate and 34% said that they consider their benefits inadequate. This shows that the majority consider their pay inadequate. However very few would like to find a better paying job. Therefore as much as their salary seems to stress them, but the stress is manageable. The findings are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Salary

Salary	Frequency	Percentage
I would like to find a better paying job	21	9%
I consider my pay low	32	14%
I consider my pay inadequate	99	43%
I consider my benefits inadequate	78	34%
Total	230	100%

Job Security: 72% of the respondents said that they feel secure in their job. 10% said that Job Security makes me want to look for another job and 8% said that they Job Security influence my commitment to my employer. This shows that the majority considers their job secure and do not find job insecurity stressful.

Table 3: Job Security

Job Security	Frequency	Percentage
I feel secure in my job	166	72%
Job Security makes me want to look for another job	23	10%
Job Security influences my commitment to my employer	18	8%
Total	230	100%

General Contribution of the Factors to Performance: 20% of the respondents said that low pay is the main cause of performance in their work place. 50% said that it was time pressure. 20% said that it was job security and 10% said that it was physical job demand. This shows that the majority considers their time pressure as the main performance stressor in Kilifi County government jobs and do not find job insecurity stressful.

Table 4: General Contribution of the Factors to Performance

	Frequency	Percentage
Low Pay	46	20%
Time Pressure	115	50%
Job Security	46	20%
Physical Job demand	23	10%
Total	230	100%

Table 5: Regression model

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.316	.241		-1.309	.192
	Demand	.226	.039	.337	5.771	.000
	Pressure	.522	.072	.419	7.251	.000
	Salary	.071	.030	.118	2.365	.019
	Security	.050	.027	.096	1.890	.060

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

$$Y = -0.316 + 0.226 X_1 + 0.522 X_2 + 0.071_3 X_3 + 0.050 X_4,$$

The relationship between the variables can be depicted with above multiple regression equation (Table 5) which as per the ANOVA test (Table 6) is significant (i.e. p-value is less than 5%) implying that we reject null hypothesis that states:- $H_0: \beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3 = \beta_4$

Table 6: Analysis of Variance

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	37.782	4	9.446	45.623	.000 ^a
	Residual	46.583	225	.207		
	Total	84.365	229			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Security, Pressure, Salary, Demand

b. Dependent Variable: Performance

In other words, the test affirms the validity of the “entire regression” at the 5% level i.e. the model “passes the *F*-test” or at least one of the $\beta_i \neq 0$

Table 7: Model Summary

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df 2	Sig. F Change	
1	.669 ^a	.448	.438	.45501	.448	45.623	4	225	.000	1.044

a. Predictors: (Constant), Security, Pressure, Salary, Demand

b. Dependent Variable: Performance

The R -square = $R^2 = 44.8\%$ which means the model is able to account for 44.8% of the variation in Performance from the three independent variables. The Adjusted R -square is 43.8% . This is the coefficient of determination adjusted for degrees of freedom, which is a different version of R^2 . It has been adjusted to take into account the sample size and the number of independent variables.

Table 8: Correlation Analysis

Correlations

		Performance	Demand	Pressure	Salary	Security
Pearson Correlation	Performance	1.000	.532	.592	.128	.056
	Demand	.532	1.000	.494	.035	-.165
	Pressure	.592	.494	1.000	.015	.057
	Salary	.128	.035	.015	1.000	-.078
	Security	.056	-.165	.057	-.078	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Performance	.	.000	.000	.026	.201
	Demand	.000	.	.000	.298	.006
	Pressure	.000	.000	.	.410	.193
	Salary	.026	.298	.410	.	.120
	Security	.201	.006	.193	.120	.
N	Performance	230	230	230	230	230
	Demand	230	230	230	230	230
	Pressure	230	230	230	230	230
	Salary	230	230	230	230	230
	Security	230	230	230	230	230

Table 8 shows that there is strong positive correlation between performance and Time pressure for the job (i.e. 0.592) followed by performance and physical demand for the job (i.e. 0.532). However, although a significant correlation exist between Performance Vs Salary and Performance Vs Security; it is relatively weak compared to the first two.

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Physical Demand Vs Employee Performance: Respondents that found their job highly strenuous were 30%. Those that found workload was overwhelming were 34% and 36% said that their job involved multiple tasks. This shows that although the respondents found their jobs demanding but the stress levels were manageable and thus did not affect their performance. A strong positive correlation was also noted between performance and physical demand of the job at 0.532. Physical demand does have significant effect on employee's performance as the p-value for Physical Demand is 0.000 which is less than 5%.

Time Pressure Vs Employee Performance: Respondents that said they rarely have rest periods were 22%. Those that found working for long hours makes them less effective were 10% and 68% said that working long hours denies them time with their family. This shows that the majority are stressed with dual responsibility of dividing their time between their work and their family. A strong positive correlation of 0.592 between time pressure for the job and performance was noted in the correlation analysis. It was also observed that there was a significant effect between Time pressure and employees performance.

Salary Vs Employee Performance: Respondents that said that they would like to find a better paying job were 9%. Those that consider their pay low were 14% and 43% said that they consider their pay inadequate while 34% said that they consider their benefits inadequate. This shows that the majority consider their pay inadequate. However very few would like to find a better paying job. Therefore as much as their salary seems to stress them, but the stress is manageable. There is a weak positive correlation of 0.128 between Salary and Employees Performance. However it was noted that there was a significant effect between Salary and Employees Performance.

Security Vs Employee Performance: The respondents that felt secure in their job were 72%. 10% said that Job Security makes them want to look for another job while 8% said that Job Security influence their commitment to my employer. This shows that the majority considers their job secure and do not find job insecurity stressful. It was also noted that there was a weak positive correlation between Security and Employees performance of 0.056. Job security does not have significant effect on employee performance.

Conclusions

In determining workplace stress and its effects on employees performance the study revealed that time pressure is one of the main factor that hinders performance due to the fact employees reach a burnout level that they can no longer produce effectively. Furthermore they lack work life balance and thus stressed on how to balance the two which hinders their performance in a huge percentage. Physical Demand of the Job also affect employees performance to a certain level though not as much as time pressure however if the physical demand increases higher it will have a direct impact on the Time Pressure. Salary has some impact on employee's performance but it is at a manageable level as much as employees are not satisfied with their pay but they are not thinking of looking for a better paying job. This is as a result that Government Salaries are structured and governed by Salary and Remuneration Commission and not like private organization that they can increase at their discretion. Due to this the employees as much as they feel they are not well paid to a certain level it does not affect their performance. Most employees feel that their Job is secured thus Job Security does not have a significant effect on employee's performance. That is, there is very low turnover rate at the Government and most staff are comfortable once they join they serve until they retire.

Recommendations

The study recommends that Kilifi County Government should organize for burnout sessions for its employees and create sufficient time for them to be with their families. Kilifi County should also redesign jobs that are overwhelming in order to reduce workloads in one cadre and spread it out evenly. Flextime working can also be considered in the County in some events so as one shall be to work from home as long as outputs are achieved. Better communication channels to be used so as information reaches employees in time for better preparation instead of last minute communication where requires staff to spend long hours at the workplace to complete a task. A skills analysis and job evaluation to be conducted in order to identify the staffing gaps so as work is distributed evenly. This will improve their performance and job satisfaction.

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