

Role Overload, Teacher-Pupil-Ratio, School Type, Years of Teaching Experience, Gender and Burn Out as Factors Related to Work Stress Among Primary School Teachers in Kasarani Division, Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract

The intention of this study was to establish the work related factors that contribute to stress and burn out among primary school teachers in Kasarani. To achieve this, the study sought to investigate the role played by overload in terms of lessons taught per week and class size. The study also explored whether school type (public or private) had any relationship with work stress. In addition the study sought to establish were years of teaching experience, gender and their relationship with work stress. Data were collected from 120 teachers through a paper based questionnaire. Majority of teacher reported work overload (50.83

Index terms— work stress, class size, role overload, burn out, primary school teacher.

1 I.

Background to the Study he fact that work stress affects people in virtually all occupations, whether they are considered blue collar or white collar has been acknowledged by many studies for example ??Macdonald, 2003); Authors ? ? : Kenyatta University Department of Educational Psychology Nairobi-Kenya. e-mails: tabitha.wangeri@gmail.com, w.lumumba2013@gmail.com ??Mc Cormic, 2003). Although work stress is a phenomenon affecting not only a few individuals but a world-wide phenomenon as (Cox et al., 2007) avers, Idris (2010) is specifically concerned about teacher stress because of the many negative effects it has on many people. In concurrence with these sentiments, Williams et al., ??2004) argue that work stress and burn out are related to negative effects on mental and physical health of the affected workers. Teachers experiencing work stress are more likely than their nonstressed colleagues to suffer job dissatisfaction, lowered productivity, absenteeism, lowered emotional and physical health and turnover. When the teachers suffer from work stress the pupils they teach are affected negatively as they may not have pleasant experiences with teachers and they may not pass important examinations and thus their future prospects are compromised Ngeno (2007); Kitenga (2009).

According to (Bachkirova, 2005) it is desirable to reduce the negative effects stress has on teachers and as such he sees a need to pay more attention to the ever growing pandemic of teacher stress. Conditions known to cause work stress for teachers the world over are overcrowded class rooms that stretch the pupil-teacher ratio, work load in terms of lessons per week, preparations, setting and marking examinations and preparing reports all conditions identified by Hakanen (2006) as responsible for teachers vulnerability to stress. In addition to these, teachers have to manage classrooms, work with colleagues, school administration the children's parents and over and above all these manage their personal lives a fact acknowledged by (Kitenga (2009). In Kenya, teachers work stress is compounded by developments like the implementation of the Free Primary Education (FPE) whose implementation started from January 2008 and continued to date that saw primary school enrollment rise to unprecedented levels thus placing a serious strain on all education related resources. One major aspect of the

teachers' job affected by these changes is the teacher-pupil ratio which has in many cases exceeded the 1:40 prescribed by UNESCO (1990 UNESCO (, 2000)) by far. Consequently, education planners have had to contend with the human resource deficit, and more so in public primary schools. Inevitably, this translates into work stress among the classroom teachers as well as the teachers heading the schools with the former having increased work load, whereas the latter experience an even heavier administrative burden all ingredients of work stress and burn out among the affected teachers. Concurring with these sentiments other factors associated with teacher stress have been identified by Igino (2007) and Kitenga (2009) as poor remuneration, heavy work load which leads to burn out as well as lack of promotion opportunities. These are factors that complicate the situation as they may lead to poor morale among the already overstretched teachers.

Role overload conceptualized as an incompatibility between work demands and the time available to fulfill those demands has been identified as a major cause of work stress among teachers. According to Hepburn and Brown (2001) teacher work overload is related to paper work, time budgets, and excessive deadlines. They also acknowledge that the teaching profession has become increasingly stressful as teachers have to meet many almost impossible deadlines and many responsibilities not to mention the excessive amount of time they spend on work related tasks. Many a time teachers have to take school work home often, teach more classes of different level per week and are heavily involved in extra-curriculum activities weekly. These are further identified by Hepburn and Brown (2001) as important factors in increasing teacher work load. All these responsibilities may compromise teachers' ability to make sound decisions as well as their concentration both related to inability to rest enough to be ready to work efficiently the next day. In examining the role stress-outcome relationship, research suggests the importance of taking into consideration the work orientations of individuals as possible moderators of the role stress-outcome relationship. The view expressed by Indris (2010) and further confirmed by (Schultz et al., 2010) was that teacher stress is caused by role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload.

In Kenya schools are categorized as public or private depending on who runs them. The government run primary schools are called public schools and are open for all Kenyan children who have attained six years of age or above. The Teacher Service Commission is a government body that hires the teachers and sees to their remuneration, promotions, discipline issues and termination of service of errant teachers. The public schools according to Uwezo report (2012) are likely to have overcrowded classrooms particularly in urban or peri-urban locations. The pay primary school teachers get from the TSC may not be as attractive as that paid to their counterparts in some private primary schools.

Private schools on the other hand are run by private proprietors who may be members of the public or religious organizations. These schools may not have overcrowded classrooms and due to the close monitoring of the private owners and the better pay and also the selected nature of the pupils the working conditions may be better than in the public schools. Consequently, the different conditions under which the teachers work, whether in private or public schools, may lead to different outcomes in relation to teacher work related stress. According to (Bilimlere, 2011) teachers working in friendlier environments that the private schools may provide may enjoy more structured work environments and higher pay which would translate to less work stress. On the contrary, teachers in public primary schools and who have heavy work load, less structured working environment and less attractive pay may experience higher levels of stress than their counterparts in the private schools.

The above notwithstanding, other factors further contributing to stress among teachers have been identified as the teachers' age and work experience. Teaching like many other professions is a complex art that requires certain innate potentialities, scholarship and skills that require years to develop and perfect. The beginning teacher has a lot to master in terms of scholarship in the subject areas as well as pedagogical skills to teach it. For effective execution of their duties, teachers have to acquire class control and the delicate relationships with colleagues, school administrations and parents. Thus, younger teachers and those with few years of teaching experience may be expected to suffer more work related stress than their older and more experienced counterparts. Research findings by Balakrishnamurthy and Shankar (2009) concur that there is a relationship between age and level of experience and stress. Their research also revealed that younger workers aged 27-37 years suffer more work related stress than their older counterparts. In addition, their research also established that older workers, those with 21-30 years of work experience reported lower stress levels than their counterparts with fewer years of work experience. The plausible explanation for this is that the older and more experienced workers have the benefit of professional experiences and they have learned the coping mechanisms that their less experienced counterparts have not. Within the teaching profession Pei and Guoli (2008) research found overall stress to be higher among teachers with five or fewer years of experience than among their counterparts with eleven to fifteen years of service or teachers with more than twenty-five years of service.

The question of who among men and women experience more stress is complicated and does not have a single answer. However, working women are expected to experience more stress than their male counterparts because of the double roles they may play as workers and homemakers a fact acknowledged by Gyllensten et al., 2005 who say that women suffer from work stress more than men. They aver that women's women-multiple roles, lack of career progression, discrimination and stereotyping are responsible for their work stress. In concurrence with these views Rivera-Torres (2013) adds that men and women experience job stress differently with men being stressed by the sheer amount of work to be done and women experiencing stress due to emotional and intellectual aspects of the job. In addition to these, Cochiara et al., (2009) found out that social support at work and the coping response behavioral disengagement and suppression of competing activities predicted job stress independently of

age, gender, class size, occupational grade and negative affectivity. High job stress was associated with low social support at work and greater use of coping by disengagement and suppression of coping strategies. More over Ozan (2010) revealed that female teachers experience more emotional exhaustion than their male counterparts and they also experience more professional disappointment than males.

Teachers who are bombarded with work such as engaged in lesson preparations and delivery, grading, filling out report forms, dealing with pupil discipline day in day out may not have time to relax or even take care of their personal needs. Moreover they may not have time to interact with significant other people in their lives like spouses and children. These conditions may easily lead to chronic stress with the consequence of burn out. Teacher Burnout is a type of chronic response to the cumulative impact of work stress which according to Ng' Eno (2007) has a negative impact on the teachers themselves, and on the pupils they teach. Agreeing with these sentiments Amimo (2012) averred that workers experiencing burnout feel lethargic and they also lose the motivation or incentive to engage in work related tasks. In addition they find work not only demanding but frustrating as well. Consequently, teachers experiencing burn out have more trouble coping with the challenges of the job than their counterparts as they are unable to provide quality teaching.

2 II.

3 Statement of the Problem

Worker stress has been a subject of research interest due to the negative effects it has on the individual worker, the people around him or her and the employing organizations. At a personal level a worker experiencing stress is most likely to suffer both physical and psychological symptoms that have a negative effect on production. The teaching profession has not escaped from this and it is in this regard that there has been agreement among researchers that teaching can be a very stressful occupation. Indeed researchers seem to concur that teacher stress appears to have increased in recent decades according to Kyriacou, 2001 and Munt, 2004). According to Gelvin (2007), teacher stress is a response syndrome of the negative affects resulting from aspects of a teacher's job. The teacher experiencing work stress may have the perception that the demands of the work constitute a threat to self-esteem causing him or her to employ coping mechanisms to reduce the perceived threat. Consequently, a teacher who experiences work related stress may be physically tired and lethargic, may have difficulties sleeping and may also use substances like smoking cigarettes, excess alcohol consumption as well abuse of other substances all of which compromise health and work effectiveness. The employing organization may suffer as the teacher may engage in voluntary absenteeism, tardy work and either voluntary or involuntary turn over. It has been widely acknowledged that the stress of teaching as an occupation is widespread and cross-cultural. As observed by Hospital and Gregory (2009), teachers today face high stress which can compromise their wellbeing, longevity in the profession, and the quality of their interactions with students a situation that may be true even in the Kenyan situation. Consequently, high turnover has been observed and many teachers who remained on their jobs freely admitted their dissatisfactions and rated their jobs as very stressful (Thomas, Clarke & Lavery, 2003). The wider implications of work stress for teachers are that it translates to negative outcomes for learners who may not perform well in examinations that determine their opportunities in life. Additionally, Wangai (1995) posits that teachers in Kenya are so demoralized, despised, frustrated and ridiculed that 30-40 per cent of them do not enjoy optimum health, while 45 per cent suffer from work stress. For these reasons the conditions that cause teachers work stress should always be investigated and ways and means of alleviating the stress addressed so as to improve the working conditions for teachers. To this end therefore, this study set to investigate teachers' perceptions of how the following variables relate to their experience of work stress: Teacher-pupil ratio, role overload, school type, years of teaching experience and gender.

4 a) The objective of the study

The major objective of this study was to identify work related factors that lead to stress among primary school teachers with regard to workload, teacher-pupil ratio, gender, school type, and length of service and burn out. The study was conducted in Kasarani Division of Nairobi County, Kenya b) Theoretical framework Jenkins' model of stress (1980) The study has been informed by Jenkins (1980) model of stress that explains the characteristics of the stress reaction among human beings. Jenkins borrowed his ideas from Selye (1976) on stress with its three phases namely, the alarm, resistance and exhaustion. According to Jenkins, the alarm stage is characterized by acute anxiety and fear if the stressor is a threat and by grief and depressive mood if the stressor is a loss. Many of these alarm reactions are self-correcting if the duration of the stress is brief. If the stimulus condition evoking an alarm reaction continues, the individual develops the next pattern which is resistance. The resistance stage is characterized by the activation in which the person engages in behaviors meant to solve the problem called coping. If an individual's defensive and problem-solving behaviors are adequate and the person is able to diminish the stress being experienced there are no negative effects experienced. On the other hand, if the defensive and coping strategies of an individual are overwhelmed by the strength of stimuli, their duration, or repeated occurrence, a pathological end-state with both mental and physical chronic disorders are likely to develop.

This theory to human beings experiencing stressful situations and may apply to the stress the primary school teachers in the following ways: A teacher who is overwhelmed by stressful working conditions will go through the same states of alarm, resistance and exhaustion that compromises well-being as well as the outcomes of teaching.

The conceptual framework of the study presents the interrelatedness of the study variables and teacher stress. The demographic variables such as age, gender, marital status, professional training and years of teaching experience interact with work overload measured by lessons taught per week and teacher-pupil ratio among other teacher duties like grading pupils work, lesson preparation, class control, administrative duties and the teachers personal life and play with to various demographic variables are related to teacher work stress. Teachers stress is associated with such negative outcomes as voluntary absenteeism, tardiness in performance of job tasks, negative effects on both the teachers' health and social life. Teacher work stress is the major cause of burn out, dissatisfaction with work life and it has also been related with health problems and turn over. Because of the negative effects on both the teacher and the pupils intervention measures need to be put in place to improve the teachers' lot. The conceptual framework points at the need to improve teacher-pupil ratio, put in place institutional and family support as well as individual methods of coping all geared to improving physical and psychological conditions of work.

5 c) Conceptual framework

6 III.

7 Study Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to investigate. The research was conducted in Kasarani Division of Nairobi County which has a cosmopolitan nature and may represent a microcosm of many schools in the country. Stratified random sampling was used to select three private and three public schools out of the 129 schools in the region. One hundred and twenty teachers were selected through random sampling among them were 37 males and 83 females while 62 of them were from public schools and 58 from private schools. Data were collected through a paper based questionnaire administered by the researchers after observation of the necessary protocols. The questionnaires contained a section for demographic information, items for work overload, and burn out inventory. The demographic information relevant to the study was age, gender, professional training and duration of service. The role overload questionnaire was a 3-point likert scale meant to capture the perception of the teachers with regard to role overload. The Burn out Inventory contained a 3-point likert scale with items investigating if the teachers experienced burn out. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the demographic variables of the study while one way analysis of variance was used to analyze the role overload scores and burnout inventory scores. ANOVA was also used to establish the relationship between role overload and burn out, school type and burn out and length of service and burn out. In addition ANOVA was also used to establish gender and burn out and finally inter-correlations.

IV.

8 Study Findings a) Demographic variables of the study

The demographic variable investigated were age, gender, marital status, and professional qualification, length of service and school type. The finding revealed that majority of the teachers (56.66%) were over 41 years old while 26.67% were aged between 31 and 40 years and a small percentage (16.67) were 30 years old and below. With regard to gender the findings revealed that the female were the majority 67.17% against their male counterparts who were 30.83%. The majority of the teachers (66.52%) were married and only a few of them (12.50%) were single and negligible percentages were divorced (below 1%), widowed (4%). Another demographic variable investigate among study respondents was professional qualification. The findings revealed that majority of the teachers 45% were certificate holders while diploma holders were 17% and teachers with Bachelor degrees were 32.50% and Masters Degree holders were 5%. With regard to length of service the findings revealed that majority of the teachers 56.67% had served for more than 16 years while those with 6-10 years of service were 35.50% and those with 5years or less 5.83%. The findings also revealed that majority of the teachers (51.67%) worked in public primary schools while the rest (43.33%) worked in private schools.

9 b) Number of lessons per week

The purpose for this objective was to investigate the number of lessons the teachers taught per week (18 or fewer, 19-21 or 22 and more).

According to the study finding presented in figure ?? majorities of teachers taught more than 22 lessons per week while who taught 19-21 lessons per week were 34.17%. Teachers who reported teaching less than 18 lessons per week were 11.66%. The findings are in concurrence with Ng'Eno (2007) and Amimo (2012) that majority of teachers in primary schools suffer work overload. Of course the teachers work is not defined by lessons taught per week but also by all time teachers spend preparing for lessons, grading pupils work and the general administrative duties that go with teaching. Consequently the hours the teachers put in according to Gardener (2012) may be as many as 48 hours which is more hours than many professionals put in per week. This translates to work overload a situation related to not only stress but burn out as well. In addition teachers experiencing overload may also experience work performance challenges not to mention the negative effect on health and many aspects of personal life.

10 c) Number of pupils per class

The purpose of this objective was to establish the average number of pupils per class. The results are presented in figure ??.

The findings revealed that majority of the teachers (62.50%) were running classes with between 41-60 pupils while 32.50% have 40 pupils and below. This means that majority of the schools have a teacherpupil ratio that is in excess of the UNESCO (1990, 200) ratio of 1teacher to 40 pupils. It also far exceeds the international ratio of 1 teacher to 30 pupils as well as the national ratio of 1 teacher per 40 pupils Uwezo (2012). The implication of these results is that the teaches may not be able to give individualized attention to learners that is critical for best learning out comes for the primary school level. The other implication is that in classes where pupils are more than 40 in class definitely stresses the teacher not just due to the numbers but also due to the demands exerted on the teacher. No wonder this situation contributes to the chronic deficiency of learning outcomes reported in the Uwezo (2012) report in which some learners at class seven do not have the competence to pass class two level mathematics and English.

11 d) Role overload scores (ROS)

The aim of this objective was to establish the teachers' perception of their roles. They were expected to respond if they disagreed, mildly agreed or agreed to five statements: if they found the roes they performed complex, if they worked under continuous pressure, if they found the pay adequate, and if they coped with the work. In addition the teachers were expected to indicate if they thought they were expected to perform jobs that required more from than their knowledge, skills and abilities permitted. The responses were computed to overall Role Overload Score and whose results were presented in figure ??.

12 i. Role overload scores

The results revealed that majority of the teachers (50.83%) perceived their roles as overloaded while 43.33% perceived their roles as mildly overloaded and only a negligible number 5.84% did not perceive their roles as overloaded. These findings are consistent with other study findings and that seem to point to the fact that experience of role overload is not unusual for primary school teachers. In particular the findings resonate with Hakanen (2006); Ngeno (2007) and itenga (2007) who found work overload to be strongly linked to stress with its antecedent effects.

13 ii. Burn out inventory

The aim of objective was to establish if the teachers reported symptoms of burn out like by responding no, mildly yes or yes to the following five statements: If they felt irritable frequently and if they performed their jobs in a tardy manner. In addition they were to report if they had lost enjoyment in their jobs and if they felt that they had withdrawn from social interactions and if they felt tired and physically and mentally drained. The results of the burn out inventory scores were presented in figure ??.

The findings reveal that majority of the teachers (61.67%) reported burn out while those who reported mildly yes were 35.00% with small minority (3.33%) reporting no burn out. The findings concur with Ngeno (2007) and Amino (2012) that burn out has many negative consequences on the teachers and the pupils they teach. The teacher experiences physical problems like fatigue, headaches, and problems with sleep, social withdrawal and diminished sense of accomplishment. Consequently may engage in voluntary absenteeism which translate to negative learning outcome for the pupils who are not guided well to master important knowledge and skills and thus they may end up failing examinations which has their future compromised.

14 iii. Statistical analyses

The relationship between role overload and burn out, school type and burn out, teachers' length of service and burn out gender were analyzed using analysis of variance and results presented in the sections below. iv. Relationship between role overload scores and burnout inventory scores One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was used to examine the relationship between role overload scores and burn out inventory scores and the results are as discussed below. The results revealed that there was a statistically significant relationship between teacher role overload scores and burnout inventory scores. This implied that these teachers, who were overloaded with schoolwork, for example teaching many lessons in a week to large classes, perceive higher levels of work stress. On the other hand, their counterparts who were not overloaded with work did not perceive higher levels of work stress. This trend is worrying because according to Amimo (2012) and Ngeno (2007) when teachers suffer role overload it has negative consequences for the teachers' well being and the pupils performance.

v. Relationships between school type and burnout inventory scores

The relationship between school type and burn out inventories was investigated and results presented in table 2. The results revealed that there was a statistically significant relationship between the type of school and burnout inventory scores. This implies that those teachers in public schools, who have to teach large classes for longer hours with less pay, perceived higher work stress. In contrast those teachers from private schools, who teach mediums-sized classes for fewer hours in a week and with good terms of service, perceive less work stress.

These findings confirm that when teachers work in overcrowded classrooms with work overload and possibly poor pay they will experience more work stress than their counterparts working under better conditions a concept well explained by (Uwezo report, 2012) vi. Relationship between teachers length of service and burnout inventory scores Relationship between teachers length of service was analyzed through one-way analysis of variance and results presented in table 3. According to the findings no statistically significant relationship was found between teacher length of service (i.e. teaching experience in years) and burnout inventory scores. The implication was that teacher length of service did not have a bearing on the amount of work stress experienced by the teachers. These findings contradict the research findings by Pei and Guoli (2008); Balakrishnanurthy and Shankar (2009) as well as those by ??ei and Gudi (2008) whose research found that older and more experienced workers suffer less stress than their younger and less experienced colleagues.

15 vii. Relationship between gender and burnout inventory scores

The relationship between burnout and gender was computed and findings presented in table 4. The findings did not reveal a statistically significant relationship between gender and burnout inventory scores. This implied that gender did not have a bearing on the amount of work stress experienced by the teachers. These findings do not agree with research findings by Gyllesten et al., ??2005) and Rivera and Torrens (2013) whose findings indicated that women suffer more work stress than men do.

V.

16 Conclusion

The results of the study indicated that the entire group of teachers investigated had professional training ranging from teaching certificate to Masters Degree. Most of them had taught for 16 years and above by the time of the study. In addition the findings also revealed that majority of teachers reported experiencing work overload as they taught more than 22 lessons per week over and above the other duties they performed. This may have negative outcomes as it bound to comprise the individual teachers well being. The time and the effort the teacher puts in to prepare for teaching and to mark the students work may impact negatively on other aspects of the teachers' life like the quality of interactions with the students, colleagues and even family due to the ever present work pressure. Moreover, a large section of the teachers studied reported having larger classes than the recommended national ratio of 1:40 a situation likely to have a negative effect on both the teacher involved and the students as well. For the teacher, this may lead to more stress which may compromise physical and psychological health resulting in lateness, absenteeism and tardy work. Moreover, the teachers affected may have challenges with job satisfaction and quality of life both of which may be compromised. The student too would be compromised due to the teacher's inability to address some professional underpinnings like individualized attention, quality preparation and additional attention and support for weak students and classroom management. As a consequence this may translate to learners who underachieve and are undisciplined.

Further to these findings, the statistical analysis showed a significant relationship between teacher role overload and burn out scores. In addition, statistical analysis also revealed that teachers in public schools reported more work stress than their counterparts in private schools. However, contrary to some research findings that show that females suffer more work related stress the findings did not find a significant relationship between gender and work stress. Also while some researches associate length of service and work stress among teachers the findings did not find significant relationship between teacher's length of service and work related stress.

17 VI.

18 Recommendations

Based on the study findings as well as the conclusions, this study recommends that the ministry of education develops programs that structure the teachers' job in order to guard against unhealthy levels of stress. The government should build more classrooms and employ more teachers in order to ensure that teacher-pupil ratio is kept at healthy levels. Similarly, the schools should provide teachers with support by ensuring that they have manageable workloads and friendly work environments. On their part the teachers should learn time management skills so that they can both teach and have time for recreation and time to connect with significant other people like their spouses, children and friends. Teachers should also develop skills of asking for support from school administration and their family to ensure satisfaction in work life. In deed ??ochiara (2008) avers that teachers with social support cope better at work. ¹

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Figure 1: Figure 1 :

1

Source of	Sum of	Degree of	Mean	F Ra-	Level of
variance	squares	freedom	squares	tio	significance
Between groups	526.6	1	526.6	72.14	0.000
Within groups	81.2	119	0.682		
Total	607.8	120			

Figure 2: Table 1 :

2

Source of	Sum of	Degree of	Mean	F Ra-	Level of
variance	squares	freedom	squares	tio	significance
Between groups	502.7	2	251.35	440.96	0.000
Within groups	67.3	118	0.570		
Total	570.0	120			

Figure 3: Table 2 :

3

Source of	Sum of	Degree of	Mean	F Ra-	Level of
variance	squares	freedom	squares	tio	significance
Between groups	994.2	8	124.278	176.53	0.080
Within groups	78.8	112	0.704		
Total	1073.0	120			

Figure 4: Table 3 :

4

Source	of Sum	of Degree of	Mean	F Ra-	Level	of
variation	squares	freedom	squares	tio	significance	
Between groups	581	9	64.56	43.98	0.804	
Within groups	581	111	1.468			
Total	744.6	120				

Figure 5: Table 4 :

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18 RECOMMENDATIONS

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