Investigating High School Principals’ Stress in Relation to their Job Experience in Schools in Southern Nyanza Region of Kenya

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Abstract

This study investigated the High School Principals’ Stress in relation to their job experience in schools in Southern Nyanza Region, Kenya. The objective of this article was; to investigate the sources of stress among high school principals in relation to their job experience in schools in Southern Nyanza Region, Kenya. $H_{01}$ There is no statistically significant relationship between Sources of Stress and the High School Principals’ job Experience in School. The study was guided by Role Performance and Demand theory by Hebb (1972). It employed descriptive survey design. Target population was 254 high school principals from six districts in Southern Nyanza Region. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 77 principals and school categorized as district, provincial public and private; mixed day/boarding and boarding girls/boys. Data was collected using both closed and open ended questionnaires with the principal's background information, a 29 – item instrument known as the High School Principals’ Stress Index (HSPSI) together with an interview schedule.. A parametric statistical tool, Karl Pearson’s Correlation of Coefficient was used to test the hypothesis. The hypothesis testing procedure was based on $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance. Data was analyzed using (SPSS Version 18) computer programme. The findings of the study revealed that the sources of stress: Role Based, Task Based, Conflict Mediating and Boundary Spanning had a correlation and dependable relationship with High School Principals’ job Experience in schools. This study recommends that High School Principals be helped by Principals/Employee Stress Assistance Program (PSAP/ESAP). It’s the researchers hope that this article will benefit both novice and experienced principals to cope and continue in service in this region and beyond.

Keywords: Kenya, High School, Principals, Sources of Stress, Job Experience
Introduction

There are occasions, situations and experiences that upset people’s equilibrium and sometimes cause serious consequences to their physical, mental, spiritual and social well being and may require remedies. According to Willis (2005) society has coined a term to describe these occasions – stress. A considerable number of people may share the same job experience but high school principals with varied levels of job experience react in a different way to it. In support of the fact that these situations are not conducive, Selye (1984) who did his research in Australia has it that the term ‘stress’ is borrowed from the word of mechanics and physics where stress is described as the physical pressure exerted upon, and between parts of a body. Furthermore, Willis (2005) adds that, historically, Dr. William Bradford Cannon who lived between 1871 -1945, in the U.S.A was the first clinician to identify the physical characteristics of the initial phase of stress. In every profession or work that has a goal to be achieved, a deadline to be met, a superior to report to and to be supervised, normally is not stress free. It is a concern to the novice and experienced employees, employers and administrators alike.

Stress in work place is a worldwide issue. A report on Secondary Education by World Bank (1999) revealed that the education systems the world over have been ineffective and has failed to address the matter of principals’ stress and burnout in secondary schools. This failure however, has stifled natural efforts towards building a stronger human resource base which is invaluable for development in all its spheres in schools. Studies carried out in the United Kingdom by Travers and Coopers (1991) found out that employees working in educational institutions especially the high school principals and their deputies reported high levels of stress and increased levels of stress related illness. On the other hand, Smith (2004), Howard and Johnson, (2004), Moon et al, (1997), Travers and Coopers (1994) and Beer and Beer, (1992) conducted studies in USA, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and France, have indicated that in terms of levels of experience in school management, novice principals such as those with less than three years of experience face incidences of depression, neurotic disorders and stress more than experienced high school principals such as those with eight years of. The study also showed that such experienced principals in public high schools suffer more frequent stress than experienced assistant teachers and also principals’ in the American public high schools were exhibiting more stress that emanates from their daily routine and tasks in the job descriptions. It is therefore likely that high level of stress among principals seems to threaten and vary in terms of levels of job experience in school.

However, in the developing countries in Africa, Kenya inclusive, similar sentiments of secondary school principals’ exhibit stress related issues. A study in Ghana shows that teachers and educational administrators are experiencing series of stress and stressful situations (Schroeder et al, 2001). What is happening in the United Kingdom and Ghana is not strange in Kenya because, Koome (2007) who carried out a study in Kenya among the principals’ found out that principals’ stress is on the increase such that most of them have dropped being principals due to stress and have joined other ministries and departments in the government like the Ministry of Youth Affairs, Gender and Sports among others.
In Kenya and particularly the Southern Nyanza Region, Principals seem to be stressed and some of them have consequently opted to quit principalship and teaching profession altogether, as shown in Table 1.1,

Table 1.1 The Following Data Reflects Schools In Southern Nyanza Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>SCHOOL TYPE AND NUMBER</th>
<th>STAFFING</th>
<th>PRINCIPALS WHO LEFT PRINCIPALSHIP POSSIBLY DUE TO STRESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>MD/B</td>
<td>BB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIGORI</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUTH KISII</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACHUONYO</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBA</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KURIA</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RONGO</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PDE’s Office – Nyanza 2007

The number of teachers who are stressed seem to be on the increase as per this table therefore a means of curbing this phenomenon is in order.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the training that the principals have, the responsibilities and expectations loaded on them leave no doubt that they can easily get stressed as they perform their tasks and roles expected of them in their capacity. It has been observed by the researcher that in Southern Nyanza Region Principals go through a number of daily routines in school management such as conflict mediation, boundary spanning, task and role based kind of stress which is high. These duties have to be performed within a given time frame and are quite demanding irrespective of the principal’s level of job experience in school. In this region, as ascertained by the researcher, the general view of the principal’s stress indicates that experienced principals are affected
more than novice principals. When given duties to perform, the novice ones seem to be less stressed than their experienced counterparts perhaps there is a relationship between extent of stress and the principal’s level of job experience in school. The problem of the study was therefore to investigate the High school principals’ stress in relation to their job experience in school and to determine at which level of job experience are principals stressed more and threatened to quit principalship and teaching profession.

Sources of Stress among High School Principals’ in Relation to their Job Experience in School

In this study, sources of stress were conceptualized in terms of roles-based, task-based, conflict-mediating and boundary spanning stress including related ones among High School principals. Robbins and Judge (2007), postulates that sources of stress are environmental, organizational and personal. They continue to add that, whether in which ever situation, stress depends on individual differences such as job experience and personality. Furthermore, when stress is experienced by an individual, its symptoms can surface as physiological, psychological and behavioral outcomes. Administrative stress experienced by principals’ are of unpleasant emotions such as anger, tension, frustration, depression and nervousness, resulting from their work as principals. Doring (1993) and Friedman (1997) suggest that principals exhibit such unpleasant emotions because it is a psychological and/or physiological response to threatening or overly demanding situations. They add that general factors that contributed to stress in principals included: human resource management, management of time and relationships. Stress in work-place, come in various ways. A research done by Mullins (2007) reveals that lack of power and influence, and office politics, are among the main sources of managerial stress within organizations and educational institutions. In high schools in Kenya, most major decisions and power rests with the Board of Governors (BOG) leaving little power and authority with the principal. Sources of high school principals are therefore not few. Jaiyeoba and Jibril (2008) conducted a study on sources of high school principals stress in Kano state, Nigeria and their findings showed that administrative routine, workload, conflicting demands and role between work and family were the highest sources of stress. Additionally, they reported that 77.5 percent of the principals reported their job was stressful. The extent and level of stress vary from person to person. Coleman and Conaway (1984) supported this when they prescribed that School principals might experience stress due to interpersonal clashes and conflicts, excessively taxing administrative responsibilities, time constraints and conflicting role expectation.

Studies done among high school principals in East Africa by Evans and Johnson (2000), indicates that technological change is a type of environmental factor that causes stress. This they say to be so because new innovations can make a high school principal’s skills and experience become obsolete in a very short time. Moreover, they continue to point out, that those who are not computer literate and not conversant with robotics, automation and similar forms of technological innovations are a threat to many principals and cause them stress.

According to survey done by Slobogin (2009) and Armour (2003) they strongly contend that employees complain about the stress created in trying to balance work and family
responsibilities, especially among the high school principals. Stress is not necessarily bad in and of itself. Although stress is typically discussed in a negative context, it has a positive value, Cavanaugh et al (2000), Melgosa (2006), McDonald (2009) and Cooper et al (2006). Whether stress is negative or positive, it continues to draw attention of scholars such that research done by Lapine et al (2004) and Cavanaugh et al (2000) concludes that stress can be good and also can be bad. However, their findings also shows that stress can be divided into two, that is, challenge stress or stress associated with challenges in work environment (such as having lots of projects, assignments and responsibilities), and hindrance stress or stress that keeps one from reaching his/her goals (red tape, office politics, confusion over job responsibilities). Stress has been found to show itself in other psychological states for instance, tensions, anxiety, irritability, boredom and procrastination (Robbins and Judge 2007).

Some high school principals’ personality includes a high degree of hostility and anger. These principals are chronically suspicious and mistrustful of others, is evidenced by William (2000) whose studies indicates that this hostility significantly increases a person’s stress and risk for heart disease. He continues to add:

"More specifically, people who are quick to anger, maintain a persistent hostile outlook and project a cynical mistrust of others are likely to experience stress in situations." Pg 148

Stress shows itself in a number of ways. According to Robbins and Judge (2007), they argue that an individual who is experiencing a high level of stress may develop high blood pressure, ulcers, irritability, difficulty in making routine decisions, loss of appetite, accident proneness, and the like. The same sentiment is echoed by Mullins (2007) when he posits that research done among the executives and school principals have identified stress, anxiety and depression as among the most commonly reported illnesses and wider research has also indicated that stress is brought about through work intensification and conflicts between home (family) and work, is related to the risk of disease and ill health. Moreover, the importance of a leader’s intelligence and experience to effectiveness differs under low and high stress situations. This is evidenced by the work of Fiedler and Garcia (2000) when they found out that a leader’s intellectual abilities correlate positively with performance under low stress but negatively under high stress. And, conversely, a leader’s experience correlates negatively with performance under low stress but positively under high stress. They continue to add that it is the level of stress in the situation that determines whether an individual’s intelligence or experience will contribute to leadership performance. This kind of a situation is likely to make a principal to quit principalship and teaching profession altogether.

**High School Principals’ Role –based Stress Areas**

Mullins (2004), DuBrin (2006), Graham and Bennett (1998) and Woods (1990) in their study, explained role as the expected pattern of behavior associated with members occupying a particular position within the structure of the organization, and how they principal’s) believe others should respond to their actions. A principal might be unclear about the exact nature of his/her role. The more explicit and specific the expectations attached to a
role, the easier it is to conform to its requirements on one hand and on the other hand, role ambiguity can cause stress, insecurity and loss of self-confidence (Graham and Bennette, 1998).

It is inevitable that serious problems normally occur when role occupants and others disagree fundamentally about the contents of a role that is the duties it covers, ranges of acceptable behaviour, whether certain actions are voluntary or mandatory and importantly which of the principals’ obligations should assume a priority. This is why Sagimo (2002), in his study suggests that principal’s role clarification is of supreme importance. Where role is not clear, there is no job description and rampant confusing assignments and responsibilities without authority, stresses the principals.

As an administrator, the role of the principal is very important in a school, but his/her work is not stress free as Kelly (1987) explains that:

“Administrators were much more subject to stress than engineers or scientists. Responsibility for people, Frenchman explains, always causes stress than being responsible for things like gadgets and equipments”. (pg. 265)

Since principals relate and work with people, they orchestrate school activities and this view is supported by Yambo (2012) as quoted in a report from USA Senate (1979) that if school is vibrant, innovative, child centered place in teaching, if students are performing to the best of their abilities, one can almost always point out to the principal’s leadership as key to success. The impact of the influence of the principal’s role in a school is enormous and also affects the position of parents, teachers and community. As the principal will be executing his/her duties, which normally involves meeting stake holders in meetings which are both formal and informal, Fontana (1989) alludes, that frustration arise from too many meetings, unnecessary rituals and procedures which makes principals stressed up. Furthermore principals work under the government and are answerable to BOG and Ministry of Education. In this regard, there is need to maintain a cordial and sound relationship with the supervisors as principals discharge their duties. Despite this, the opposite sometimes comes with stress as Fontana (1989) continues to point out that:

“Poor relationship with the supervisors is a potential source of stress since These supervisors have the ability to influence our lives materially”. Pg 35

The relationship between the principals and the supervisors is the key to smooth running of the schools. Any rift or misunderstanding between the principal and supervisors can generate a considerable amount of stress.

**High School Principals’ Task –based Stress Areas**

Fontana (1989) in his studies about stress management, describes task based stress as stressors related to actual doing of the work or job as opposed to stressors related to conditions under
which one is expected to do it. When differentiating stress that emanates from work-task itself and emotions, DuBrin (2006) comes up quite clearly that:

“Task-based stress focuses on substantive issue, related differences, related to the work itself of the principal.” pg.120.

These issues are tangible and concrete and can be dealt with more intellectually than emotionally. Task-based stress, as suggested by Olayiwola (2008) arise from the performance of day to day administrative activities ranging from telephone, staff interruptions, meetings, writing memos and reports to and participating in school activities outside normal working hours. When referring to principal’s task based stress, D’ souza (2003) also puts more emphasis on the work–load. He explains that more load means having more work than one can perform in a given amount of time. Overloaded principals feel hurried, have too many tasks to do, too many decisions to make and find themselves constantly behind schedule, and worry about time and deadlines. More studies on principals’ task and stress done by Robbins and Judge (2007) prescribes that task demands are factors related to a person’s job (autonomy, task variety, degree of automation), working conditions and the physical work layout. Also, working in an overcrowded room or in a visible location where noise and interruptions are constant can increase anxiety and stress (Evans and Johnson, 2000).

Most High School Principals seldom find themselves multi-tasking. Studies done by Finely (2010) defines multi-tasking to working on several tasks at the same time. He adds that most administrators including high school principals more often, find themselves multi-tasking in everyday by trying to do two or three things at once and this therefore is a source of a task-based stress.

High School Principals’ Conflict –Mediating Stress

Conflict is simultaneous arousal of two or more incompatible motives. In every organization where people are, conflicts cannot be avoided. The school head, in this case, the principal is always at the centre to arbitrate. Studies by DuBrin (2006), asserts that, although harmony and collaboration are an important goal of groups and teams working together some disagreement and dispute is inevitable. It is often accompanied by tension and frustration whenever two or more people in an institution compete for the same resources, conflict occurs and this conflict needs mediation. As the principal and the leader he/she must carry out the mediation and this process brings about conflict mediation stress on the part of the principal. According to Cooper and Marshall (2002) and Kreitner (2000) conflict results in both positive and negative consequences, also, the right amount of conflict may enhance job performance. They suggest that if the principal observes that job performance is suffering because teachers are too placid, the principal might profitably increase conflict by possibly establishing a prize for top performance in school. Ordinarily, incompatible behaviours make another person less effective and anything of value in an organization or a school can become competitively sought after hence create stress for they are always few.
Managing conflict at school has been an age-old challenge for educators especially among high school principals. Dunham (1992) posits that attention has been drawn to the level of violence in schools and society which necessitates a conflict or mediation program which can be proactive enough to address concerns about violence and related conflicts in schools. Conflicts are a natural part of life and therefore a natural part of school life that brings with it a considerable amount of stress to the high school principals.

The researcher, D’souza (2003) observed that the standard and tone of the school are influenced by the principal and this sentiment is also echoed by Kelly (1987) when he postulated that, organizations are the cooperate theatres of action where standards and tones rally to bring up a conflict, where people act their roles, speak their scripts, say their peace and earn their bread at the end of it. Most conflicts in schools and organizations, he says, come up possibly in this way:-

“And you can’t play your part if you do not know your lines. And you can’t know your lines unless you know the play, And you can’t get the best out of your part unless you know where you stand on the stage, what your cues are, how to project your voice, how to hide your bad side where the prompter is” (pg 550).

With the rampant possible conflict in schools however, Hoy and Miskel (1982) conducted a research which proved that principals are at the vortex of solving conflicts between teachers, students, and parents. Not only are principals confronted with demands of parents, students and teachers, but they are responsible for seeing that teachers understand and support the objectives and policies of the school systems.

High School Principals’ Boundary-Spanning Stress

In this study, principal’s boundary spanning stress emanates from external conditions, such as negotiation and gaining public support from school budgets.

Research and studies by Doring (1993); Campbell and Williamson (1987) and Friedman (1997) suggest that principals are experiencing greater stress as a result of their responsibilities, as well as their position at the school where they must interact with all the stakeholders and school publics. Boundary spanning stress therefore, occurs where the demands on people, especially principals are greater than what they can reasonably expect to achieve. In a school situation, non — teaching staff through their workers union is described by Graham and Bennett (1998) as a system whereby employees’ terms of employment are settled not by individual negotiation but by agreements reached between representatives which apply equally to many employees and this is called collective bargaining. In his research, Doring (1993) found that meetings with the union representatives always poses high pay demands for the workers which some schools can’t afford hence the principal becomes the most stressed as he/she negotiates.
Since stress that emanates from boundary spanning can be intense and acute for it involves even members of the public, Woods (1990) argued that principals need to have sound public relations, high bargaining tact which can enable their institution to procure the needed resources among other competitors posing and having the same demands and pointed out that:

“Principals are in a highly vulnerable position..... standing at the intersection of the school and the outside world and at the centre of a role – set distinctive for competing and conflicting ,expectations. They have to dexterous diplomats with almost super human powers. If they are to survive and meet the respons- ibilities of their positions” (pg175).

The positions that seek to relate to the organization to other environmental sectors and that guide the organization in its effort to procure scarce resources and accomplish both organizational and societal goals do experience more stress. Karst and Rosenzweis (1974) and Friedman (1997) agrees and prescribe that there is a theoretical and empirical evidence to support the contention that people occupying boundary spanning positions in an organization, experience hard times, meet challenges and stress that it generates.

Methodology

The design of the study was descriptive survey. Nkpa (1997), states that descriptive survey design provides information about variables more clearly. Best and Kahn (2006), suggest that:

“Descriptive survey research is concerned with the analysis of relationships between non-manipulated variables and the development of generalizations, extending its conclusions beyond the sample observed.” Pg 146

The design however, enabled the researcher to study the causal relationships between the dependent and independent variables. The independent variables for study include high school principals’ experience in school management: level of education, sex (gender), age, and school characteristics: type of school, locality that is, rural or urban. Dependent variables include high school principals’ stress: sources, patterns, extent and effects of stress which are varied. Moderating variables include various education stakeholders, students’ background and auxiliary partners in education. Stratified random sampling was necessary because the stratum was able to capture both rural and urban schools for instance. All the registered schools were considered both public and privately owned for a more balanced outcome. Kathuri and Pals (1993) and Kothari (2004) state that when a researcher is interested in a certain or specified information, only respondents with such characteristics should be selected. Tortu et al (2004) reinforces this position by adding that apart from stratified random sampling, purposive sampling is necessary where a sample shows good evidence of providing the researcher with the needed information.
Table 2 Sample Size Distribution of Schools in Southern Nyanza Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>TARGET POPULATION</th>
<th>SAMPLE SIZE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Migori</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Kisii</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachuonyo</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suba</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuria</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rongo</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>254</strong></td>
<td><strong>77</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table 2, page 55, indicates the number of principals/schools per district in Southern Nyanza region representing the target population however, the sample size per district is proportionally calculated based on 30 percent which is a number considered to be statistically representative enough (Krathwol, 1997, Kerlinger, 1983, Wiersma, 2000 and Best & Khan 2006).

The HSPSI has six sections. Section I has the background information with necessary demographic details. Section II-IV combined a questionnaire that solicited information about the roles, tasks, arbitrations and collective bargaining that principals do for their schools which are not stress free. Section VI was on stress considerations ascertaining the extent, sources, stress patterns and varied additional useful information. In this section, the questionnaire on HSPSI employed the use of likert-scale simply because Bloomberg & Volpe (2008) and Gorard (2004) suggested that it is used to assess attitude and related concepts (multidimensional underlying variables) where respondents are asked a statement or questions and then rate their response on a scale of agreement (agree/disagree) or quantity (good/bad). The scale usually have five/seven points, sometimes three or even number. While clearly ordinal in nature, these scales are often treated as equal-interval and used with parametric techniques. In this regard therefore, data generated from the likert-scale was analysed by Karl Pearson’s Coefficient of Correlation, a parametric tool. Moreover, this instrument was found to be fitting most because stress could not be easily observed for it is attitudinal, personal and psychological in nature. The tool was very useful in helping the researcher to generate data. However, when seeking to answer research questions and objective seeking the extent at which high school principals are stressed, it included the following: Not stressful, stressful, very stressful, extremely stressful and not applicable. Finally, the hypothesis handled the aspects of sources of stress among the high school principals. There was unstructured interview schedule for the principals. The unstructured interview was preferred because it is flexible hence according to
Nkpa (1997), Orodho (2004) and Kothari (2004). Both inferential and descriptive statistics were used interchangeably. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts using tally sheets were used and percentages calculated, this is recommended by Frankael and Wallen (1993) because they portray the findings easily and at a glance. The information gathered through interview schedule was arranged thematically and transcribed into written texts. This allowed the researcher to arrive at valid conclusions about research questions. On the other hand, to get valid conclusions about the null hypothesis testing, correlation coefficient was used. Karl Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient, a parametric statistical tool was used to test the hypothesis which might not have been well handled using descriptive statistics. It was used to test the null hypothesis because studies done by Krysik and Finn (2007), suggests that in hypothesis testing with Pearson’s $r$, (rho), when a researcher uses a program such as the statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) or Excel to calculate a correlation coefficient it also calculates a $p$-value.

Results and Discussion

High School Principals’ Sources of Stress (QHSPSS) in Relation to their Job Experience in schools

To test for the first source of stress, Role Based Stress and the Principals’ Job Experience in School, a Karl Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient was conducted. Table 3, below, shows the result of the test.

Table 3 Source of Stress 1-Role based Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Based Stress</th>
<th>Principals’ Job Experience in School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role Based Stress</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation 0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance (1 tailed)</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Correlation is sig at 0.05 level (1tailed) | N=77
The result showed that Role Based Stress had moderate correlation, substantial but small relationship alpha 0.05, \( (r=0.49) \). From the result, the hypothesis is rejected. It can therefore be concluded that the Role Based Stress has significant relationship on the High School Principals’ Job Experience in school. This finding concurs with the sentiments of Mangal (2004) and Krysik & Finn (2007) who postulated that any computed correlation between \( \pm 0.41 \) to \( \pm 0.70 \) is moderate correlation, substantial but small relationship. Due to the fact that Role Based Stress is the type that emanates from ones role or key part of work or as per the office of occupancy, in most cases, the roles of the principals sometimes are not clearly defined hence causes stress.

During the interview with High School Principals, 36.7 percent indicated that Role Based Stress is rampant in that there is unclear role definition, unnecessary chains of command and interference from politicians and sponsors. Sagimo (2002) argues that ill defined roles lead to confusion and disorganization in places of work. Similarly, commenting on high school principals’ role ambiguity, DuBrin (2006) and Graham & Bennette (1998) contended that it causes stress in work place hence brings about role based stress among the principals. In this study however, the locality of schools which is a significant element in school management was determined so as to ascertain the diversity of schools.

To test for the second source of stress, Task Based Stress and the Principals’ Job Experience in School, a Karl Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient was conducted. Table 4, below, shows the result of the test.

**Table 4 Source of Stress 2-Task based Stress**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Based Stress Correlation</th>
<th>Principals’ Job Experience in School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance (1 tailed)</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation is sig at 0.05 level (1tailed)</td>
<td>N=77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result showed that Task Based Stress had high correlation, and marked relationship alpha 0.05, \( (r=0.72) \). From the result, the hypothesis is rejected. It can therefore be concluded that the Task Based Stress has high significant relationship on the High School Principals’ Job Experience in school. This finding concurs with the sentiments of Mangal (2004) Krysik & Finn (2007) who postulates that any computed correlation between \( \pm 0.71 \) to \( \pm 0.90 \) is high correlation, and marked relationship. Since Task Based Stress is the type that comes as a result of work that has to be done as per job description or as a principal, there are some unavoidable work/tasks that face principals. In a school core business is in academic performance. It is the task of the high school principal to maintain high or peak performance in school and it is stressful. This study found out a number of important facts about high schools performance mean score for three years 2007-2009. In 2007, there were 19 new schools that did not register students for KCSE examinations. For those who did examination, 27.3 percent got a mean score of 5.1 - 6.0 and only 9.1 percent scored the mean score of 6.1 - 7.0 out of the possible maximum 12.0 scale. This was a fairly low achievement. In 2008, there were 17 new schools that did not register for KCSE Examinations. For the schools which did register for KCSE, 24.7
percent scored the mean score of 5.1 – 6.0 and 14.3 percent scored a mean score of 6.1 – 7.0 out of the possible maximum 12.0 scale. Though the performance is still low, but is slightly better than 2007. In 2009, there were 12 new schools that did not register for KCSE examinations. For the schools that did register for KCSE, 18.2 percent scored the mean score of 5.1 – 6.0 while those who scored 6.1 – 7.0 increased to 15.6 percent. This year still, registered some improvements in the mean score such that, 1.3 percent scored 7.1 – 8.0 and 1.3 percent got a mean score of 8.1 – 9.0 of the possible 12.0 scale. Due to the fact that examination performance is dismal in this region, most high school principals are disturbed and Sergiovanni (2007) insists that disturbed, discouraged and worried high school principals exhibit high levels of stress when they do not attain their targets especially in their key tasks. D’souza (2003) and Olayiwola (2008) strongly argue that tasks like work overload, telephone interruptions competing to meet deadlines causes stress in work place, and therefore task based stress among high school principals is reasonably high in Southern Nyanza Region of Kenya.

To test for the third source of stress, Conflict Mediating Stress and the Principals’ Job Experience in School, a Karl Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient was conducted. The Table 5, shows the result of the test.

Table 5 Source of Stress 3-Conflict Mediating Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principals’ Job Experience in School</th>
<th>0.03</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Mediating Stress Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance (1 tailed)</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation is sig at 0.05 level (1tailed)</td>
<td>N=77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result showed that Conflict Mediating Stress had high correlation, and marked relationship alpha 0.05, (r=0.80). From the result, the hypothesis is rejected. It can therefore be concluded that the Conflict Mediating Stress has high significant relationship on the High School Principals’ Job Experience in school. This finding concurs with the studies done by Mangal (2004) and Krysik & Finn (2007) who concluded that any computed correlation between ±0.71 to ±0.90 is high correlation, and marked relationship. Due to the fact that Conflict Mediating Stress is the type of stress that comes as a result of resolving parents, teachers and students conflicts, in every work place, particularly institutions of learning where discipline and teamwork is paramount, conflicts cannot be absent or be avoided. In fact, DuBrin (2006) and Lussier (2005) contend that there is more conflict mediation and resolutions in many high schools.
In Kenya today, nearly all schools are sponsored by either a religious denomination, District Education Board (DEB) or a foundation. In this area it is not a strange phenomenon, where there are various sponsors for schools. Furthermore, this study discovered that in this region, most high schools, that is, 37.7 percent, are sponsored by the Seventh day Adventist (SDA) Church. These findings are confirmed and supported by the Ministry of Finance and planning (2002) in a report which revealed that Southern Nyanza is predominantly occupied by the Seventh day Adventist (SDA’s) faith. Since there are other different religious groups with different religious beliefs among students, staff, parents, and board members, the principals of these schools are likely to face conflict mediating stress as they arbitrate even matters of religious nature. During the interview with principals, 29 percent of them confessed that there is such a conflict especially when non Seventh day Adventist teachers want to teach on a Saturday and the Adventist students, backed by their conviction of faith, parents and the sponsor choose to go to church. Such situation calls for the principals’ intervention and is not stress free. Jaiyeoba and Jibril (2008) alludes and supports this sentiment when they rightly maintain that whenever there is a conflict in school, the principal who is the chief mediator in school has to intervene and this creates a conflict mediating stress. This therefore mandates that every high school principal should be well grounded in the knowledge of conflict mediation and resolution to avoid this kind of stress.

To test for the fourth source of stress, Boundary Spanning Stress and the Principals’ Job Experience in School, a Karl Pearson Correlation of Coefficient was conducted. The Table 6, below, shows the result of the test.

Table 6 Source of Stress 4-Boundary Spanning Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principals’ Job Experience in School</th>
<th>Boundary Spanning Stress Pearson Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significance (1 tailed)</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation is sig at 0.05 level (1tailed)</td>
<td>N=77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result showed that Boundary Spanning Stress had very high correlation, quite dependable relationship alpha 0.05, (r=0.93). From the result, the hypothesis is rejected. It can therefore be concluded that the Boundary Spanning Stress has very high significant relationship on the High School Principals’ Job Experience in School. This finding was in line with the studies done by Mangal (2004) Krystik & Finn (2007) asserted that any computed correlation between ± 0.91 to ± 0.99 is very high correlation, and quite dependable relationship. Since Boundary Spanning Stress is a kind of stress that comes as a result of seeking to relate the school to other environmental sectors and guiding the institution in its effort to procure scarce resources and accomplish both institutional and societal goals, principals are squarely involved. Studies done by Robbins et al (2010) revealed that managers, administrators including high school principals should be ardent bargainers because they are in a position to relate their institutions to their clientele which is not stress free and this kind of stress is normally high if not very high.
The study discovered that most of the schools in Southern Nyanza Region, Table 14, page 98 indicate that 83.1 percent are Public schools. Those which are privately owned are 16.9 percent only. In Kenya there has been a stiff competition between public and private school in terms of academic performance. While private schools through their respective boards of management charge reasonably high fee and levies to cater for their daily operations, public schools, however, are strictly controlled by the government hence some are even under staffed hence increases boundary spanning stress. These findings are supported by Woods (1990), World Bank (1999) and d’Arbon et al (2007) when they argued that under staffing leads to over load on principals hence they feel hurried, have too many tasks to do, too many decisions to make and find themselves constantly behind schedule. This situation persistently wears out and stresses principals.

The study also found out that, 83.1 percent of the schools in this region are found in the rural areas while only 16.9 percent are in urban areas. There are numerous and cardinal challenges in the rural areas of this region, which are not stress free to the principals. Research by NACC (2008) on HIV/AIDS, for instance, is in agreement when it stated that Nyanza province is leading in death rate due to this disease, and the region is hard hit by the scourge such that orphaned students are more challenged. These students cannot afford most of the basic necessities despite the efforts of well wishers and the few non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) for example, ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) and CRS (Catholic Relief Services) who are working very hard in this region. Consequently, when they go to school, their attention span and class attendance is very minimal even though principals work very hard to help them, and since they cannot provide for all their needs, principals get frustrated, stressed and burnt out when they see young promising youths drop out of school due to poverty. Furthermore, this study revealed that students are very irregular in school attendance hence hampers syllabus coverage and in turn results in poor examination performance (Hodge and Wylie 2005). In trying to curb this problem, principals find it a difficult task and it therefore brings undue pressure and stress to them.

Conclusion

This study made the following conclusion based on the findings:

The results of the study indicated that Role Based Stress had moderate correlation, substantial but small relationship with high school principals’ job experience in school. Task Based Stress had high significant relationship on the High School Principals’ Job Experience in school. The results also showed that Conflict Mediating Stress had a high correlation, and marked relationship with high school principals’ job experience in school. Finally, the results indicated that Boundary Spanning Stress had very high correlation and quite dependable relationship with high school principals’ job experience in school.
Recommendation

Due to the fact that Role based, Task based, Conflict mediating and boundary spanning stress had a positive correlation and quite dependable relationship with the high school principals’ stress in relation to their job experience in school, the Ministry of Education (MOE) should strive to take those teachers recruited to be the high school principals to a well organized in-service course for stress management and coping strategies which should be periodical. Employee Stress Assistance Program (ESAP) should also be in place as a unit in every DEO’s office.

References


