

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND HOW IT INFLUENCES EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AMONG PUBLIC SERVANTS IN UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

The study attempted to unravel the influence of occupational stress to employee performance. The findings revealed that 97.6% of respondents have experienced stress at their place of work. 60% of respondents attributed occupational stress to work overload, 31.7% reported stress arising from negative work relations, 21.9% reported role ambiguity and conflict as a source of stress and 14.6% reported long hours as a source of stress. Other minor causes of stress include lack of job security, low salaries, and facilitation, which in turn creates financial strains, hence the occupational stress.

Findings further show that occupational stress has an effect on the employee at work. 51.2% reported a fall in their job performance as a result of stress, 29.2% reported psychological effects like mood swings, feelings of anger towards other employees, and frequent arguments with co-workers, and 19.5% reported physiological effects which include excessive perspiration, frequent headaches, and nausea coupled with fatigue.

Occupational stress has an effect on the organization itself. 41.5% of respondents observed a decline in the overall performance of employees who experience occupational stress due to the delays observed in the execution of tasks at the organization.

26.8% reported a fall in timely and quality service delivery from the organization. A few respondents reported no significant effect noticed on the organization, in fact, it improved service delivery and performance. Using relaxation techniques like listening to music and watching soccer as a means of managing occupational stress, 22% of respondents utilized social support networks like counseling and interacting with colleagues, and 29.3% had to improve on-time management in order to manage occupational stress.

The study recommends more personal and group wellness programs, improvement in workplace communication and working environment, redesigning of jobs and their description to reduce on job ambiguity hence managing occupation stress.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study provides findings on the baseline survey on how Occupation stress influences employee performance in the Uganda Public Service The survey preceded Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health research, which studied the mental health of 376 Ugandan workers in 21 humanitarian aid agencies. It revealed that a significant number of staff at these

organizations experienced symptoms of depression (68%), anxiety disorders (53%) and 26% showed symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). These are some of the common symptoms of stress.

The study further suggested that by the year 2020, depression alone would constitute one of the largest health problems worldwide. This is further supported by a study conducted by the World Health Organization in 2005, which suggested that by 2020, stress would be a major cause of workplace ill health. Most of these symptoms are not peculiar to the Uganda Civil Service and it is against this background that the Counselling and Guidance Division of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development set out to carry out this baseline study.

1.1 The objective of the study

The overall objective of the study was conducted to establish and collect baseline data about the impact of Occupation stress on employee performance on the Uganda Public Servants.

The study intended to achieve the following specific objectives;

- To identify the status of occupational stress awareness among employees in the Public service
- Establish the causes of Occupational stress among employees • To establish how Occupational stress can influence employee performance
- Identify occupational stress prevention strategies that can be recommended to the Public service

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The target population for the study was employees of the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development. A sample size of fifty (50) respondents was used. The justification for this sample was that it was important for the research team to choose a number that they can have access to within the time frame in which the study is being conducted (Fraeklin and Warren, 2002). Convenience sampling was used to select the respondents. This sampling technique was used simply because the respondents were accessible to the research team. To reach the objectives of the study, both primary and secondary data were collected during the research process. Primary data was collected by self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaire was first pretested for validity and coherence among members of the Employment Services Departmental Senior Management Committee where members had their input captured and incorporated into the questionnaire. The questionnaire was then programmed as a google form template; a link was then created and sent out to the respondents to fill in. The data was then uploaded to the Google server in real-time. Secondary data was collected mainly from published textbooks, articles, and websites. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used in this study.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of stress as an organizational phenomenon (occupational stress). The experience of stress involves situations that are demanding on resources as well as the feeling of distress

experienced subjectively. An individual may experience stress at different levels based on what they view as stressful or not.

According to Bowling and Harvey (2001), the interaction between the environment and the individual results in stress, which brings about emotional discomfort, which inevitably affects the physical and mental condition of the person? This tends to affect the people and consequently the job performance. It is important to note that stressors, which are the situations, or circumstances that bring a state of disequilibrium within individual cause stress.

Bowling and Harvey (2001) further argue that there exists an impeccable cost on people, Organizations, and society because of stress. This is because stress brings about a lot of anxiety and stress-related disorders on the part of the employees, which leads to low productivity on the part of employees. (Source: Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol.5, No.8, p.1-17, September 2017)

3.1 Causes of Stress at Work

There have been five major sources of stress identified by Arnold, Robertson, and Cooper (1991). These are factors inherent to the job, the organizational role-played, relationships at work, career development, and organizational structure and climate.

3.2 Factors inherent to the Job

The factors inherent to the job include:

Poor Working Conditions: This refers to the physical surrounding of the job which may include high levels of noise, high or low lighting, fumes, heat, poor ventilation systems, smells, and all the stimuli which bombard a worker's senses and can affect his mood swing overall mental state. Also, an office that is poorly designed physically can be classified under poor working conditions, because this may hinder communication which might lead to poor working relationships and might lead to stress.

Long Working Hours: Many jobs require long working hours, which in turn take its toll on employees' health and makes them suffer a lot of stress. For instance, an individual or a worker who may have had no sleep for long hours may find that both his/her work quality suffers. In addition, the individual's health is affected as well.

Risk and Danger: A job that involves more risk and danger puts employees at higher stress levels. This is because when an employee is constantly aware of potential danger and is prepared to react to any incident without hesitation, it brings about rush, respiration changes, and muscles tension which are seen as potentially threatening in the long term.

New Technology: With the introduction of new technologies into the working environment, workers have to continually adapt to new equipment, new systems, and new ways of working. This serves as a major source of stress because of the pressure it comes along with. For instance, being trained with current methods may be a burden for an employee who was trained and applied training methods the old way.

Work Under-Load: This defines the situation whereby employees find their jobs not challenging enough or under their capabilities. This may be caused by doing the same work repeatedly which becomes a routine, work that is boring and not stimulating enough. This may lead to employee dissatisfaction, which can lead to stress (Anbazhagan et al., 2013).

Role Overload: This happens when the employee has so much work to do because of he/she has to meet some deadlines, which often causes stress in employees. Osipow and Davis, (1988), posited that role overload is the extent to which role demands are perceived by the respondents as exceeding personal and workplace resources and their perceived inability to accomplish the expected workload. Role overload, therefore, can be seen as relating to the performance of a given amount of work in a given period and it is experienced when an individual decides to conform to some tasks and to refuse some in a given period.

3.3 Role in the Organization

When the role and expectations of an individual in an organization are defined clearly and understood it minimizes stress. However, the role in the organization when unclear can bring about stress. Some of these roles include the following:

Role Ambiguity: This is defined as the degree to which clear and specific information is lacking with role requirements (Yongkang et al., 2014). In other words, the main employee perceives that he or she is in a difficult situation, and the job obligation is unclear and not stated in a straightforward manner. It has also been established to be an aspect of job dissatisfaction, influence employee creativity, and tendency to quit the organization.

Role Conflict: This occurs when employees are confronted with incompatible role expectations in the various positions they occupy. It can also be connected to either a short period or a long period, and to situational experiences.

Relationship at Work: How people relate at the workplace affects them and their work greatly, working in a stable environment where employees get to know one another very well helps to facilitate work and reduces pressure. When employees are able to deal with their bosses, peers, and subordinates very well, it affects how they feel but when an employee experiences poor working relationships with superiors, colleagues, and subordinates his stress level increases. People who are in high need of relationships, work best in solid work teams and may suffer stress in unstable work teams and probably may not be able to give out their best. This is because most employees spend so much time at the workplace and therefore poor working relationships can affect them adversely.

Career Development: Organizations have become flatter, meaning that power and responsibility now radiate throughout the organization. The workforce has become more diversified. Jobs and careers get scarcer. For a person who had been determined to rise through an organization, the challenge has recently become greater. Opportunities to learn new skills are now becoming requirements. Career development causes a lot of stress to employees throughout their working lives. Staying the same is quickly becoming an inadequate approach to work, which means that one would have to learn new ways of working by upgrading one's knowledge. Shortage of job security, fear of redundancy, obsolescence and many performance appraisals can cause pressure and strain. Also, the

frustration of having reached one's career ceiling or having been over-promoted can result in stress.

Physical Environment: Working conditions of jobs have been linked to physical and mental health. A physical environment that can be a source of stressors includes exposure to hot room temperatures, frequent light-outs, and dangerous poisonous substances. It was found that poor mental health-related directly to unpleasant work conditions, physical effort and speed in job performance, and excessive, inconvenient hours (Osipow,1998). Also, researchers have found increasing evidence that repetitive and dehumanizing environments adversely affect physical health.

3.4 Symptoms and Effects of Stress on Performance

Stress shows itself in many ways. For instance, an individual who is experiencing a high level of stress may develop high blood pressure, ulcers, and the like.

These can be grouped into three categories; physiological, psychological and behavioral symptoms.

3.5 Psychological Symptoms and its Effects

These are the major consequences of stress. Then mental health of employees is threatened by high levels of stress and poor mental health. Employees' work performance may deteriorate due to psychological symptoms, unlike physical symptoms. Anger, anxiety, depression, nervousness, irritability, aggressiveness, and boredom is believed to result in low employee performance, declines in self-esteem, resentment of supervision, inability to concentrate, trouble in making a decision, and job dissatisfaction. Also, the psychological symptoms of stress can lead to burnout.

“Job burnout is a continued withdrawal from work which makes the sufferer devalue his work and sees it as a source of dissatisfaction (Mark, 2012).”

3.6 Behavioral Symptoms and their Effects

The behavioral signs of stress include eating more or eating less, cigarette smoking, use of alcohol and drugs, rapid speech pattern, and nervous fidgeting which leads to absenteeism from work, hopping from job to job, and causes performance to deteriorate.

3.7 Physiological Symptoms and their Effects

These are changes in the metabolism that accompany stressors. The symptoms include increased heart rate, blood pressure, etc. With this, the wear and tear on the body become noticeable and problematic. The effects of this are back pains, migraine headaches, insomnia, heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and even cancer, which affect employees' job performance. These symptoms and its effects can lead to either positive or negative outcomes, and to this extent, the dynamics of the nature of stress and the management of stress merit serious consideration.

3.8 Effects of Occupation stress on Job Performance

There is significant inconsistency among researchers concerning the direct and indirect effects of various putative stressors. Direct stress effects are those incurred by the task load alone irrespective of any psychological stress that may also be generated.

Accordingly, indirect stress effects are those that evolve out of psychological factors associated with the task load demands. There is a narrow line that separates these two, and they can be indistinguishable at times. This fact has made their separation and measurement particularly difficult.

There are several issues at the heart of the inconsistencies found in the literature. For example, is the application of some task demand (i.e. workload or time pressure) an application of stress? Many would argue that it is, while others would contend the contrary. Proponents of the former typically offer one of two arguments.

The first argument states that stress is a term that can be applied to any demand on a system. Therefore, any task that requires mental resources qualifies as a stressor-it place a demand on the system. This argument meets the criteria of early stress definitions (stimulus-based approaches); however, it is no longer, as accepted demands incur a psychological cost in addition to their direct effects. That is to say, these demands trigger a psychological response such as frustration, anxiety, or psychological discomfort.

This response often contains both physiological and mental components that vie for resources. In this way, devoting them instead to secondary psychological processors. On the other hand, a compelling argument can be made that workload is a demand that does not require, not regularly incur, a secondary psychological cost.

In applying the state definition of stress, the interaction between three perceptions: demand, and the importance of being able to cope, it is difficult to see how demand characteristics alone qualify as stressors (McGrath, 1976).

For example, in some cases, time pressure and or workload would trigger anxiety or frustration that might further distract or interfere with performance. However, it is not clear that this would necessarily be so in most, let alone all, situations.

If agreed that subjective experience and specifically cognitive appraisal is elemental in defining stress, then one must assume it plays a significant role in answering questions about whether workload, time pressure, or other putative stressors carry both direct and indirect effects.

Does this suggest that when demand is deemed stressful or upsetting it is performance yet is viewed as stressful by the operator, does this indicate that it would be a considerate stressor? Reasonable arguments can be made to support both positions, and the research literature, in its current state, is a reflection of this fact. Although it can be argued that each stressor involves direct effects, each may also carry indirect effects as well. For example, time pressure limits the time available to perform a given task.

This limit is a physical boundary that does not require any psychological explanation in understanding its direct effects on performance. However, this limitation often evokes a corresponding psychological reaction such as anxiety that has secondary or indirect effects on performance. The ability to separate these two dimensions has proved difficult for the research community.

The research that addresses various putative stressors discussed in the review (e.g., workload, time pressure, heat, cold, noise, and fatigue) rarely makes the distinction between these two dimensions, given the inherent difficulty in doing so. Therefore, discussions of these factors in this review comprise both direct and indirect effects, without distinguishing between them.

Performance is defined as a "measure of the quantity and quality of work done considering the cost of the resource it took to do the work."

It is further suggested that to measure organizational human resource performance one has to reflect total labor cost per unit of output.

"Individual performance depends on three factors which are; ability to do the work, the level of effort, and support is given to that person." (Mathis and Jackson, 2000)

The relationship of these factors, widely acknowledged in management literature, is that Performance (P) is the result of Ability (A) multiplied by Effort (E) multiplied by Support (S), that is;

$$P = A \times E \times S$$

Performance is diminished if any of these factors are reduced or absent.

An "inverted U-type curve" has been used to portray the effect stress has on performance.

"The curve indicated that as stress increases so do the performance. However, if the stress continues to increase beyond an optimal point, performance will peak and start to decline." (Blumenthal, 2003)

This shows that stress is necessary to enhance performance, but once it reaches a level of acute discomfort, it is harmful and counter-productive". It is further argued that "excess stress is harmful, destructive and detrimental to human well-being and performance. Stress can have an impact on an individual's well-being by causing dysfunction or disruption in multiple areas". This dysfunction extends into the organizational world and leads to decreased performance.

3.9 Stress Management at the Workplace

Robbins (2004) indicated that stress can be handled in two ways; the individual and organizational approaches (Robbins, 2004). The individual approach constitutes; Exercise, which entails walking, riding bicycles, attending aerobic classes, practicing yoga, jogging, swimming, and playing tennis. Individuals could control stress through relaxation.

Individuals can also decrease tension through relaxation techniques like meditation. The objective is to reach a state of deep relaxation in which the employee feels physically relaxed, somewhat detached from the immediate environment, and detached from body sensations, Relaxation exercises lessen the employee's heart rates, blood pressure, and other physiological signs of stress.

Another way to decrease stress individually is by opening up. A healthy response to these moments or periods of personal crisis is to confide in others. Employees may not find it easy to discuss complex individual traumas with others, but self-disclosure can decrease the level of stress and give them a more positive viewpoint on life. Organization approach to stress management may include; Employees training programs, effective upward and downward communication in the organization, improvement in personnel policies such as (good welfare packages, incentives, pension schemes), good job design, improvement in the physical work environment, and also management should provide technical support to employees.

These management strategies emphasize the important role of stress and its management and provide further support for the perception that stress does have an impact on performance. The results of Humara (2002)'s review of some of the above programs indicated that programs that included some of those concepts tend to be the most effective at improving performance and reducing anxiety: goal-setting, positive thinking, situation restructuring, relaxation, focused attention, and imagery and mental rehearsal.

4.0 FINDINGS

The study sought to document the status of the level of awareness of occupational stress among public servants. The study was guided by a set of four objectives as listed in the objectives section of this report and data was collected following these objectives

Out of 50 respondents sampled for the study, 41 respondents took part in the study spread across different management levels of the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development. In terms of gender, figure 1 shows that 41.5% of the respondents were female while 58.5% were male. Results further show that only 4.5% of the respondents were between the age of 18-25 years [Females: 4.9%, Males: 0.0%], 34.1% were between 26-35 years [Females: 9.8%,

Males: 24.4%], 31.7% were between 36-45 years [Females: 17.1%, Males: 14.6%], 12.2% were between 46-52 years [Females: 2.4%, Males: 9.8%] and only 17.1% were 53 years and above [Females: 7.3%, Males: 9.8%]

Figure 1: Percent distribution of surveyed respondents by gender

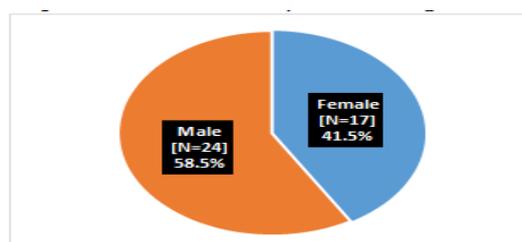
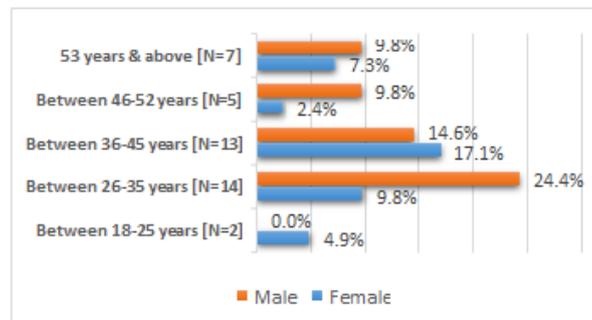


Figure 2: Percent distribution of surveyed respondents by age group and gender



Results show that 68.3% of respondents were married [Females: 24.4%, Males: 43.9%], 29.3% were single [Females: 14.6%, Males: 14.6%] while only 2.4% were widowed [Females: 0.0%, Males: 2.4%] as shown by Figure 3. Figure 4 shows that male respondents had an averagely higher level of education than the female respondents, with 29.3% of the respondents having a bachelor’s degree *Females: 17.1%, Males: 12.2%], 2.4% having a certificate [Females: 2.4%,

Males: 0.0%+, 56.1% having a Master’s degree *Females: 19.5%, Males: 36.6%+ and only 12.2% having Post graduates Diploma [Females: 2.4%, Males: 9.8%]

Figure 3: Percentage distribution of respondents by marital status and gender.

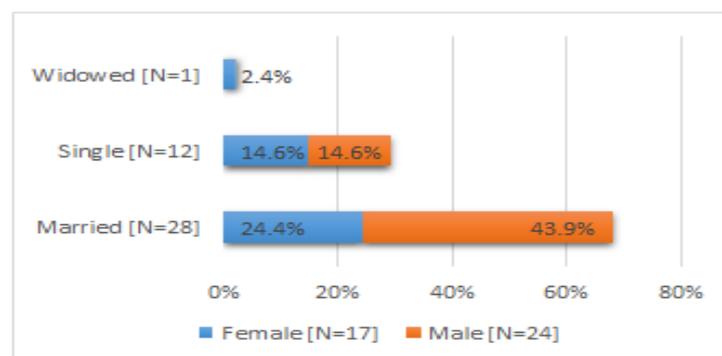
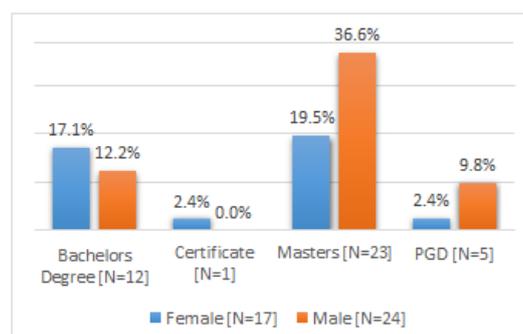


Figure 4: Percentage distribution of respondents by education level and gender.



The questionnaire also collected data on the nature of the job of the respondents at the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development. Figure 5 shows that 24.4% of the respondents were employed on a contract term [Females: 9.8%, Males: 14.6%], 68.3% were on a permanent term [Females: 24.4%, Males: 43.9%] and only 7.3% of the respondents were employed on a temporary basis and all were female [7.3%]. Further analysis shows that almost half of the respondents have been in service for a period between 1 and 3 years (43.9%). An equal number of respondents have been in service for a period between 4-7 years, 15-21 years, and 21 years and above (14.6%), and only 12.2% have served for a period between 8-14 years at the ministry.

Figure 5: Percentage distribution of respondents by nature of job and gender.

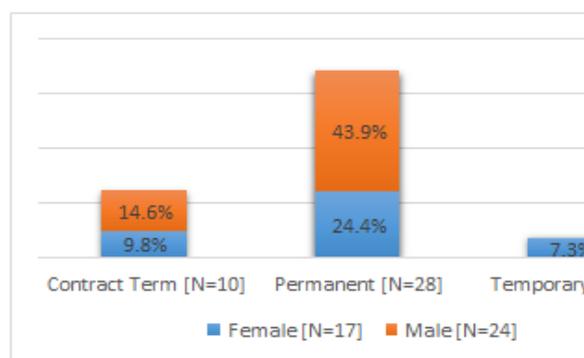
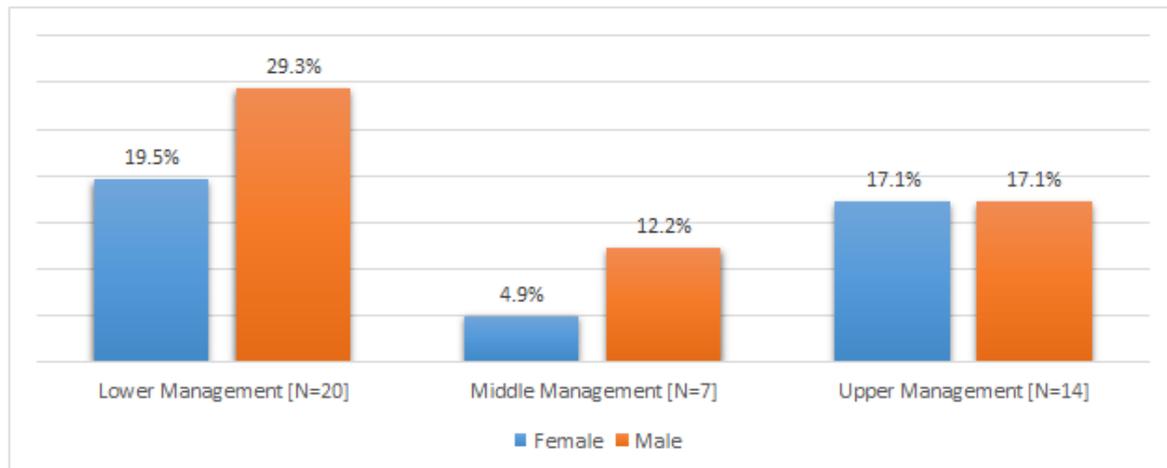


Figure 6: Percentage distribution of respondents by a period of service.



Results further show that almost half of the respondents who answered the questionnaire were from the lower management level of the Ministry (48.8%), 17.1% were from middle management and 34.1% were from upper management. Figure 7 further shows that 19.5% of respondents were females in lower management while 29.3% were male. 4.9% of the respondents were females in middle management and 12.2% were male. An equal percentage of males and females (17.1%) constituted upper management employees. Analysis shows that 78.6% of the respondents in upper management have been in service for 8 years and above while 70% of the respondents in lower management have served for less than 3 years in the ministry.

Figure 7: Percentage distribution of respondents by Management level and gender.



4.1 Occupational stress and its Causes

Section D of the questionnaire captured information from respondents about their knowledge of occupational stress and its cause.

4.2 Knowledge about Occupational stress

Asked whether they have ever heard of the term “Occupational stress”, it is observed from Figure 8 that 92.7% of respondents have heard of the term “Occupational stress” while only 7.3% have never heard of the term

This shows that almost all respondents have heard of occupational stress at their work place.

Figure 8: Percentage distribution of respondents who have heard of Occupational stress.



4.3 Definition of Occupational stress.

All respondents had responded to Occupational Stress in almost a similar way but with different statements. When put together, occupational stress is a type of stress, physical or psychological, that comes because of the challenges associated with one’s job.

“It refers to ongoing stress an employee experiences due to the responsibilities in view of his/her job description, conditions, working environment or other pressures of the work place, whether government

, private sector or CSO setting.”

Respondent 17, Male, **MGLSD**

“Stress that one experiences as a result of the job and work he/she is undertaking.”

Respondent 26, Female, **MGLSD**

Causes of Stress at work-place

Figure 9: Percentage distribution of respondents who have heard of Occupational stress.

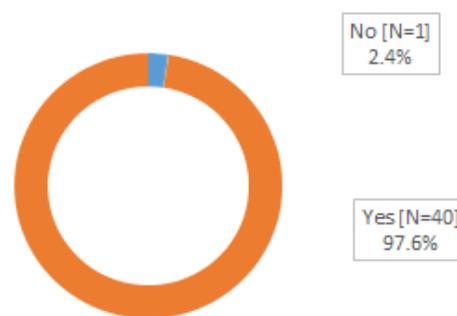


Figure 9 shows that almost all respondents approached in the study at one point have experienced stress at their place of work. Only 2.4% of the respondents have never experienced stress while 97.6% have experienced it.

The causes of occupational stress vary among the respondents with almost 60% of respondents attributing it to work overload. Work overload arises when a job's demand exceeds an employee's ability to deal with them. Respondents reported that they get frustrated when they have an excessive workload, Unable to meet some of the deadlines, which are in most cases unrealistic or too tight, and when have limited staff, resources, or equipment to complete a particular task.

31.7% of the respondents also reported stress arising from negative work relations. They reported frustrations when they are unable to deal with some of their supervisors who exhibited unprofessional conduct when working alongside their subordinates when the office was engulfed in work conflicts including arguments between employees and their employers. Respondents in Upper management reported getting stressed when subordinates and other colleagues fail to follow technical advice agreed upon during meetings. Some of the respondents reported low support from their supervisors as a major cause of stress at work.

21.9% of respondents reported role ambiguity and conflict as a source of stress. They further explained that unclear job descriptions, unrealistic job expectations coupled with multiple work demands, which are uncoordinated by supervisors. There is pressure from bosses to achieve results without proper funding.

14.6% of respondents also reported long working hours as a cause of stress. They explained that some assignments require them to work long hours. Coupled with schedules that are not flexible at all, this creates conflicting time demands between work and family hence “stress”.

Other sources of stress reported by respondents include lack of job security, low salaries, and facilitation, which in turn creates a failure to meet financial needs at home, end of contracts for employees and abrupt changes in the organization.

Figure 10: Percentage distribution of respondents by causes of occupational stress.



4.4 Occupational stress and its Effects

Section D of the questionnaire further collected data on how occupational stress affected the respondents at their place of work, how it affected the organization and how it affected their families.

4.5 At work

At work, 51.2% of the respondents reported a fall in their job performance. There was the inability to perform and communicate in a productive manner due to the stress. There was an increase in time taken to complete tasks, which usually took little time. Deadlines were no longer met because of stress and some of them even lost commitment to the job.

29.2% of respondents reported psychological effects because of occupational stress. As further explained by the respondents, these effects include; feelings of anger, mood swings, and frequent arguments which would affect other workmates, abnormal feelings of depression, hopelessness and failure, feelings of inferiority among fellow workers (low confidence), and feelings of job insecurity.

19.5% of the respondents also reported physiological effects. Respondents explained that they felt excessive perspirations and palpitations because of occupational stress. Other respondents developed high blood pressure and experienced frequent headaches and nausea coupled with a lot of fatigue.

Figure 11: Percentage distribution of respondents by the effect of occupational stress (at work)



4.6 On the organization

Results show that all respondents reported an effect of occupational stress on their organization. The effects were greatly seen on job performance with 41.5% of respondents reporting a decline in job performance during performance assessments. A lot of absenteeism and late coming were noticed among the employees. There was a delay in the execution of tasks and delays in the submission of reports all resulting from occupational stress. 26.8% of respondents reported effects on service delivery from the organization. They further explained that the organization lost a number of experienced staff as a result of the effects of occupational stress. Many targets were not met since there was reduced productivity among the employees. A few respondents agreed to the fact that occupational stress has no significant effect on the organization; in fact, it usually increases performance among employees.

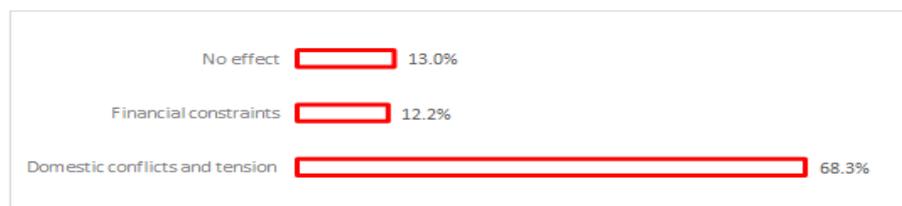
4.7 On the family

Figure 12 indicates that 68.3% of respondents reported an increase in domestic conflicts and tensions because of stress at work. Increased arguments and harshness at home, divorce with partners, parental and children conflicts, and reduction in family bonding are some of the effects of occupational stress. Female respondents reported a lack of concentration on family chores during evenings and weekends.

Results further show that 12.2% of respondents reported financial constraints during periods of stress at work. This was majorly due to loss of employment because of some of the causes of occupational stress especially arguments with supervisors.

Only 13% of respondents reported that occupational stress had no effect on their families. These respondents further explained that they managed to achieve a work-family life balance in that they make sure that their families do not know about work problems.

Figure 12: Percentage distribution of respondents by the effect of occupational stress (on the family)



4.8 Occupational stress management

4.8.1 Individual approach

According to figure 13, the most utilized strategy by employees to reduce occupational stress is using relaxation techniques (34.1%) which include playing music, watching soccer, taking time off to relax with children and other family members, doing physical activities, and staying home.

22.0% of respondents utilized social support networks, which include going for counseling sessions, interacting with colleagues during break and lunch breaks, talking with family about work issues, and requesting support when needed.

29.3% of respondents had to improve on their time management in order to manage work stress, and 12.2 % did nothing about it. Only 2.4% focused their energies on seeking other job opportunities.

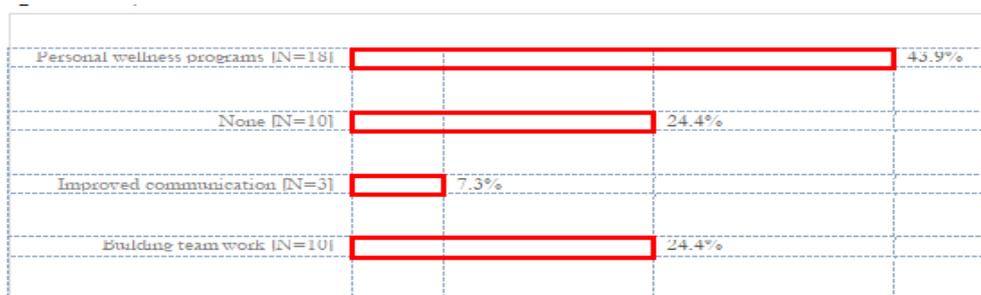
Figure 13: Percentage distribution of respondents by occupational stress management approach (Individual)



4.8.2 Organizational approach

Figure 14 gives a summary of the occupational stress prevention methods that exist in MGLSD. 24.4% of the respondents reported no existing stress prevention methods in the organization. Almost 25% reported the use of team-building approaches to prevent occupation stress in the organization. These include giving staff more control of their work, regular meetings to set realistic targets, an increase in staff allowances and facilitations, and other team-building programs. 43.9% of respondents reported personal wellness programs at the organization, which include Health runs, aerobics sessions, and Counselling sessions for all employees. Only 7.4% of respondents reported an improved chain of communication between supervisors and subordinates in order to manage stress from uncoordinated supervisors.

Figure 14: Figure 13: Percentage distribution of respondents by occupational stress management approach (Organization)



4.9 Prevention methods for occupational stress

Figure 15 shows that respondents recommend more personal and group wellness programs (56.1%) to be put in place as a preventive measure for Occupational stress. These should include organization-paid vacations and more professional counseling and guidance sessions. 34.1% recommended improved communication and working conditions like maintenance of working equipment, involvement of employees (low level alike) in major decisions being made in the organization, and more facilitation availed to employees. 4.9% of respondents recommended redesigning of jobs and their descriptions while only 4.9% had no recommendation to make.

Figure 15: Percentage distribution of respondents by recommendations on stress prevention



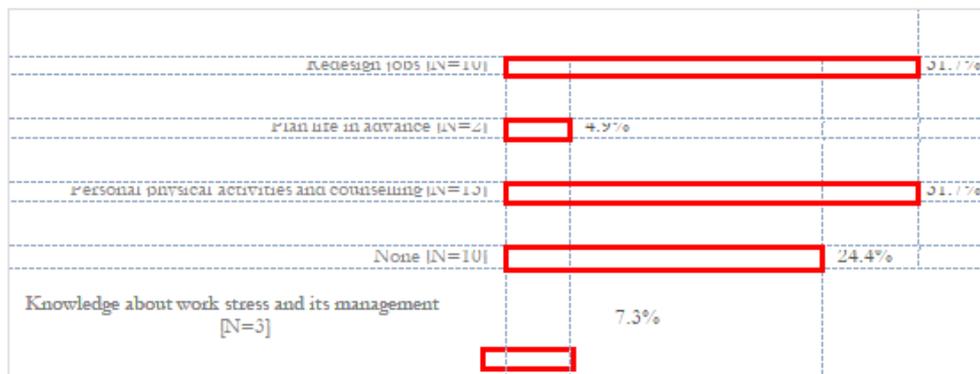
4.10 Occupational stress prevention methods learnt post-COVID19

According to figure 16, Personal physical activities and counselling (31.7%) are the most important Occupational stress prevention techniques learnt because of the COVID19 pandemic effect.

31.7% of respondents learnt to redesign their jobs to lessen the effects of occupational stress with an emphasis on virtual working which is possible in case of limited resources (work from home), striking a balance between work and home activities.

24.4% of respondents reported learning nothing in order to manage occupational stress effects, 7.4% reported learning more about work stress and how to manage it and lessen its effects and only 4.9% learnt to plan for life in advance i.e. saving to meet the basic needs of life.

Figure 16: Percentage distribution of respondents by recommendations on stress prevention



5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This baseline survey sought to collect and analyze data to ascertain the level of knowledge and prevalence of occupational stress in the Uganda public service. Based on the findings in the study, it is clear that occupational stress does exist among employees of the Uganda public service. Findings also show that there are multiple causes of occupational stress, which have physical, psychological, and behavioral effects. The study findings show that some employees have no stress management techniques to enable them to cope with occupational stress effects. This section concludes on the premise that, although occupational stress to some extent improves performance for the organization, it has adverse effects on the employee and their family as well.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

Much as preliminary findings and literature review show occupational stress enhances job performance, the negative effects associated with it in regards to the employee and their families are too many to ignore. Therefore, management should come up with an overall stress reduction strategy or policy focusing mainly on the employees. In addition, jobs should be assigned taking into account the age group, working experience, and education level of employees in order not to overburden them with ambiguous workloads.

There is a need to improve inter Departmental/Agency/Ministry communication while closely working together with LGs to ensure a good working environment for the employees.

Measures such as appropriate working hours, quality tools and equipment, relative workloads, leaves, and breaks are recommended to reduce occupational stress in order to improve employee performance.

A cross-sectional study to includes other Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies are likely to give more inferential outcomes hence, there is a need to conduct further studies on occupational stress and its effects on family and job performance.

An overall stress reduction strategy or occupational stress policy is recommended in order to fully unpack the causes and effects of occupational stress in the Uganda Public Service.

Provide onsite or distance counseling to the distressed employees.

Encourage social activity, Employees spend a lot of time together, and the more comfortable they are, the less stress they will feel. As coworkers get to know each other, expectations and communication barriers are broken down, greasing the wheels for easier future interactions.

Allow for flexible working hours and remote working.

Encourage workplace Wellness-Exercise takes employees' minds off the stress of their job to focus on the task. It also improves moods by increasing the production of endorphins.

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