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EFFECTS OF TIME AND COST EFFECTIVE STRESS MONITORING, MANAGEMENT, PREVENTION AND REDUCTION PROGRAMS ON STAFF PERFORMANCE IN THE KENYA DISCIPLINED SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose for this paper was to explore the effects of time and cost effective stress monitoring, management, prevention and reduction programs on staff performance in the Kenya Disciplined Services. In this study, Kenya Disciplined services staff were surveyed to identify their perceived job stressors and measure degree of impact of job related stress and organizations performance. The result was used to design effective strategies for reducing job stress that will in turn result in improved job performance among these staff. The survey method was used to help determine the level of workplace stress of the staff and the impact on staff and organizations performance. Stratified random sampling was utilized in drawing a representative sample of 111 employees from a population of 557 for the study. The target population for study was based on all employees of NYS in all the six Nairobi Stations. A structured questionnaire administered by research assistant was the main data collection instrument for the research. The researcher used statistical package for Social Scientists (SPSS) data analysis program to help generate statistical analysis further. The results were presented in descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages. The study found out that time and cost effective monitoring, management prevention had an effect of performance in the Kenyans Disciplined Services. The study therefore recommended that there was a need for NYS to realign its vision, mission and long-term objective for the challenges of becoming a premier disciplined Service will be reflected on the quality of service delivery, corporate image, staff productivity and efficiency in service delivery. Achieving these organization performance indicators calls for among others a stress free working environment among staff and a comprehensive stress policy to monitor, manage and prevent work stress.

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INTRODUCTION

Kenyan Disciplined Services, officers operating under severe and chronic stress may well be at greater risk of error, accidents and over-reaction that can compromise their performance, jeopardize public safety and pose significant liability costs to the organization. However, discipline officers are rarely provided with effective stress management strategies to help alleviate these problems.

In disciplined organizations, officers with high job demands describe themselves as “working very fast” “working very hard” and not “having enough time to get the job done.” Officers with little workplace control describe themselves as lacking the ability and/or authority to make decisions or impact on their job. The result of job stress is clearly detrimental to both organizational and individuals. In Kenya however, the economic costs of job stress, including absenteeism and lost productivity, are difficult to estimate but could be as high as several billion shillings per year.

There are several stressors in the Kenya Disciplined Services. Bullying, work or the fear of losing the job are all examples of stressors. Although work overload in Kenya and specifically in Kenya Disciplined Services is not necessarily as high as in the Western countries or Asia, nevertheless, stress at the workplace implicate far-reaching consequences on officers and the organization.

In Kenya Disciplined Services, it is common for senior officers to command their juniors to use “initiative” whenever the latter are faced with challenging task which has deadlines yet the former do not issue any guidelines at all. This boards on of supportive supervision. Supportive supervision occurs when employees have high quality relationships with their supervisors. Supportive supervisors provide guidance and display confidence in their juniors. By effects of stress by helping officers focus the work at the hand and giving them confidence to perform their jobs. For instance, when work is moderate and positive related to performance, officers with high quality relationships with their supervisors should experience heightened motivation, task focus and performance. Conversely, supportive supervision will reduce the distracting nature of home stress, shift attention back to work and weaken the negative relationship between home stress and performance.

Job-related stress has emerged as a significant workplace problem in a number of countries around the world and it is increasingly becoming accepted as a workplace phenomenon negatively affecting a growing number of people and organizations (Cox et al,2000). The experience of stress in organizations is today a widely acknowledged problem. (Astraschan, 1995). Stress does not only entail individual and societal problems but also implies a managerial and organizational problem since a great share of organizational resources and capabilities reside within individuals.

“Job stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of a job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Job stress can lead to poor health and even I injury. “(Stress at work (United States National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health), Cincinnati,1999.)

It can be conceptualized as an interactive imbalance between the individual and the individuals work environment and the perceived ability to cope either the situation. This process will be influenced by the nature and the extent of the demands, he characteristic of the person, the social support available to the individuals and the constraints under which the coping process is taking place (Cox et al, 2000).

The emotional, cognitive, behavioral and physiological reaction to aversive and noxious aspects of work, work environments and work organizations. It is a state characterized by high levels of arousal and distress and often by feelings of not coping.” (Guidance on work-related stress: Spice of life- or kiss of death, European Commission, Directorate- General for Employment and Social Affairs).

Stress “is the reaction people have due to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them.” (Managing stress at work: Discussion document, United Kingdom Health and Safety commission, London,

1999.) The study Cox et al, 2000 definition is Work in the disciplined services is often regarded as an extreme stressful occupation, and officers typically suffer a variety of stress effects, trickling down on their ability to perform their duties effectively and satisfactorily (Rollin and Mike Atkinson,1999). It has also been argued in the management ranks of the different Kenya Disciplined Services that particular attention be given to occupational stress in Kenya Police, Administration Police and the NYS as its potential negative consequences affect society in more direct and critical ways than stress in most other occupations. Employee stress is there a significant bottom line issue that impacts on an organizations performance capacity. It cannot be ignored by any employer wishing to stay competitive in today marketplace as stress-free working environment creates a situation that is conducive for optimal work performance that in effect improves organizational performance. It was therefore desirable to survey the impact of work stress on the staff performance In the Kenya Disciplined Services and suggest a cost effective stress management strategy for the organizations. In the disciplined services, officers and staff are bound by strict difficulties in managing their occupational role. Issues related to leadership and management, occupational culture and identify and the nature of work have a direct bearing on their experience of work stress, the result of which negatively impact on the performance of the organization in terms of productivity, quality of service and corporate image. Proceeding on these bases therefore, the study responds to these problems by surveying the current stress situation, the causes and its impact on staff and organization performance in the Kenya Disciplined Services with specific case of the National Youth Service. (Kirkcaldy et al, 1995).

Objective of the Study

This study investigated the effects of time and cost effective stress monitoring, management, prevention and reduction programs on staff performance in the Kenya Disciplined Services.

RELATED LITERATURE

Job Stress in Organization

Job stressor has been described by stress researchers as the condition or situation at work that requires an adaptive response of an employee. Bullying, work overload or the fear of losing the job are all examples of stressors. On the other hand, the potential reaction by an employee to a stressor is a job strain (Spector, 1996). The most common job stressors are: role ambiguity, workload and working hours, control, competition and business re-engineering work/home conflict and bullying.

According to Spector (1996) Job control is the extent to which employees are able to make own decisions about their work. This includes issues such as when, how, where to work and what tasks to do. Studies have found out that employee perceptions of control are associated with job stress.

High levels of control usually go and conform to a great degree of emotional distress, intent to quit the job, absence and turnover. This reflects negatively on the organization ability to perform and deliver services effectively. Defrank and Ivanicevich (1998) argues that if an organization does not handle the implementation of transformation change programmes such as downsizing, cost reduction, delayering or outsourcing effectively, then increased distress can be the consequence.

That could be because those changes are made without the involvement of the employees, who have to cope with the new circumstances without being briefed sufficiently prior to the implementation. In this setting, the role of employees becomes secondary to technology and competitiveness, which leads to frustration because of a feeling of being overburdened. The effective management of diversity provides many advantages to organizations in terms of achieving synergy effects through creative inputs from different (cultural) backgrounds.

Nonetheless, if diversity is not managed effectively it may lead to interpersonal stress, competition among different groups for attention and resources, and decreased interaction because of the perceived need for

political correctness in speech, interaction and recognition (Defrank and Ivanicevich, Aug 1998). Therefore "diversity stress" reflects the occurring feelings of ambiguity and uncertainty. They arise when an employee does not have the personal resources to both understand and to respond appropriately in a multicultural situation. The diversity stress often results from differences beliefs and values. Moreover, this kind of stress is often the direct of result of unfair behavior of managers and colleagues towards people of different gender, race, color or origin.

Work stress can also be based on conflict or tension with co-workers and supervisors and can involve arguments, nervousness, strain, and tension. Tepas and Price (2001) says that stress can be viewed as, "an agent, circumstance, situation, or variable that disturbs the 'normal' functioning of an individual", Defrank and Ivanicevich (1998), view stress as an adaptive response, moderated by individual differences, that is a consequence of any action, situation or event that places special demands on a person.

Cranewell-ward (1995), perceives work stress as an imbalance between the level of demand placed upon staff and their capability to meet those demands. This definition contains four important features: it refers to a reaction to a situation, not the Situation itself (the latter often called stressor), it emphasise the individual nature of stress, since the perception of stressors differs from person to person; it is "special", since only significant or unusual situations can be said to produce stress; and asserts the individual capability of coping with the amount of stress.

Stress pressure can result in eustress; it is neither too much nor too high but just right for the employee. Corbridge and Pilbeam (1998), asserts that this optimal amount of stress placed upon an individual lead to a high performance of an individual as a consequence of feeling challenged but not overburdened.

Officers operating under severe and chronic stress may well be at greater risk of error, accidents and over-reaction that can compromise their performance, jeopardize public safety and pose and significant liability costs to the organization (Rollin and Mike Atkinson 1999)

Cooper (1998), Conceptualizes that changes and dynamisms in the nature of work imposes more pressures on employees. In order that staff may be happy, motivated, achieve expected results and perform exemplarily in their work, they must be fit for the work, not to do too much of it and must have a sense of it.

Galinsky et al (2001) asserts that women feel more job stress than men. While men work longer hours, take less vacation time, and tend to have jobs with characteristics leading to more stress, women report having more demanding jobs. They are interrupted more frequently while working and have too many tasks to do at the same time.

Features of Stress Free Working Environment

In an ideal situation the following features are prevalent:

Job Characteristics:

Designed jobs- are designed to permit use of Skill and discretion by jobholder, incorporate sufficient task variety and challenge to maintain employee interest, ensure that tasks are sufficiently related to form a coherent job, and provide mechanism for giving early feedback on performance.

Designed work - Work is designed so as to allow the exercise to responsibility by the job-holders, provide sufficient authority to enable job-holders to carry out their responsibilities adequately, allow job-holders to share in decisions that affect their work, allow for learning opportunities through work, and ensure clear work goals and targets that do not conflict with those set for others

Work Relationships *Superiors* develop participative management styles that allow for discussion for issues with appropriate and real delegation of authority; leaders pay attention to an individual's needs as well as those

of the task and the group, and leaders are required to deal immediately with cases of bullying, sexual harassment, racist behavior etc.

Colleague/workmates accept fellow team members in a co-operative spirit, team members support each other, and individuals are valued for their role.

Own staff (for managers and supervisors) - adequate training in handling staff is provided; immediate superiors are able to provide diplomatic support where necessary, and there is implementation of proper disciplinary procedures to cater for unco-operative or disruptive employees

Organization Structure

Hierarchy of jobs is reduced to the minimum (flatter structure) to permit wide use of skills, discretion and authority.

Communication Systems - These are designed to encourage communication between departments sections as well as vertically through the management chain, grievance procedures are rapid and discreet; and positive feedback is encouraged (by job results and staff appraisal).

Decision making process in the organization are delegated as far as is reasonable down the organization, people at every level are able to share in decisions affecting (a) their work and (b) their future prospects, and results of decisions affecting employees are notified as soon as possible.

Organization Culture

Attitudes towards employees are positive, even when customers are regarded as the number one priority; where attention to product/service quality is paramount, this should reflect itself in respect for employee's knowledge, skills and contribution, reasonable risk-taking is encouraged, and mistakes seen as learning opportunities rather than grounds for criticism, employees are regarded as the organization's best asset in meeting the wants and demands of customers and other external stakeholders, training, development and counseling opportunities are available for every employee, and conditions of employment (salaries, wages, holiday arrangements and shift-working) are fair (Cole, 1995).

Impact of Work Stress on Performance

The negative physiological and psychological effects of stress may also cause work performance to deteriorate, leading to reduced efficiency and motivation in performing job duties, poor morale, excessive absenteeism and premature retirement. Work in the disciplined services often places excessive absenteeism and premature retirement. Work in disciplined services often places officers in situations where reaction, speed, coordination and the capacity to make rapid decisions and accurate judgments under pressure is critical, and inefficient mental and emotional responses and accurate judgments under stress can significantly impair these abilities (Amsten 1998)

Excess stress, or distress, results in lowered individual and organizational performance, with both production and quality suffering (Nelson and Quick, 1996).

Individuals who are experiencing high levels of occupational stress may become irritable and exhibit anti-social behaviors that will tend to alienate their friends, family members, and co-workers thereby affecting their performance negatively (Mack et al, 1997).

It appears that most of the total costs resulting from stress are often unlikely to be borne by the individual organization, but instead to become 'externalized', in other words distributed among the employees (Levi and Lunde-Jensen, 1995).

Cooper et al (1996) suggest that among typical outcomes of stress are a reduction in job satisfaction resulting in poor productivity and low performance.

Common effects of exposure to stressors are poor concentration and diminishing self-confidence (Brady, 1999) which affect work-productivity (Warshaw and Messite, 1996). This ultimately affect impact negatively on employees' productivity and consequently on organization performance.

Stress arising from sexual harassment for example manifest itself in 'cognitive distraction' or loss of concentration (Barling et al, 1996), interfering with judgment which in effect lowers individual productivity.

Cooper et al (1996) focus on the following well known and well documented outcomes frequently associated with experience of stress: greater sickness, absenteeism, impaired performance and productivity, and higher turnover rates.

Lower job-satisfaction and organizational commitment are other likely outcomes of stress which Lower would affect organization performance negatively (Barling, 1996).

Cooper et al, (1996) assess the cost of stress to the organization with response to absenteeism, replacement costs in connection with labor turnover (recruitment, training and development costs), reduced performance productivity (lack of added value to product and service) and loss of public goodwill and reputation (corporate image)

Work turnover is expensive as excessive employee turnover is often cited as a key barrier to high quality service. Turnover reduces the productivity of an entire work unit/team, particularly as a result of uncompensated extra workloads, the stress and tension caused by turnover and, as a result of, the decline in corporate image. Indirect costs include variables such as the loss in organizational knowledge and skills, reduced corporate growth through lower productivity and the impact on organizational commitment that frequent turnover can have among the negative impact on organizational commitment that frequent turnover can have among the employees who stay at the organization. These indirect costs can often be greater than the direct costs of turnover.

Poor job performance may appear as yet another Consequence of organizational stress, thereby reducing productivity. In some cases, the stress arises from a lack of confidence in supervisory

staff. The lack of confidence may come about because of general organizational uncertainty or combination of little no supervisory training, lack of communication skills, or uncertainty lack of openness and trust. High levels of stress, let unchecked, have been shown to lead to increases in absenteeism and staff turnover (Cooper and Cartwright, 1994).

Suffering from the effects of stress for a period of time exposes an employee to a burnout. A son suffering from a burnout is emotionally exhausted and has low work motivation: being depressed about work and having little energy and enthusiasm for the job (Spector, 1996)

Creativity is the production of Ideas, products, or procedures that are novel or original and potentially relevant for or useful to the organization (Lubart, 1996). It often involves gathering information from multiple sources, recognizing unusual connections between elements of a problem or situation, and combining them into a practical and useful product.

Creativity is particularly important for service sector employees because providing novel services, integrating customer preferences with knowledge of constraints, and making innovative suggestions for improving internal procedures are critical customer satisfaction and effective service delivery (Cummings and Oldham, 1991). In NYS it involves novelty in training techniques, helping trainees adapt to the requirements and the training environment and mat and about ways to improve training quality and the general creative suggestions to co-workers and procedures and operations. The argument is that stress will negatively affect creative behavior or sons. First., although the increased focus caused by stress can improve creative behaviours , the narrowing of attention can reduce ability to recognize alternative and can prevent them from integrating

diverse sources of information into novel outcomes. Second, although institutional rewards and constraints reinforce aspects of performance, discretionary behavior such as creativity is often not included in employee job descriptions or expectations.

A Supportive environment can alleviate the negative effects of stress on performance such as productivity (Amabile et al, 1996). Supportive supervisors are non-controlling, display confidence in their employees, and treat them as loyal and trustworthy. This reduces negative effects of stress on creativity by counteracting feelings of nervousness and tension. By communicating trust and support, supervisors may facilitate employee creativity, even under stressful conditions. This would allow employees to maintain the flexibility, autonomy, divergent thinking, and risk-taking characteristics of creative performance even when work stress is present.

Stress Management programmes

Organizations have adopted various researched strategies to manage stress. In 1996, Cooper et al came up with three strategies for stress management in organizations: primary prevention (stressor reduction), secondary prevention (stress management) and tertiary prevention (employee assistance programmes or workplace counselling).

Primary prevention is about modifying or eliminating the sources of stress inherent in the working environment. This strategy focuses on adapting the environment to fit the individual as far as possible. Elkin and Kosch (1990) suggested some useful strategies to reduce or eliminate workplace stressors. When an alarming amount of stress has been diagnosed within the company, designing the tasks and the working environment should be the first step to be taken. That is because work overload is often the result of poor organized work and merely specified tasks, defining tasks with help of specific job descriptions will help to distribute the workload in a fair and feasible way.

Additionally, the delegation to work should be encouraged and the workloads of each individual can be varied. It is so helpful to rotate people on assignments. Furthermore, acting on stressors includes the provision of training and development opportunities to enhance individual job skills. Another way of primary prevention lies in educating managers to recognize distress and to respond in an appropriate way. Redesigning the work environment includes the evaluation of the physical work environment, aiming to match personal expectations and needs. Another useful statement to eliminate stressors is to establish flexible working schedules, in which options are available regarding starting and ending times, working hours per day, number of days worked per week and so on. This will enable an employee to work when there are lots to do, and to work in times of low work requirements. Establishing fair employment policies is yet another approach to lessen distress. This includes agreements on working hours or granting appropriate wages in form of performance related payment or honoring working of overtime through additional payments. Recruiting and selecting the right persons for a vacant job also comes under primary prevention. Employing workers with the required skills helps to avoid organizations and employees to face situations where a person is simply not capable of fulfilling a task because it is too difficult for him/her. This ties directly into the need for elaborate training programs. Management must understand that the changing working environment requires change in employee's skills. Here, training means not merely the learning of new technologies but also the improvement of decision-making skills, increasing awareness of effective team interaction and the development of communication skills. Such programmes can reduce stress and lead to employee satisfaction thus impacting positively on their performance.

Secondary prevention is concerned with the prompt detection and management of experience stress by increasing awareness and improving the stress management skills of an employee through training and educative activities. It focuses on stress education and stress management.

According to Cohen (1997), a stress management programme should include: identifying and helping identify symptoms of distress, developing clear and measurable goals, focusing on necessary skills to be acquired as

well as personal and attitudinal development, communicating with employees about job Stressors, Job strains and the benefits of stress management programs aid finally developing Individualised and topic specific programmes to meet the needs of the employees. Symptoms or distress are explained to employees to achieve the awareness that there could be a stress problem within the organization or for the individual. Additionally, It develops self-awareness and provides individuals with a number of basic relaxation techniques. It includes time management courses or assertiveness training as well as the development of cognitive coping skills. Managing stress could cover areas such as simplifying daily routines, cutting clutters or taking regular breaks from repetitive work (Cohen, 1997)

Tertiary prevention is s about the treatment, rehabilitation and recovery process of those or are suffering from serious ill health as a result of stress. Interventions at this level typically involve counselling services for employees in the workplace. Such services are either provided by in-house counsellors or outside agencies in form of Assistance Programmes (EAP). In Kenya, the development of EAP has not found ground though a number been developed in the last few years (example of Peak Performance Consultants who offer in house training on stress management). The idea behind EAP is to enable employees to talk through work-related problems with a counselor. The latter offers a safety valve to relieve stress and enhance productivity (Midgley, 1997J).

Whereas there is considerable activity at the secondary and tertiary level, primary preventions are quite rare in Kenya (Peak performance Consultants). Reason for this is, that it is considered less disruptive to change extensive organizational development programmes. Overall, interventions at the individual level can make a difference temporarily reducing experienced stress. According to Reynolds (1993) at the outcome of stress management training is a modest improvement in self-reported symptoms psychological indices to strain, but little or no change in job satisfaction (Cooper, 1998)

Moreover, counselling is useful in treating and rehabilitating distressed employees, but as they arc kely to re-enter the same Job/work environment as dissatisfied and no more committed as before employees are entering a vicious circle.

According to Corbridge and Pilbeam (1998), the reason for an expressly stated stress policy in an organization lies in focusing managerial attention on reducing direct and indirect cost of stress.

However, even more important is the management's responsibility for the physical and mental health and safety of their employees. Moreover, protecting the organizational image in relation to the service delivery, efficiency, customer base and the labor market, underpinning a belief that, for the organization, people are a source oi competitive advantage is another reason for a stress policy.

According to Corbridge and Pilbeam (1998), a company's stress policy can ,exemplary, contain: a about the organizational attitude towards harmful stress, a statement about the need to de-stigmatize an admission of distress by an employee and the provision of stress-reporting channels, confidential counselling and referral services, stress education and awareness training stress; stress audit arrangement, risk assessment and a commitment to react upon the stressors as well as individual coping strategies and a process of stress monitoring and policy review.

Rollin et al (1999) in their research on the impact of stress among police officers assesses their physical health and vitality, emotional wellbeing, coping and interpersonal skills, work Performance, workplace effectiveness and climate, family relationships, and physiological and psychological recalibration following acute stress. They concluded that the integration of effective self-management programs in training could ultimately improve officers' long-term health and emotional wellbeing and increase work effectiveness and performance. Training in emotional self-management also Significantly benefits police organizations by improving Judgment and decision making, decreasing the frequency of on-the-job accidents, organizational liabilities and more effective Communication and cooperation within work teams, and enhanced work performance.

According to Mugwere (2002) in her study “A case study of the determinates of work stress and management”, there are various causes of stress. These are; time pressure and deadlines responsibility without authority, thwarted ambition, restriction on behavior, poor relation with the boss, too much work, managers’ leadership style, under promotion, too little work, poor physical working conditions, poor relations with co-workers, poor relation with subordinates, poor supervision, difficulties in delegating responsibility, role conflict and role ambiguity.

In order to cope with stress, Mugwere found that various measures need to be put in place by management. These are; start counselling services, recognition and moral support from bosses, employee’s meetings/time, recreational activities / entertainment, provision of stress management courses, improve communication, and improve employer/employee relation.

Aseto (2003) in her study. “The role of the manager in prevention of work related stress; A case study of insurance companies in Nairobi,” found that there are many sources of workplace stress in staff. These are: inadequate salary, lack of training opportunities, obsolete technology and a lot of paperwork, inadequate staff/resources, role issues such as ambiguity and specification, lack of job security, work overload, difficult clients/brokers, staff turnover, working long hours, bureaucracy, lack of promotional prospects, unco-operative staff, tight deadline, rigid decision making, demoralized staff, monotony, lack of recognition and poor communication.

She further found some of the stress coping mechanisms used by staff when faced with found some of the stress coping mechanisms used by staff when faced with stressful work situations. These are, talking with fellow staff, trying to deal with the situation, going out with friends, hobbies, reading books, talking to bosses, watching T.V., listening to music, taking a break, doing physical exercises, prioritizing work, taking painkillers, putting in extra hours, planning ahead. Smoking using relaxation techniques such as breathing in and out, reorganizing work, taking a drink, using humor, perservering and use of positive thinking.

These are challenges managers face in handling employees work related stress. These, according to Aseto, are; identification of stress, even work load distribution, providing social support, devising work strategies, financial stress faced by staff, time pressure and staff shortage. She further found that there are certain techniques that managers use while coping with stress. These are: talking to staff, taking a walk, listening to music, creating extra time, team-building, creating conducive environment, use of positive thinking, taking a break and obtaining additional resources.

In particular context of stress in the disciplined services, the researcher narrowed down on the following broad based work stressors: roles, interpersonal relations, career concerns, work scheduling, job content and control and workplace violence. These principal stress factors were surveyed to establish their impacts on staff and organizational performance.

It is also clear from the aforementioned literature that work stress is an eminent threat to an organization’s very existence as stress reduces employee’s performance reflecting in low and poor organizational performance. It is therefore advisable to implement a stress intervention programme to minimize the negative impacts. It is necessary to make decisions about the appropriateness and quality of the proposed programme. Such decisions should be made on the basis of a well-defined set of criteria. The provision of Kenya Disciplined Services with wide stress avoidance and coping techniques will help the employees manage their stress and also help them to avoid the negative effects of stress on costs and productivity. The form of stress management proposed by this paper should contribute to the goals and the values of both Kenya Disciplined Services and the individual employees. Much of the literature and academic work done on the area of impact of stress on organization performance was foreign. Little if any of published research has been done in the subject area among the Kenya Disciplined Services. The study was geared towards closing this gap by domesticating the current study.

FINDINGS

Qualitative data analysis indicates that NYS staff are largely exposed to stress arising from quantitative and qualitative work overload (working during odd hours, over-enrolment of students in various courses, working under strict deadline); inadequate reward system (pay/ promotion/ recognition); “unnecessary” and frequent transfers especially to hardship areas; inadequate tools and equipment; bullying by seniors (harassment, degradation, humiliation, shame, intimidation, coercion and threats of transfers); unclear task definition; lack of training opportunities/ irrelevant training not matched to skills requirements; poor placement (role not matched to competence); poor working relation (lack of staff cooperation, arguments and quarrels); and unsupportive working environment from both coworkers and supervisors in that order. Staff stress coping strategies indicate that NYS has not currently adopted any stress management programme. The staff use their personal initiatives which include: cultivating cordial working relationships with supervisor and coworkers; spiritual intervention (meditation); social support from friends, family and colleagues; recreation (sports, gymnastics, games and exercise); leisure (singing, music, crossword puzzle, watching movies and TV); private counselling services; good dieting; proper time management (meeting targets and schedules, priority to assignments first, following strict work schedules); positive work attitude (inculcating patience, tolerance and hope); mastery of procedures and processes; delegation of duties; mutual respect for all; and withdrawal mechanisms (breaks and off duty).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that unsafe working environment reduces staff commitment to the organization resulting in poor performance as staff attention to organization’s vision, mission and core values in delivery of service are distracted.

Staffs who are exposed to high qualitative work overload result in negative organization’s corporate image while staff who experience stress as a result of working with non-supportive supervisors impact negatively on the organization’s corporate image. Also, low levels of work pressure enhance organization’s efficiency in service delivery. Employees that are under no pressure to deliver task results can plan schedules procedurally and are therefore more likely to be more organized, focused and likely to perform duties diligently thus organization’s efficiency in service delivery. Employees with low job control are likely to be less motivated to efficiently perform duties, as there is a likelihood that in such environments, the superiors take all the credit. This also reflects on low levels of duty delegation. Staff exposure to high quantitative work overload affects the organization’s ability to offer quality service.

The study recommended that, in the meantime, the Service needs to keenly address the stressors identified in the research. This exercise will involve work measurement exercise and staffing levels assessment to establish the number of staff required for each section. This will involve among others, matching of staff competence to tasks for right placement; business-reengineering process through increased automation of front and back office operations, which will result in reduced quantitative and qualitative work overload for increased efficiency and staff productivity. A time bound stress management program that will ensure a comprehensive review of staff salaries, promotion policy (clear career guidelines) and upward adjustments in staff allowances is recommended.

The Service is also asked to form a professional ethics committee that will facilitate reporting, handling, hearing and appeals on all disciplinary cases involving staff discrimination, sexual harassment, office violence, abuse, corruption, nepotism and favoritism. On communication, the Service should design systems that encourage communication intra and interdepartmental coordination, frequent and regular section and positive feedback mechanism.

The career development strategy should incorporate avenues for staff training and development. Seminars, refresher courses and short courses, diploma and degree courses at various levels are recommended. Adequate

issues of staff welfare need to be addressed. Frequent stress counseling programmes need to be incorporated within the organization structure operations of the Service.

Recommendations for further study

Given the scope of this study, there are other areas of interest that the study did not address while they remain core to organization performance especially in the Disciplined Services. On this basis therefore, the researcher recommends future studies touching on other work related variables such as job satisfaction, opportunities for career development, organizational commitment, cultural factors and labor turnover within the Kenya Disciplined Services.

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