

Occupational Stress and Employee Performance: A Case Study of Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA)

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Abstract : *Organizational structure is the formal system of task and job reporting relationships that determines how employees use resources to achieve organizational goals. Organization structure can be a source of occupational stress especially where the pattern of jobs, roles, rules and regulations, constrain the individual's range of choices in how to do the job. The work organization is often composed of six major components. These components are: scheduling (e.g., work-rest schedules, hours of work, shift work); job design (e.g., task complexity, required skill/ effort, worker control); interpersonal (e.g., relationships with supervisors and co-workers); career concerns (e.g., job security, growth opportunities); management style (e.g., participatory management practices, teamwork); and organizational characteristics (e.g., climate, culture). These components can be part of the sources of occupational stress within an organization. This study examined the relationship between occupational stress and employee performance at the Kenya National Highway Authority (KeNHA). The specific objective of the study was to examine the effects of working relationships on the employee performance at KeNHA. The study utilized the descriptive research design and structured questionnaire to collect the data. The data was analyzed through the use of SPSS in which both the descriptive and inferential statistics were extracted. In the context of standard means, the study found out that occupational stress affects Work relationships negatively (4.5478), interpersonal relationship in the organization affects the efficiency of the employees (4.0124), and the relationship with the supervisors and colleagues affect the productivity of the employees in the organization (3.9748). Others include organization keeping employees well informed on matters important to them (2.3145), Communication across all levels in this organization is good (2.4154), occupational stress in the organization is the cause of most of the conflicts among employees (3.5412), and occupational stress is the main cause of conflicts between the employees and their supervisors (3.8451). The study concluded that was significant statistical (positive) relationship between working relationships and employee performance at KeNHA.*

Key Words: *Employee Performance, Occupational Stress*

I. Introduction

Employee job performance can be viewed as an activity in which an individual is able to accomplish the task assigned to him/her successfully, subject to the normal constraints of reasonable utilization of the available resources. Chen (2010) defined job performance as a reflection of employees working status and it was related to the level of employee achievements. According to Tsai, Cheng, & Chang (2010), job performance is the accomplishment or a work record of employees during a specific period. It is an action plan related to the level of task finished. It's also the contribution, work quantity and quality, and the productivities (Chen, 2010). It's an index of employees' productivity. On the other hand, Addison & Yankyera (2015) defined job performance as individual's behaviour related to organization's goals and their behaviour that can be evaluated by the individual's contribution on organization's achievements. It is the quantity and quality of the achievement that an individual or a group contributes to the organization (Wu, 2011).

Factors that affect employees' performance include job motive, skill and ability, role consciousness, and motivation. Other factors that affect performance are situational that is factors in the individual's environment which stimulate and support or hinder performance. Truxillo et al (2012) identified job characters that is skill variety, task

identity, task significance, autonomy, feedback as having an effect on critical psychological states, which in turn have an effect on personal and work outcomes, including job performance. Factors that have detrimental effect on performance are role ambiguity and role conflicts which are conceptualized as stressors that impede performance. Situational constraints include stressors such as lack of necessary information, lack of supplies as well as stressors within work environment. These are assumed to impair job performance directly.

Job stress is considered to be rising and has become a challenge for the employer because high level stress results in low productivity, increased absenteeism and collection of other employee problems like alcoholism, drug abuse, hypertension and host of cardiovascular problems (Ahmed, Hussain, Farooq, & Ahmed, 2011). At a conceptual level, four types of relationships were proposed to exist between the measures of job stress and job performance (Jamal, 2011). One is negative linear relationship when productivity decreases with stress (distress). Productivity can also increase as a consequence of stress (dusters), thereby implying a positive linear relationship between the two. Too much pressure however, may have stress related implications such as employee mental alienation and/or impact on individual performance (Badar, 2011). It may also lead to the destruction of team spirit, dissatisfaction with or absence or even resignation from work can be manifestations of work stress (Beheshtifar, & Nazarian, 2013). Thirdly, there could be a U-shaped or a curvilinear relationship wherein, mild stress could increase the productivity initially up to a peak and then it declines as the person descends into a state of distress.

Occupational stress may cause a loss of talent and an increase of training cost, due to high turnover (Velnampy, 2013). While stress is inevitable, it constitutes a real threat to the quality of life for employees not to mention its link to an increased risk of morbidity and mortality (Addison, & Yankyera, 2015). Other costs include on-going medical costs, direct income loss, transport costs and losses related to lifestyle changes that can result in counter-productive workplaces and significant financial loss to employees and employers. Overall, stress causes extraordinary tangible and intangible financial costs to a company. These include erosion of goodwill, decreased quality, decreased customer satisfaction, decreased productivity, decreased profitability, and decreased efficiency, inefficient, negligent or criminal employee activities and increased recruitment and training costs (Dror & Cole, 2010).

II. Literature Review

Occupational Stress

Stress is a holistic transaction between the individual, a stressor and the environment, resulting in a stress response. Some jobs produce more stress than others, e.g., those involving rotating shifts work, machine paced tasks, routine and repetitive work, or hazardous environment among others (Halkos, & Bousinakis, 2010). The Workers' vulnerability to stress is a function of both internal (organization) and external (non-work) stressors. Two major factors help determine how stress will affect employee performance differently across similar jobs, these factors are; stress threshold and personality types. Stress threshold is an internal factor, some people have high threshold while others have low threshold. A person with low threshold performance is affected even by a slight change or disruptions in their work routine and vice versa (Ahmed, Hussain, Farooq, & Ahmed, 2011). Another factor that determines stress vulnerability on individual is their personality types. There are two types of personality; Type A and Type B. Type 'A' people are aggressive and competitive, set high standards, are impatient with themselves and others, and thrive under constant time pressures. They make excessive demands on themselves even in recreation and leisure. Because of the constant stress that they feel, they are more prone to physical ailments related to stress such as heart attacks (Badar, 2011). Types 'B' are more relaxed and easy going. They accept situations and work within them rather than fight them competitively. They are especially relaxed regarding time pressures, so are less prone to have problems associated with stress. Still they can be high productive workers who meet schedules and expectations; they simply obtain results in a different manner (Addison, & Yankyera, 2015).

Causes of Occupational Stress

According to Blickle, Wendel, & Ferris, (2010), there are six broad sources of stress that is external environment, organizational factors, job characteristics, work relationships, domestic factors and personal factors. Under external environment, sources of stress include economic situations, competitiveness, arrival of new technology and political changes. The organizational factors that cause stress include organizational structure and culture, management styles and career development. In the context of Job characteristics, the causes of stress include intrinsic job demands i.e. if the nature of the job is repetitive, insufficient challenge or excessive job for one person, and degree of autonomy (insufficient to meet either the demands of the job and or expectation of job holder). Others are role conflict that is organization expectations leads to confusion or does not meet job holders' expectations and contractual terms. Work

relationships were also identified as a cause of stress. This includes relationship with the supervisors and colleagues. Leader may find it stressful to deal with demands of their own staff. Others may find it difficult to deal with demands customers, suppliers and other outsider especially those dealing with customer complaints all day long (Badar, 2011). He also identified domestic issues such as home life and other outside life as causes of stress. Personal factors such as individual perceptions of job or role, personality type, ability for one to adapt to change, motivation and ones level of tolerance for ambiguity were also identified to cause stress.

Symptoms of Occupational stress

Signs of stress may manifest in physical, psychological and behavioural symptoms. The physical symptoms can be life threatening stress related illnesses, e.g. blood pressure and heart disorders, insomnia, constant fatigue, headaches, skin rashes, digestive disorders, ulcer, loss of appetite, overeating, marked decline in personal appearance, quick and fiery temper, changes in eating habits and general withdrawal from social activities (Badar, 2011). Psychological include general irritability, acute anxiety attacks, depression, and inability to concentrate on the simplest of routine tasks. Other common symptoms include a person becoming unnecessarily over emotional, aggressive in conflict situations, poor concentration, difficulty in remembering and inability to make decisions. Behavioural symptoms include sleeplessness, high turnover rate, work related accidents changes in eating habits, many people indulge in excess addictions like smoking, drinking, occasional drinker becomes alcoholic and smokers become chain smokers. Stress may also reveal in reduced performance and job satisfaction (Badar, 2011).

Employee Job performance

Employee job performance refers to the level of productivity of an individual employee, relative to his or her peers, on several job related behaviours and outcomes (Sarwar, Ketavan, & Butt, 2015). Employee job performance can be viewed as an activity in which an individual is able to accomplish the task assigned to him/her successfully, subject to the normal constraints of reasonable utilization of the available resources. Job performance is productivity that is the comparison of the amount of effectiveness that results from a certain level of costs associated with effectiveness (Sarwar, Ketavan, & Butt, 2015). Badarm (2011) separates job performance in two parts; task performance and contextual performance. Task performance is the traditional notion of the ability how well workers perform and complete specific tasks. Contextual performance measures aspects of performance unrelated to specific tasks such as; volunteering, putting in extra effort, cooperating, following rules and procedures and endorsing the goals of an organization that are important in the job.

Effects of Occupational Stress on Job Performance

Stress has a positive effect on employees of any organization but up to a certain extent. However, any benefits that can be realized from occupational stress are negative correlated when it surpasses a certain threshold. The influence of occupational stress on job satisfaction and commitment is immense. Job satisfaction may be defined as the degree of positive affect towards a job or its components. This is determined by characteristics both of the individual and of the job, and particularly how work is organized within the corporate work environment. Higher turnover rates and propensity to leave have been associated with job dissatisfaction Lu et al (2012). Organizational commitment predicts work variables such as turnover, organizational citizenship behavior and job performance. Role ambiguity and conflict decrease worker's performance and are positively related to the probability of the workers leaving the organization (Badar, 2011).

The result of unrelieved stress on an individual and on the business is worrying. The result may be higher accident rates, sickness absence, inefficiency, damaged relationship with clients and colleagues, high staff turnover, early retirement on medical grounds and even premature deaths. Low quality service- increase in complaints received and customers lost cost time and money. Complaints take time to deal, replacement of products or services and loss of customers. Dissatisfied workers will lead to loss of valuable time in disputes with management over terms and conditions of employment (Yilmaz, 2013). Stress can have damaging psychological and physiological effects on employees' health and on their contribution to organization effectiveness. Stress can have various effects on the individual as well as on the organization. Clearly not only the individual suffers but the organization may also be affected by absenteeism, work related accidents, turnover and impaired decision making (Badar, 2011).

III. Objective Of The Study

To examine the effect of working relationship on employee performance at Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA)

IV. Research Question

What is the effect of working relationship on employee performance at Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA)?

V. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design. The study used the descriptive research design because the researcher collected data and reported the way things are without manipulating any variables. The whole population of KeNHA is 400 employees and the sample size was derived using the Krejcie et al, (1970) formula as below to derive a sample size of 200 members.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n=sample size

N=population of the study

e=Precision level

In this case N is 400, ±5% Precision level

Proportionate stratified sampling was then applied in categorizing the respondents within the organization into 3 groups (strata). In order to obtain a representative from the stratum, the following formula was then employed to calculate the number of respondents to select:

Table 1; Sample size

Category	Total Number of respondents	Percentage	Sample
Top Management	15	3.75%	8
Middle Level of Management	55	13.75%	28
Support	330	82.5%	164
Total	400	100%	200

Two hundred questionnaires were distributed to the respondents out of which 180 questionnaires were returned. The results why the 20 questionnaires were not returned included misplaced questionnaires and respondents away from work on prolonged periods. This constituted 90% return rate. Out of the 180 questionnaires that were returned, a further ten questionnaires were not analyzed as they were disqualified due to several issues such as incompletely filled questionnaire. The final number of questionnaires that were analyzed were 170 which constituted 85% response rate.

VI. Findings And Discussions

The effect of the working relationship on the employee performance at the Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA) was examined using seven metrics as below;

- i) Occupational stress affects Work relationships negatively.
- ii) Interpersonal relationship in the organization affects the efficiency of the employees
- iii) The relationship with the supervisors and colleagues affect the productivity of the employees in the organization.
- iv) This organization keeps employees well informed on matters important to them
- v) Communication across all levels in this organization is good
- vi) Occupational stress in the organization is the cause of most of the conflicts among employees
- vii) Occupational stress is the main cause of conflicts between the employees and their supervisors

These metrics of the working relationship on the employee performance at the Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA) were measured through the use of the likert scale using the above questions. The likert scale descriptors Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Uncertain (U), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA) was used which were represented as 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively in the SPSS input spread sheet. The means of various metrics were as follows: occupational stress affects Work relationships negatively (4.5478), interpersonal relationship in the organization affects the efficiency of the employees (4.0124), and the relationship with the supervisors and colleagues affect the productivity of the employees in the organization (3.9748). Others include organization keeping employees well informed on matters important to them (2.3145), Communication across all levels in this organization is good (2.4154), occupational stress in the organization is the cause of most of the conflicts among employees (3.5412), and occupational stress is the main cause of conflicts between the employees and their supervisors (3.8451).

Table 2; Descriptive Statistics for working relationship on the employee performance

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Occupational stress affects Work relationships negatively	170	4.5478	0.5142
Interpersonal relationship in the organization affects the efficiency of the employees	170	4.0124	0.7584
The relationship with the supervisors and colleagues affect the productivity of the employees in the organisation.	170	3.9748	1.2451
This organization keeps employees well informed on matters important to them	170	2.3145	1.0125
Communication across all levels in this organization is good.	170	2.4154	0.9145
Occupational stress in the organization is the cause of most of the conflicts among employees	170	3.5412	1.2142
Occupational stress is the main cause of conflicts between the employees and their supervisors	170	3.8451	0.8451
Valid N (Listwise)	170		

The inferential statistics were analyzed using the Principal Component Factor Analysis with a view of identifying the inherent latent factors in the impact of working relationship on the employee performance. The factors with eigenvalue of greater than 1 was extracted that is factor 1 with an eigenvalue of 1.854 which accounted for 26.486% variance of the working relationship on employee performance.

Table 3: Total Variance of Working Relationships

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.854	26.486%	26.486%	1.854	26.486%	26.486%
2	0.958	13.685%	40.171%			
3	0.951	13.586%	53.757%			
4	0.946	13.514%	67.271%			
5	0.897	12.814%	80.085%			
6	0.854	12.200%	92.285%			
7	0.540	7.715%	100%			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The table 4 shows the one factor and the ways in which the components were loading to them in order of significance. The most significant factor in the working relationships influence on employee productivity is that the relationship with the supervisors and colleagues affect the productivity of the employees in the organization (factor loading of 0.984), and Occupational stress affects Work relationships negatively (factor loading of 0.945). Others were Occupational stress is the main cause of conflicts between the employees and their supervisors (factor loading of 0.899), Interpersonal relationship in the organization affects the efficiency of the employees (factor loading of 0.894), this

organization keeps employees well informed on matters important to them (factor loading of 0.784), Communication across all levels in this organization is good (factor loading of 0.645), and Occupational stress in the organization is the cause of most of the conflicts among employees (factor loading of 0.546).

Table 4; Component Matrix of Working Relationships

	Component 1
Statement	
The relationship with the supervisors and colleagues affect the productivity of the employees in the organisation.	0.984
Occupational stress affects Work relationships negatively	0.945
Occupational stress is the main cause of conflicts between the employees and their supervisors	0.899
Interpersonal relationship in the organization affects the efficiency of the employees	0.894
This organization keeps employees well informed on matters important to them	0.784
Communication across all levels in this organization is good.	0.645
Occupational stress in the organization is the cause of most of the conflicts among employees	0.546

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

1 Component Extracted

Finally, in conclusion the following research hypothesis was tested;

H₀: There is no significant statistical relationship between working relationships and employee performance at KeNHA

H_A: There is significant statistical relationship between working relationships and employee performance at KeNHA

Table 5; Hypothesis Testing

	Financial Performance
Low Transactional Costs	.845**
Pearson Correlation	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
N	170

** . Correlation Is Significant at the 0.05 Level (2-Tailed)

VII. Conclusion

There was significant statistical (positive) relationship between working relationships and employee performance at KeNHA.

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