



Relationship between Occupational Stress and Job Performance of Secondary School Teachers in Mwanza, Tanzania

*Nyakeko Francis

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0499-7081>

Agency for the Development of Educational Management (ADEM)

Email: nyakekofrancis@gmail.com

Winfrida Malingumu, PhD

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0849-2719>

The Open University of Tanzania

E-mail: winfrida.malingumu@out.ac.tz

Coletha C. Ngirwa, PhD

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6772-2372>

The Open University of Tanzania (OUT)

E-mail: coletha.ngirwa@out.ac.tz

*Corresponding Author: nyakekofrancis@gmail.com

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Abstract: This study was about the relationship between Occupational Stress and Job Performance among Secondary School Teachers in Mwanza, Tanzania. The study was guided by the Descriptive Correlational Design. The sample for this study was 86 out of 110 heads of schools, 340 out of 2274 teachers and 34 out of 37 Ward Officers through simple random sampling. The study used a questionnaire as source of data, which was treated through the Pearson Correlations statistical tool. Based on the findings, the study concluded that not all stress is detrimental. As revealed in this study, limited stress may act as a motivator for effective performance, enhancing alertness and productivity for individuals to survive in their working places. The existing stress in schools may call for immediate intervention since excessive stress may lead to burnout which may seriously affect the performance of employees. Therefore, schools under investigation should come up with programs for managing the stress among teachers so that teachers can be stress free and do their work under safe working relationships.

Keywords: Occupational stress; Job performance; Secondary school teachers.

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Introduction

Job performance is a crucial aspect of an employees' work that refers to effectiveness and efficiency level expected. Empirical studies identify factors that affect job performance to include occupational stress, job demands, job control, social support and job insecurity (Huang et al., 2017; Hussein & Yaseen, 2022; Tuckey et al., 2015). In mitigation, organizations have embraced various strategies

such as providing employees with feedback on their performance, offering training and development opportunities, promoting a positive work environment and enhancing the employee motivation and engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Chen & Wang, 2019). These interventions aim to reduce occupational stress and enhance employee well-being through providing social support and increasing job control (Clough et al.,

2017; Montano et al., 2017). In consequence, organizations tend to prioritize job performance as a critical determinant of the overall organizational success.

Job performance is a fundamental requirement within the context of secondary schools. The role of secondary school teachers has become a subject of extensive research in recent years, with a particular emphasis on well-being and job satisfaction. Consequently, Teacher enthusiasm has evolved as a concept over time and some researchers claim that it is first experienced and then expressed in their actions. As a result, it now includes both experienced enthusiasm (a sense of being happy, enthusiastic, pleased and enjoying teaching) and demonstrated enthusiasm (nonverbal expressiveness) as complementary elements (Punia & Bala, 2023). This highlights the crucial connection between teachers' well-being and job effectiveness. Among the various factors that affect teachers' performance, occupational stress emerges as a noteworthy consideration. Occupational stress, as a pivotal aspect of teachers' well-being has a substantial impact on morale, job satisfaction and consequently performance.

Stress is a psychological and physiological response to environmental demands that exceed an individual's adaptive capacity (Onochie, 2020). It is a natural and normal part of life; everyone experiences stress to some degree. Stress can stem from work-related pressures, personal relationships, financial difficulties and major life events. Specifically, occupational stress refers to the psychological and physiological response of individuals to demands and challenges of their work environment (Houdmont & Leka, 2010). Stress in an organizational context refers to the physiological, psychological and behavioral responses that individuals experience when they perceive a discrepancy between the demands placed on them by their organization and their ability to cope with those demands (Onochie, 2020). Numerous studies have highlighted the negative consequences of occupational stress on job performance. Such occupational stress can have a significant negative effect on employees' well-being, including mental and physical health, job satisfaction and job performance (Coimbra et al., 2020; Daniel, 2019). Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (2017) demonstrated that high levels of occupational stress among teachers can puncture/deflate job satisfaction, heighten burnout and erode teaching effectiveness.

In China, Xie et al. (2021) found that job demands such as workload and administrative duties are negatively associated with teachers' well-being whereas job resources such as social support and autonomy are positively associated with teachers' well-being. The study of Wang et al. (2020) in China found a positive association between job satisfaction among secondary school teachers and perceived organizational support and job autonomy. The study also found a negative correlation between job satisfaction and job stress. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2019) found a significant negative correlation between occupational stress and job performance among secondary school teachers in China. The common thread in these studies is how a multiplicity of factors can contribute to stress. Implicitly, interventions aimed to improve the teachers' well-being should focus on providing adequate resources and support to reducing job stressors.

Key stressors for teachers include excessive workloads, time pressure, lack of resources and limited decision-making authority (Borg & Riding, 2017). These stressors can result in emotional exhaustion, reduced motivation and compromised job performance. Subsequently, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced additional stressors in terms of adapting to online teaching, managing hybrid classrooms, and addressing the emotional needs of students (Poon, 2021). Conversely, the study of Asif et al. (2023) in Pakistan found that teachers' job satisfaction positively correlates with perceived supervisor support and trust. This finding underscores the importance of positive relationships between teachers and their supervisors in promoting job satisfaction among secondary school teachers.

In the context of Tanzania, recent studies on occupational stress among secondary school teachers such as that of Mbonile et al. (2019) found that, teachers experience high levels of occupational stress because of heavy workloads, rowdy students' behavior and inadequate resources, which negatively impacted their well-being and their job performance. Similarly, Mwakasangula and Mwita (2020) reported detrimental effects of occupational stress on teachers' mental and physical health, job satisfaction and overall performance. On the other hand, Mwakasangulai (2021) underscored the importance of effective coping strategies and support systems in managing occupational stress among teachers. These findings are consistent with

those from Francis et al.(2021), which exposed negative impact of occupational stress on various professionals' job performance. Impliedly, occupational stress remains a significant concern for secondary school teachers in Tanzania and it suggests a need for intervention and support mechanisms to effectively address and manage stress.

Overall, the studies reviewed suggest that secondary school teachers need improvement of job resources, reduction of job stressors, promotion of positive relationships with their supervisors and fostering positive relationships with students to enhance their well-being, performance and job satisfaction. This study, therefore, assessed the relationship between occupational stress and job performance among secondary school teachers in Tanzania, primarily because of limited research on the topic in the local context. The valuable insights into the specific stressors Tanzanian teachers face and their impact on job performance can inform the developing of evidence-based interventions and support mechanisms to enhance teachers' well-being and educational outcomes.

This study was informed by Karasek's (1979) Job Demand-Control (JDC) and Johnson and Hall's (1988) Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) models that have dominated in research on occupational stress. The JDC model proposed that job demands and job control have a significant bearing on job-related outcomes such as job satisfaction, mental health and job performance. Under this model, high job demands coupled with low job control can lead to increased occupational stress that can have negative consequences for employees. In this context, job demand-control model provided a useful framework for understanding factors that contribute to occupational stress among teachers. Job demands for teachers could include factors such as heavy workload, administrative duties and lack of resources whereas job control refers to the level of autonomy and decision-making power teachers have in their job tasks. Using the job demand-control model, this study sought to establish the impact of job demands and job control on occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Tanzania.

The expanded JDCS model, on the other hand, additionally proposes that social support can moderate the negative impact of high strain on the well-being of employees and hence mitigate against

potential negative outcomes. As such, Johnson and Hall's (1988) expanded model informed the study's exploration of how social support from colleagues and supervisors can safeguard against negative effects of occupational stress on the teachers' job performance. Generally, applying the job demand-control model allows researchers to gain a better understanding of how job demands, job control and social support affect occupational stress and job performance among secondary school teachers in Tanzania.

Methodology

Design

This study was guided by the Descriptive Correlational Design that aims to describe the relationships and associations between two or more variables without manipulating them. It is used to establish connection, correlation or association between variables (Saro et al., 2023).

Population and Sampling

The sample for this study was 86 out of 110 heads of schools, 340 out of 2274 teachers and 34 out of 37 Ward Officers through simple random sampling.

Validity and Reliability

The researchers tested the research instruments with 30 secondary school teachers in schools which were not part of the sample to determine whether the tools were appropriate for data collection. According to Taber (2018), the acceptable Cronbach's alpha (α) level for internal consistency of an instrument is 0.7 or above. During the test, the test showed high reliability, with the Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficients of 0.83.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to all research protocols. Research clearance was obtained from the Open University of Tanzania (OUT). The research permit facilitated the obtaining of further permissions at both the regional and district levels. The study participants were informed about the nature of the study before obtaining their written informed consent. Participation was voluntary and hence the participants could withdraw at any time if they so wished. Furthermore, a high degree of confidentiality was maintained with the respondents not linked in any way to the data they provided.

Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the study findings. It starts by presenting demographic information of respondents.

Demographic Information of Respondents

Most of the respondents were male (n= 276) compared to female (n= 184) and the majority were aged between 31 and 40 years (n= 285). Most of the respondents had undergraduate degrees (n= 345), with a few others possessing postgraduate qualifications at the master's degree (n= 23). Other qualifications included postgraduate diplomas (n=

13), ordinary diplomas (n= 70) and occupational certificates (n=9).

Research Question 1: is there a significant relationship between job performance and occupational stress?

In order to determine the relationship between job performance and occupational stress, this research question called for testing of the following null hypothesis: there is no significant relationship between job performance and occupational stress. This hypothesis was tested through Pearson Product Moment Correlational Coefficient as appears in Table 1:

Table 1: Correlation between Job Performance and Occupational Stress

		Job Performance	Occupational stress
Job Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.162**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	460	460
Occupational stress	Pearson Correlation	.162**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	460	460

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The nature of the possible existing correlations between the independent and the dependent variables would be either positive or negative and was interpreted based on the following criteria:\n≥ .70 = strong relationships\n≥ .50 = moderate relationship and\n≤.50= weak relationship

Table 1 indicates the p-value of .000 which is lesser than the critical value. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, maintaining that there is a significant correlation between the independent and the dependent variables. Since this relationship is positive, the more the occupational stress, the higher the score of the job performance. This finding implies that occupational stress improves job performance. The findings are similar to that of Amoako et al. (2017) in Ghana which revealed that stress among employees enhanced job performance. The findings are also in line with that of Ismail et al. (2022) on the contribution of occupational stress on job performance in Malaysia.

It is important to note that though the correlation was significant, it was weak (r = 0.162). While this suggests a positive relationship, its practical significance may be limited due to its weak nature. While some level of stress might be beneficial (Travis et al., 2020) excessive or chronic stress can

lead to burnout, decreased job performance and adverse health effects (Faisal et al., 2019).

The findings, however, are intriguing and may raise several questions. In response, the positive correlation between job performance and occupational stress could be attributed to the fact that some level of stress may act as a motivator, encouraging employees to remain focused and dedicated to their tasks. A moderate level of stress can enhance alertness and performance by increasing the release of stress hormones such as adrenaline, which can boost productivity in the short term (Sapolsky, 2015). Secondly, certain job roles or professions may require a degree of stress to maintain a heightened state of vigilance and responsiveness, such as in emergency medical services or crisis management (Quick et al., 2013). Due to the findings in this study, this may also be applicable in the teaching profession.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study concludes that not all stress is detrimental. As revealed in this study, limited stress may act as a motivator for effective performance, enhancing alertness and productivity for individuals to survive in their working places. The existing stress in schools under investigation may call for immediate intervention since excessive stress may lead to burnout which may seriously

affect the performance of employees. Therefore, schools under investigation should come up with programs for managing the stress among teachers so that teachers can be stress free and do their work under safe working relationships.

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