

**THE PERCEIVED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OCCUPATIONAL
STRESS AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN TEA FACTORIES
IN MURANG'A COUNTY**

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DECLARATION

This management research project is my own original work and has not been submitted previously in its entirety or in part at any other university or college for any academic award.

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This management Research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University supervisor.

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DEDICATION

It is with gratitude that I dedicate this project to you my Mother (Lydia K Kabugi) and Sisters (Njeri Mukuna & Wanjiru Mukuna). Your smiles, presence and unwavering understanding have given me the impetus to pursue high academic standards despite numerous challenges in life.

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ABSTRACT

Stress is a universal element experienced by employees around the globe and it has become a major problem for employers particularly in developing nations like Kenya where the employer doesn't realize its impact in the organization. The objective of this study was to determine the perceived relationship between occupational stress and employee performance in tea factories in Murang'a County. To achieve the objectives of the study, the research was conducted in all the 8 tea factories in the County across all the categories of employees in order to get the most justified opinions on stress and performance. The study used primary data which was collected using a self-administered structured questionnaire. The population of the study comprised all the employees in the 8 tea factories in Murang'a County who are approximately 800 in total. The questionnaires were issued to 1 top manager, 4 technical employees and 15 short contract/casual employees per factory in all the 8 factories. The questionnaire comprised of three parts: Part A: the Demographic Information of the respondents, Part B: Indicators and Causes of stress in the factories and part C: Employee Performance Measures in the factories. The data was collected and analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation and also using the Pearson product moment correlation analysis. The study revealed that employees in the factories indicated the existence of stress by portraying behaviors such as labor turnover, many complain and grievances, headaches and dizziness, absenteeism and withdrawal tendencies. The study also indicated that there are many causes of stress in the factories and these are: the employees feel underutilized, they have high workload, and they face unequal treatment, poor leadership, poor remuneration, poor employee relations and poor working conditions characterized by high levels of noise, high temperatures, poor air circulation and exposure to physical injury. Additionally, the study revealed that performance in the tea factories is at stake because the employees portray behaviors such as lack of commitment, poor customer service, tardiness, ineffective usage of time, lack of total fairness while dealing with people and disclosure of confidential information just to mention a few. The limitation for this study was that the study was carried out within a limited time frame and resources which constrained the scope and depth of the study. This necessitated the adoption of a descriptive survey research design hence these findings cannot be used to make generalizations regarding the impact of stress on employee performance in other tea factories in Kenya.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Stress is a universal element experienced by employees around the globe. Stress has become a major problem for employers particularly in developing nations where the employer doesn't realize the impact of stress on employee performance and the negative effects that may be attributed to stress on employee performance and the organization. Employees go through various challenges that may expose them to stress for instance, they have to meet certain deadlines, cope with some unusual but critical situations on their own and adapt to some cultural changes of the organization such as meeting certain targets, learning new procedures, attending meetings on time and have to be inventive (Jamal, 2007).

Recent research arrives at a conclusion that most employees prefer better working conditions more than remuneration. In reference to the theory of lack of intervention, it has been evidenced that employees who work under pressure are less effective and efficient in their work in contrast to employees who enjoy freedom and independence in their work place. Most employees develop stress as a result of poor working conditions for example; working under pressure, being subjected to unworkable deadlines, lack of promotion and poor remuneration. This however negatively impacts on the performance of employees leading to poor organizational performance and failure to achieve corporate goals (Helena, 2006).

Stressed employees fail to perform well and this is attributable to high turnover, absenteeism, inefficiency, errors and ultimately poor organizational performance.

Kroemer & Grandjean (1997) indicated that stress acts as a catalyst for poor performance in most organizations. He argued that employee's performance is measured by their level of motivation, stressed workers are demoralized and lack meaning for the job which eventually leads to poor performance. Although occupational stress has a small impact on the organization and employees performance in the short run, it can shape dire consequences in the long run because it affects their health (NOHSC, 2001).

In the Kenyan context, occupational stress is a common problem across occupations which have negative impact on employees' performance especially in the private sector. Occupational stress brings about subjective effects such as feeling undervalued and this may lead to poor concentration, mental block and poor decision making skills. Research shows that stress is rising and this is becoming a major challenge to employers because it has negative effects on the health of employees and organizational performance (Ojwang, 2012).

1.1.1 The concept of perception

Khank (2007) defined perception as, the process of interpreting the messages of our senses to provide order and meaning to the environment. Perception describes the way people filter, organize and interpret sensory information. Accurate perception allows employees to interpret what they see and hear in the workplace effectively to make decisions, complete tasks and act in ethical manner. Faulty perceptions lead to organizational problems such as stereotyping that lead people to erroneously make assumptions. Slocum (2007) summarizes perception as the process which attributes meaning to incoming stimuli through the human senses. When employees perceive that

the organization's practices reflect a commitment to quality and are based to seeing employees as assets, they have higher productivity, commitment and satisfaction.

Allport (1955) described perception as a mental process involving the selection, organization, structuring and interpretation of information in order to make inferences and give meaning to it. It is our own unique image of how we see and experience the real world. Sensations such as sight, touch, smell, feel and taste are the inputs to the perception process, where it takes the inputs from the senses and turns or transforms them into outputs. These outputs are information, patterns and meanings which may become inputs to a further system that has action or behavior as its outputs. Sensation or the ways that stimuli are received and transmitted are probably similar for different people. This does not mean though that two people will see the same situation in the same way. The way the stimuli is received and processed may differ. For example, what a manager may consider to be perfectly fair criticism of a subordinate's performance, the subordinate may see as victimization.

Too often managers misunderstand the behavior of employees because they tend to rely on their own perception of the situation and forget that employee's perception may be different, explains Slocum (2007). Moreover, Khank (2007) observes that what can impact employee perception include the nature of working conditions, the policies and procedures of the business in general, and how much trust and respect is present between managers, employees, the benefits paid and how much they relate to the work assigned.

1.1.2 The concept of occupational stress

According to Meurs & Perrewe (2011), stress is the reaction of the body to a certain change that requires a physical, mental or emotional response or adjustment. Stress emanates from any thought or situation that makes you feel frustrated, angry, nervous, or worried. Consequently, occupational stress emanates when an employee is not able to handle the work demands placed on him /her. Stress involves the failure by the incumbent to cope with the environmental pressure that comes about when one involuntarily perceives and concludes that a situation is worthy of anxiety and responds to brace against it for defense.

These situations are referred to as stressors and they include but are not limited to illness, relationships, working conditions, financial constraints etc. Helena (2006) states that the environmental pressure comes in many forms, triggers and psychological responses that overwhelm an individual thus decreasing his/her capacity to perform. Stress also involves defense mechanisms by the individual which are best described as the fight or flight response which is a hard wired reaction to perceived threat for purposes of survival.

Stress manifests itself in form of signs and symptoms such as absenteeism, tardiness, turnover, headaches, anger bursts, employee withdrawal, drug abuse etc which vary according to the individual's experiences, personality and situations they are subjected to. These entail physical health as well as mental health effects which in turn affects the performance of the employee either positively or negatively (Mc Gowan et al. 2006). The process of managing stress is one of the keys things that organisations should address to ensure that their employees give the best to the company.

1.1.3 Employee performance

Employee performance is when an employee is achieving a goal in a highly effective and efficient manner and when that goal is closely aligned with achieving the overall goals of the organization, notes Campbell (1990). Job performance can be viewed as an activity through which an individual is able to achieve tasks assigned to him/her successfully, subject to normal constraints of logical utilization of the available resources. Performance is an extremely important criterion that determines the organizational outcomes and success based on the contribution of each individual employee. Performance must be directed towards organizational goals that are relevant to the job or role.

Employee performance involves all aspects which directly or indirectly affect and relate to the work of the employee. It is measured by comparison of the performance targets to be achieved within a limited time against the performance standards which are set by the employee and the supervisor. Performance Management is used to ensure that employees' activities and outcomes are congruent with the organization's objectives and entails specifying those activities and outcomes that will result in the firm successfully implementing the strategy (Noe et al. 2000, p.55).

Employee performance in the organization is determined by the key performance indicators in each of the departments for instance decrease in the level of employee turnover. When these are achieved, then the assumption is that the employees are performing above average in their set targets. There are various factors that have a positive effect on the performance of employee's for example remuneration and recognition. Thompson et al, (2004) argued that most employees perform well when the working conditions are favorable. It is

evident that employees who are motivated tend to perform better than those who are demotivated in their work places.

1.1.4 Tea Factories in Murang'a County

Tea in Kenya is considered the third major foreign income earner in the country behind tourism and agriculture. The major kind of tea produced in Kenya is black tea but other kinds of tea such as green tea and purple tea are produced on a smaller scale. The tea sector in Kenya comprises of about 500,000 small scale farmers who account for 60% of the country's total production. The major market for Kenyan tea includes India, Britain and North America (KTDA, 2013).

There are eight tea factories in the county and these are Nduti, Njunu, Makomboki, Gacharage, Ikumbi, Githambo, Ngere and Kanyenya-ini. These tea factories mainly play a role of tea processing in the entire Tea Zone of Murang'a County which is basically in the highlands areas that are cooler. Each of these factories have approximately 100 workers with at least 75% of these being involved in the processing of tea in the capacity of casual or technical employees. The categories of staff in these factories is the management (factory unit manager, production manager and field services coordinator) the technical staff who are in charge of the machine operations and tea collection (machine operators, tea collection clerks and drivers) and the casual staff who are temporary and they man the day to day activities such as offloading and firewood preparation (KTDA, 2013).

1.2 Research Problem

Globally, occupational stress is an inevitable force to be reckoned with in almost all sectors. According to Jennifer (2006), employees working in manufacturing firms dealing with perishable products cannot evade stress since they are subjected to a lot of pressure forcing them to work against unworkable deadlines. This raises the question of whether the employees are able to perform as expected under such stressful conditions. The concept of stress at work lies in the environment under which the employee is expected to perform his work and the success of this depends on the level of control that the employee has on the stressful situation. The higher the level of control, the better the performance and the reverse is true.

In Kenya, tea is grown on small scale basis in the highland areas of central Kenya and in the rift valley which has a cooler climate and higher annual rainfall. Tea is picked on a daily basis and to maintain the high quality product, it has to be manufactured round the clock. The factories in Murang'a county collect an average of 85,000 K.gs from the farmers per day and it has to be processed within a span of 24 hours to retain the flavor that determine the quality of the beverage. This means that the employees have to work extra hours and in shifts to keep up with the pace without jeopardizing the quality of their output. There are usually two shifts: day and night. Each shift has about 50 employees in total and the casual workers who are the majority earn about 300 Ksh per day which is not commensurate to their work. The environment in which they work is noisy, hot and they are exposed to strong fumes and dangerous machines and this implies that workplace stress is definitely inevitable (KTDA, 2013).

A number of scholars have carried out studies to examine the controversial topic of stress in relation to other variables. Jamal, (2007) in a study to revisit the controversy between stress and employee performance sought to establish the relationship between the two variables. He found that there was a positive linear relationship or a negative linear relationship depending on how the incumbent handles the stress. More so, Gichohi (2009) carried out a study to examine the relationship between stress and job satisfaction in the government of Kenya press and he concluded that stress negatively affected job satisfaction which led to lower productivity among the employees. This led him to recommend that for the situation to be corrected, the factors that reduce stress and increase job satisfaction such as good relations at work, regular job reviews and job satisfaction surveys have to be put in place. Ojwang (2012) in a study to find out the prevalence of stress amongst employees in the civil service and their coping styles found the existence of burnout and depersonalization which led to low personal and organizational accomplishment. The employees had developed indifference and cynicism in their work in order to distance themselves from its exhausting demands. Furthermore, Mugwere (2002) in a case study of the determinants of work stress and its management pointed out that receptionists, security officers followed by supervisors and middle level managers were the most stressed groups. The mechanisms, procedures and methods for coping with stress found in our Kenyan organizations are a far cry from those found in developed countries. The study findings showed that a lot needs to be done in Kenyan organizations to help its workers cope with stress and a good recommendation is counseling which is unexploited.

From the above analysis, it is evident that workplace stress has an effect on employee performance. Several research studies have been carried out on stress in relation to labor turn over, job satisfaction, coping styles and performance in the civil service, government press and in international context. However, none of those have locally focused on the impact of occupational stress on employee performance in tea factories in Murang'a County. This makes the researcher to develop an interest in this area of study and attempt to answer the research question: what is the relationship between occupational stress and employee performance in tea factories in Murang'a County?

1.3 Research Objective

To determine the perceived relationship between occupational stress and employee performance in tea factories in Murang'a County.

1.4 Value of the study

Firms in the tea industry can use the findings from this study to determine the extent to which stress affects performance of their employees. This is important to most organizations whose employees work under pressure and seeking ways of managing and avoiding stress among employees to boost performance.

Other firms can use this study to determine the various causes of stress that employees face in the work place and the negative effect that stress impacts on employees performance.

Academicians and researchers can use this study as a source of reference and besides, they can use it as a basis for further research. Researchers interested in this area can use the findings of this study to build on the existing research through identifying gaps.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an in depth background of the empirical review of other research papers, text books, journals and magazines carried out by various authors on this study. It will enable the researcher and other reader's to have a solid background understanding of the relationship between occupational stress and employee performance in tea factories in Murang'a County.

2.2 Theoretical foundation of the study

This study was based on two theories which are: socio-technical system theory and intervention theory. The two theories provide empirical evidence on the effect of occupational stress on employee performance in the organization.

2.2.1 Socio-technical system theory

According to Trist (1981), socio-technical system theory suggests that, in a workplace, there exist two compulsory and complementary subsystems that enable smooth running of an organization. The two subsystems are the social subsystem and the technical subsystem. The social subsystem comprises the employees and other members of the staff of an organization while the technical subsystem includes all the technical resources and utilities that enable employees to work on their individual duties.

The concept of the two subsystems complementing each other means that each of the subsystem is equally important and a vital part of running the organization. Therefore, the employees must be provided with ample relevant social resources and other technical

utilities so that they are able to perform well in their respective roles. According to Kroemer and Grandjean (1997) and Trist (1981), there must exist a balance in the provision of the two subsystems. Too much social and technical resource suggests a great number of duties and responsibilities and attract expectation of great output.

If the number of the employees is less than the prevalent duties and responsibilities, work overload comes by. Work overload is one of key stressors at the workplace as the study will reveal later. Since, according to Trist (1981), employees require to experience both the beginning and the ending of a duty each day, overworking does not help the employees enjoy this experience. Instead, the employees do a lot of work in a day, but this work is likely to be of poor quality (Kroemer & Grandjean, 1997). In the short run, the organization in question will perceive high quantitative results but in the long run, the organization may loose clients due to poor quality product.

In a similar way, when there are too many employees and little resources, there is a high chance that scrambles for resources and utilities will emerge among employees and this may lead to conflicts at the place of work. In short, the respective management must establish a balance between human resources and technical resources to ensure streamlined performance, and still, manage the organization at subsystems level.

2.2.2 Intervention theory

According to Van der Klink et al, (2001), intervention theory suggests that employees demand justifiable responses to their effects and their experiences at work in order to perform well. The theory covers wide range of perspectives, in this regard, including: rewarding processes; the recognition of effort and results at individual level; punishment

of failures and offenders; capacity building; promotional programs; training; guidance and counseling; and many others.

The theory recognizes lack of appropriate interventions, as regards these perspectives, as a potential stressor in the work place. And yet, it is not only the response that matters, but also equality in these responses per individual employee. In other words, for high performance per employee to be realized, the responsible organization must appropriately respond to requests, complaints, demands, inquiries and inputs of all the employees (Blonk & Schene, 2001), and in a fair and equal or rather equitable manner.

Van Dijk (2001) argues that research has shown that employees who are not treated equally tend to develop divergent attitudes towards fellow employees and towards the organization itself (Michiel, 1998). These divergent attitudes lead to unpredictability and fluctuation of per-employee performance because each employee responds differently. As so, it is very likely that various employees will not at all care about how they perform. They direct their attention to personal objectives, goals and interests instead of focusing on the development of the organization. The result is lowly performing employees due to the very evident stress at the workplace.

Van der Klink et al, (2001), the bigger picture behind intervention theory is that stress does normally exist among various employees in a corporation; however, it is how the management responds to the various causes or existence of stress among employees that determine the impact of stress on employees' performance. Stress at workplace does not necessarily impact negatively on the employee's performance; sometimes stress leads to

more or less strengthening of the employees and fosters better performance if appropriately addressed.

2.3 Causes of occupational stress on employees

A survey carried out by Meurs & Perrewe (2011) on the integrative theoretical approach to work stress found that overworking on employees part, is a widely source known of stress. Mostly, employees are overworked whenever the social subsystem comprises workforce that does not match the needs and duties of an organization. Research has shown that overworked employees are more likely to get health problems than employees who work normal hours in a day. Consequently, such employees are more likely to ask for more sick leaves. This way, corporations that overwork employees incur huge losses in terms of the amount of the lost time in form of sick leaves and so on. The impact thereof is low performance index per year per employee.

To establish the main causes of stress, Michiel (1998) carried out an investigation on the reported cases of stress, the study found that work under-load was one of the causes of stress. The findings showed that most employees felt underutilized and this to them failed to meet the intended objective their job description. A dull, repetitive, unrewarding job with no prospects can quickly lead to boredom. Left unchecked, apathy sets in and productivity slows. Such jobs can become highly stressful as there is no outlet other than grumbling. In worst case scenario's workers may even resort to minor acts of sabotage that can negatively affect others.

This happens often when some employees, for example, are given more attention in programs such as training and promotion than others. Thus lowly motivated employees

have little interest on the organizational development. Instead, they develop more interest to personal goals and they thus give little attention to their various duties in an organization (Meurs & Perrewe, 2011). The result is low performance per employee per a given time. The same thing happens if there is inequality in rewarding and punishment programs and the impact thereof is more or less the same (Fiona & Wilson, 2004).

A review was carried out by Mc Gowan et al, (2006) in New Zealand; this study was intended to establish the causes of stress among employees and its implications on performance of employees. From the findings, it was evident that poorly paid employees are less motivated compared to employees who are well paid. Meurs & Perrewe (2011) argues that corporations that perform well offer competitive packages to their employees, companies that fail to remunerate their employees competitively experience high employees' turnover and low productivity since employees lack a motivating factor to perform in their work.

As most of the employees are bottom-level feeders, the kind of leadership and culture and organization practices has the potential to cause considerable amount of stress in the workplace. For example, an autocratic leadership is a characteristic of an organizational leadership that does not integrate employees' participation in decision making processes (HSC, 1997). Therefore, for any decision reached by the top management, the other employees are forced or ought to follow without complaining. In the modern society where civilization has taken its toll, most employees are aware of their rights both at individual and institution levels. Therefore, there is high likelihood that activism will erupt wherever employees rights are not attended to. Similarly, though working without raising any complaints, employees fight for their rights indirectly through lack of concern

and responsibility as far as the respective organization is concerned. In the long run, seeking a locus for justice, the employees tend to perform poorly because it is not the organizational goals that are their priorities (Luthan and Fred, 2003).

2.4 Indicators of occupational stress

A systematic review was conducted by Ruotsalainen & Verbeek (2006) on the indicators of stress among healthcare workers, the results of this study showed that stress can be expressed through increase in the level of turnover among employees in the work place. The scholars carried out a survey in a number of firms and concluded that when employees develop conflicts between the role and needs of an individual employee and the demands of the workplace, they are likely to look for better opportunities elsewhere. This leads to increased staff turnover in the work places. Complaint is quite common for employees who work under a lot of pressure.

Selye (1993) noted that increase in complains and grievances may be as a result of work related stress which develops because a person is unable to cope with the demands being placed on them. Stress, including work related stress, can be a significant cause of illness and is known to be linked with high levels of complains and grievances. Johnson et al, (2005) carried out a survey on the indicators of stress in UK and the experience of work related stress across occupations. Out of the full asset database 26 occupations were selected six occupations were reporting worse than average scores on each of the factors that affect employees performance for example: physical health, psychological well-being and job satisfaction (ambulance workers, teachers, social services, customer services, call centres, prison officers and police).

The results of this study indicated that it is easy to detect whether employees are stressed especially when their level of performance declines. Johnson & Cartwright (2005) argues that poor performance is a key indicator of stress in the work place, based on his findings, stress may be caused by a health problem or a chronic illness, and this may also interfere with the performance of employees by reducing their levels of productivity. Pestonjee et al, (1999) indicates that when employees are subjected to a lot of pressure in their work places there is a high possibility to bring about increase in absenteeism among employees in the work place. This is a stress indicator that is mostly attributed to dissatisfaction, this shows that there is a problem in the work places. Cole (2008) argues that employees who are satisfied and well motivated in their jobs are hardly absent in their work place.

2.5 Performance Measures

Hatry (2006) define Performance measure as a “regular measurement of the results (outcomes) and efficiency of services or programs”. Performance measures are used to monitor and improve performance of a firm in order to yield better results. A survey was conducted in London on performance measurement tools, managers and supervisors were interviewed and the results of this study found that performance measures are recognized as important tools of all Total Quality Management programs. Slack et al, (1995) stated that “Managers and supervisors directing the efforts of an organization or a group have a responsibility to know how, when, and where to institute a wide range of changes. These changes cannot be sensibly implemented without knowledge of the appropriate information on the performance measures to use in determining the level of performance”. Performance measurement is traditionally viewed as an element of the planning and control cycle that captures performance data, enables control feedback,

influences work behavior and monitors strategy implementation (Slack, Chambers & Harrison, 1995).

A comparative study was done in Oxford University in the service industries a few managers from the banking industry were interviewed about how they carried out their performance measure and the tools they used .According to Politt (2004) the findings showed that regular measurements of a system's services and programs were done for monitoring and evaluation of performance. The findings established that performance measurement was done different from the past whereby it involved management accountants with budgetary control and the development of purely indicators such as return on investment. The findings revealed that there are increasing trends of relying on nonfinancial measures to assess the performance of organizations. Performance measurement has now gone beyond input and processes into other sensitive areas (Politt & Bouckaert, 2004) for example: customer satisfaction, reviewing consistencies and understanding value drivers etc.

2.6 Factors that affect performance

An exploratory study was carried out on the effects of psychological stress and how it affects performance by Helena & Addae. (2006), it was found out that environmental factors are factors over which an individual has no control, for example the job may have been completed under severe time constraints, with a lack of adequate resources, or by using obsolete equipment; there may have been conflicting priorities or information overload, such that the individual is confused and under stress; other staff and departments may have been less than cooperative; the restrictive policies of the organization may have prevented the individual from using her initiative and imagination

to the extent that she wished; the quality of the supervision exercised may have been defective , some people need encouragement and support, whereas others like to be left to get on with the job. This cannot be used as excuses for poor performance, but they do have a modifying effect.

A cross national comparative study was conducted in China and America, Spector et al. (2004) found that people's behavior is determined by what motivates them .Their performance is a product of both ability level and motivation .Motivation is necessary for job performance. It is clearly evident that if the manager is to improve performance of work in an organization, attention must be given to the level of motivation of its members. According Porter et al, (1968) character traits, skills and knowledge which are used in the performance. It is always present and will not vary widely over short periods of time. Porter and Lawler (1968) suggested that effort does not lead directly to performance but is influenced by individual characteristics, factors such as intelligence, skills, knowledge, training, and personality affects ability to perform a given activity. If a person lacks the right ability or personality or has inaccurate role perception of what is required of them, the exertion of large amount of energy may still result in low level of performance or task accomplishment.

According to Bernardin (2010), organizations always yearn for employees to perform to the best of their capacities and thus they introduce training to achieve this goal. This calls for charges me specific knowledge, skills, attitudes or behaviors. He further recommends development where employees are offered learning opportunities designed to help them grow, not necessarily on their careers but other aspects of their lives as well. Performance is a function of a worker's knowledge, skills abilities and competencies and training and

development helps to improve them. Competences and performance are surely correlated as competences are diagnostic and can be used to assess the potential to perform.

Mullins (2010) did a review in manufacturing and service firms on the role of perception in relation to employees' performance, the findings of this study showed that perception influences the type of effort exerted, the direction and the level of action in which is believed to be necessary for effective performance. As well skills and abilities individual should have an idea of what their role involves that often go beyond the formal job description. Role perception are influenced by our past experiences and expectations communicated. On the other hand Kondlkar (2007) stated that performance will depend upon role perception as defined in the standing orders, policy instructions, and the level of efforts, skills ability, knowledge and intellectual capacity of the individual. Managers must explain to the employees the role they play in the organization. Employee need to understand what is expected of them and how these expectations affects performance. Managers should be sure that desired level of performance set for employees can be attained.

2.7 Effects of stress on employee's performance

According to a study conducted by Garima et al (2007) presence of stress at work is almost inevitable in all the organizations and it isa common complaint of workers worldwide. In this competitive world companies are facing challenges at every step and with increased competition; work load on the employees has also increased. Most of the times employees and even the management are not clear about their roles in the organization. These factors eventually results in increased stress level (Garima et al 2007).Luo et al (2008) in a study to examine work/family demands, work flexibility,

work/family conflict, and their consequences at work found that previous researchers indicate that in spite of increase in stress level, employees exerts better performance. These studies also indicate that stress is necessary up to certain extent to increase performance.

Much as stress leads to increased performance up to a certain level, this varies according to the personality of the incumbent experiencing stress. Inagaki et al (1997) in a study to examine the relationship between individual characteristics and stress demonstrated in Egoram found that those employees who are outgoing and extroverted in nature can handle stress more than the introverted type of personalities. One of the major outcomes of stress is illness which consequently deters performance due to incapacitation and absenteeism that results there from. Personality factors have shown inclination towards stress, anxiety, and other occupational health outcomes in different areas of medicine, and these factors may contribute to feelings of job dissatisfaction and stress (Michiel, 1998). The incidence of self-reported work related stress has risen nearly threefold recently. The health and safety executive reported that over half a million individual in Britain believe they are experiencing work related stress at a level that is making them ill leading to under performance (HSC, 1997).

Contrary to the notion that occupation stress leads to poor performance, this is not always the case. Mimura e.t al. 2003 in a study to find out the underlying factors responsible for stress and their effects on the performance of the employees on the job came up with factors such as organizational culture, role and responsibility. A regression test was applied to check the effect of stress on job performance and it revealed that stress has a

positive effect on job performance meaning that job performance increases with the increase in stress.

Bakker et al (2002) in an internet survey to study the validation of the Maslach burnout inventory in The United Kingdom found that There have been reports in the newspaper recently of deaths due to overwork. Deaths due to this rose to 317 in 2003 doubling the previous record of 147 set in 2002. Doctors, nurses, factory workers, and taxi drivers are the worst affected (Fiona & Wilson, 2004). Chronic work-related stress is equally troublesome in all regions. Nearly one-third of American employees often or over often feel overworked or overwhelmed by work- and over half of them say they experienced high level of stress at least once each week and this deters their performance efforts. In the UK, 83 percent of human resource managers indicate that stress is a problem in their organization.

Employees experience significant higher stress level in noisy, open offices than in quiet area (Evans, 2000). All 260 nurses who responded to survey in New South Wales had experience some form of stress at least weekly (North, 2001).The demands of working for long hours lead to stress and when one cannot cope any more, they become sluggish which implies under performance. This stress can be reduced by social support (Spector, 2004). There are 3 categories of potential stressors Environmental, organizational and personal (Cooper, 1978), working in an overcrowded room or in a visible location, where noise and interruption are frequent and constant, can increase stress and distract performance (Evans et al, 2000).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology that was applied in conducting the study. This includes the research design, population of the study, sampling, data collection and data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

The study used descriptive survey research design. Patricia et al (2013) deems a descriptive study as fit because it gives a clear explanation of the characteristics of the population or situation being studied. In this study, the focus was to establish the perceived relationship between occupational stress levels and employee's performance in tea factories in Murang'a County. A descriptive survey allows the researcher to describe specific behavior as it occurs in the environment. This is done through asking a series of specific self-reported questions which allows for an anonymous peek inside the thought processes of large numbers of people simultaneously thus creating an opportunity to describe what is not outwardly observable. Descriptive research survey is best be used to increase understanding and knowledge about the behavior and thought processes of people.

3.3 Population

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), explains that a target population should have some observable characteristics to which the researcher intends to generalize the results of the study. The tea factories in Murang'a County have approximately 100 employees each making the total population of the study to be approximately 800 employees. The

categories of the employees are top management (factory unit manager, production manager and field services coordinator), the technical staff who are in charge of machine operations and the short contract staff who comprise about 75% of the total employees.

3.4 Sampling

The study was conducted in all the 8 factories and the researcher applied proportional stratified sampling to select the respondents in each category. According to Hunt et al (2001), when the sub population within the overall population varies, then it is advantageous to sample each sub population (stratum) independently. According to Kothari (2006), 10% to 50% of the total population is appropriate sample size when the population is large and assists in generalization of the research findings. The researcher therefore sampled 20% of each of the categories of staff and this percentage was picked due to resource constraints and it was deemed sufficient enough to represent the population. The number of respondents sampled was then equally distributed among the 8 factories and the respondents were randomly selected in each factory. This is as illustrated below:

Table 3.1: Sampling

STAFF CATEGORY	STAFF POPULATION	20% SAMPLE	SAMPLE PER FACTORY	TOTAL SAMPLE
Management	48	10	1	8
Technical	160	32	4	32
Casual	592	118	15	120

Total	800	160	20	160
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Source: KTDA (2013)

3.5 Data Collection

The study used primary data which was collected through a structured questionnaire. According to Jupp & Sapsford (2006), a self-administered questionnaire is the only way to elicit self-report on people's opinions, attitudes, beliefs and values. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the bio data and the main part which covered the background of the study, the causes of occupational stress, the indicators of occupational stress and the effect of occupational stress levels on employee performance. The questionnaires were distributed to the selected respondents for them to fill and were collected later for analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics techniques since the nature of the data collected was quantitative. Descriptive statistics is the discipline of quantitatively describing the main features of a collection of information (Trochim et al, 2006). Descriptive statistics aim to summarize a sample, rather than use the data to learn about the population that the sample of data is thought to represent. This is done through the use of measures of central tendency (mean, median and mode) or through measures of dispersion or variability (standard deviation, variance, kurtosis and skewness).

Pearson product moment correlation was used to determine the perceived relationship between occupational stress levels and employee performance in tea factories in Murang'a County. The data was described through comparison with theoretical

approaches cited in the literature review in order to establish areas of agreement and disagreement in order to ascertain the facts.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results analysis and discussions of the findings for the study that was carried out to investigate the perceived relationship between occupational stress and employee performance in tea factories in Murang'a County. It therefore covers the analysis and discussion on the demographic information, stress in the tea factories and employee performance in the factories.

4.2 Response Rate

The questionnaires that were sent out to the respondents were 160 and 134 of them were returned. This included 6 from the management, 28 from the technical staff and 100 from the short contract/casual employees. This represented 84% of the targeted population which is appropriate according to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) who states that a 50% response rate is appropriate enough to comfortably analyses findings.

4.3 Demographic Information of Respondent.

This section covers the results, analysis and discussions of the demographic information of the respondents in relation to job category, number of years employed in the factory, highest level of education attained, age of the respondents, gender of the respondents, employment contract type, work shift description and weekly overtime hours. Each of the section portrays the results in frequency tables and a brief discussion on the interpretation of the same.

4.3.1 Job category

The question sought to know the category of the respondent's job in the tea factory. Table 4.1 indicates that majority of the respondents were short contract staff comprising 74.6%, Technical staff at 20.9% and the management with 4.5%. This is in line with the speculated sample of the different job categories and it indicates that there is a well-balanced organizational structure in the factories.

Table 4.1 Respondents' Job Categories

Category	Frequency	percentage
Management	6	4.5
Technical	28	20.9
Short Contract/ Casual	100	74.6
Total	134	100%

Source: KTDA (2013)

4.3.2 Number of years employed in the factory

The question sought to know the period that the respondent has worked in the factory. The study results as shown in Table 4.2 indicate that majority of the respondents 35.8% has worked in the factory for 2 – 5 years. This implies that majority of the respondents have been in the factories long enough to understand and respond to issues of stress and performance in the factories.

Table 4.2 Number of years employed in the factory

Employment period	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 12 Months	20	14.9
1 – 2 Years	47	35.1
2 – 5 Years	48	35.8

5 – 8 Years	17	12.7
Over 8 years	2	1.5
Total	134	100%

4.3.3 Highest Level of Education Attained

This question sought to find out the literacy levels of the employees in the tea factories as shown in Table 4.3. The findings indicate that a majority of the respondents at 41.8% have at least secondary school education and these mostly are the short contract staff. This is an indication that most of the respondents have adequate levels of literacy to understand the questionnaire and respond to the issues of stress and performance in the factories.

Table 4.3: Highest level of education attained.

Education level	Frequency	Percentage
Masters	7	5.2
Degree	18	13.4
Diploma	18	13.4
Certificate	35	26.1
Secondary	56	41.8
Total	134	100%

4.3.4 Age of Respondents

This question sought to describe the age of the respondents as shown in Table 4.4. The study revealed that majority of the respondents (48.5%) were between 29 – 38 years which is an indication that most of the employees are mature enough to decipher the issues of stress and performance in their work.

Table 4.4 Respondents Age Bracket

Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage
20 – 28 Years	41	30.6
29 – 38 Years	65	48.5
39 – 48 Years	26	19.4
Above 49 years	2	1.5
Total	134	100%

4.3.5 Gender of Respondents

This question sought to know the respondents gender. The study results shown in Table 4.5 revealed that majority of the respondents were male at 68.7% while female was 31.3%. This implies that the gender profile in the tea factories is imbalanced which could trigger stress due to discriminatory employment practices.

Table 4.5 Respondents Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	42	31.3
Female	92	68.7
Total	134	100%

4.3.6 Employment Contract Type

This question was aimed at finding out the nature of contract that the employees in the factories were subjected to. The findings indicated that majority (70.1%) were short contract/casual employees which is an indicator of job insecurity that leads to stress amongst the employees of the tea factories. This information is summarized in Table 4.6:

Table 4.6 Respondents' Employment Contract Type

Contract type	Frequency	Percentage
Fulltime permanent	24	17.9
Fulltime Temporary	9	6.7
Part time permanent	7	5.2
Short contract / casual	94	70.1
Total	134	100%

4.3.7 Work shift Description

This question sought to know the kind of work shifts that the employees in the factories were subjected to with an aim of estimating the number of hours that they work per day. From the findings, it was evident that 35.8% majority work in a rotating 12 hour shift which means that in a six day week, they work for 72 hours. This indicates that employees are subjected to long working hours which is a cause of stress. The difference in working hours among the employees is probably influenced by ones job description. This information is as shown in the Table 4.7:

4.7 Respondent's Work Shift

Work Shift description	Frequency	Percentage
Rotating 8 hour shift	25	18.7
Rotating 12 hour Shift	48	35.8
Permanent day shift	26	19.4
Permanent night shift	35	26.1
Total	134	100%

4.3.8 Weekly Overtime Hours

This question sought to find out the number of overtime hours that employees work per week with an aim of determining how far time-strained they are. As indicated in Table 4.8, the findings indicate that 54.5% majority work are for 6 – 12 extra hours per week which means that they work 2 extra hours per day in a six day week. Most of the employees do work overtime and this indicates work overload in the tea factories which leads to stress and lowers performance.

Table 4.8 Respondents' Weekly Overtime Hours Worked

Overtime Hours Range	Frequency	Percentage
6 Hours or less	26	19.4
6 – 12 hours	73	54.5
12 – 18 hours	34	25.4
Over 18 hours	1	0.7
Total	134	100%

4.4 Stress in the Tea Factories

The section sought to measure the level of occupational stress in terms of causes of stress (stressors) and indicators of stress being experienced by the employees in tea factories in Murang'a County. A scale of 1 – 5 was used. The score "Strongly Disagree" was represented by a mean score equivalent to 1 - 1.5 on the continuous Linkert scale ($1 \leq \text{Strongly Disagree} \leq 1.5$). The score "Disagree" was represented by a mean score equivalent to 1.5 - 2.5 on the continuous Linkert scale ($1.5 \leq \text{Disagree} \leq 2.5$). The score "Uncertain" was represented by a mean score equivalent to 2.5 - 3.5 on the continuous Linkert scale ($2.5 \leq \text{uncertain} \leq 3.5$). The score "Agree" was represented by a mean score

equivalent to 3.5 - 4.5 on the continuous Linkert scale ($3.5 \leq \text{Agree} \leq 4.5$). The scores of “Strongly Agree” were equivalent to 4.5 - 5.0 on the Linkert scale ($4.5 \leq \text{Strongly Agree} \leq 5.0$).

Table 4.9: Indicators of Stress

Indicators of Stress	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am not satisfied with the work at the factory and would look for a job elsewhere	134	3.6042	0.9620
There are many complains and grievances going around in the factory	134	3.7410	1.0327
My job performance is not satisfactory or is getting worse	134	3.2048	1.0238
I do not attend work on a daily basis and in time	134	3.9401	0.7624
I am not certain about what my future career picture looks like	134	4.8042	0.2396
I always experience headaches, sweats, dizziness or lightheadedness while at work	134	3.7124	1.2308
For the last 12 months, I have been diagnosed with an illness	134	2.5673	1.3456
For the last 6 months, I have had a job accident	134	1.8630	1.6024
I rarely talk to my boss or co-workers whenever I have personal problems	134	3.9104	1.23369

The results above indicate that most employees strongly agree that they are not certain about what their future career picture looks like (Mean= 4.8042, SD=0.2396). Most employees agree that they are not satisfied with the work at the factory and would look for a job elsewhere (Mean= 3.6042, SD = 0.9620) and they also agree that there are many complains and grievances going on around the factory (Mean=3.7410, SD= 1.0327). Similarly, the employees agree that they do not attend work on a daily basis and in time

(Mean= 3.9401, SD=0.7624). Additionally, they also agree that they experience headaches, sweats, dizziness or lightheadedness while at work (Mean=3.7124, SD=1.2308) and they also agree that they rarely talk to the bosses or coworkers whenever they have a personal problem (Mean=3.9104, SD=1.23369). However, majority employees are uncertain whether their performance is not satisfactory (Mean=3.2018, SD=1.0327). Most respondents disagree that they have been diagnosed with any illness for the last 12 months (Mean= 2.5673, SD= 1.3456) and also strongly disagree to having had a job accident for the last 6 months (Mean= 1.8630, SD=1.6024)

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that uncertainty about what the future career picture looks like the most prevalent indicator of stress among the employees of the tea factories because it implies job insecurity. The willingness to look for jobs elsewhere by the employees imply high labor turnover which is also an indicator of stress in the tea factories. Additionally, it is evident that the employees are stressed due to the fact that there are many complains and grievances in the tea factories. Withdrawal tendencies as an indicator of stress is also present among the factory employees because the rarely talk to their bosses or coworkers whenever they have personal problems. Absenteeism as an indicator of stress is also very evident due to the fact that employees do not attend work on a daily basis and in time. Besides, the fact that most of them experience stress symptoms such as headaches and dizziness further ascertains the existence of stress among them. The issue of decrease in performance cannot be ascertained to be an indicator of stress in the factories because the employees are uncertain about its occurrence in the factories. The occurrence of illnesses and accidents is not an indicator of stress in the factories.

Table 4.10: Causes of Stress

Causes of stress	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
The factory does not utilizes all my potential in terms of skills and experience	134	3.6179	1.24634
I am not able to complete the work assigned to me on a daily basis in time	134	3.6328	1.21053
The factory does not offer me a variety of tasks such that I do not have to do repetitive tasks every now and then	134	3.4030	1.24526
I am not treated equally with my colleagues in terms of opportunities for growth	134	3.6418	1.25298
I am dissatisfied with the remuneration I receive from my work	134	3.9925	1.06550
The factory leaders do not respect me or ask for my opinion before making any major decisions	134	4.1343	.97171
My job require a great deal of concentration and remembrance of many different things	134	2.7910	1.26891
My job requires me to work very fast and hard with little time to do it	134	2.6045	1.16347
My supervisor and colleagues rarely go out of their way to make life easier for me	134	3.8134	1.14490
The level of noise in the areas in which I work is usually high	134	4.2985	1.01884
The level of lighting in the area in which I work is usually poor	134	3.5373	1.10812
The temperature of my work area is usually uncomfortable	134	3.6567	1.11790
The level of air circulation in my work area is poor	134	3.6791	1.07326
In my job, I am well protected from exposure to dangerous substances	134	3.1045	1.04787
My job exposes me to verbal abuse and or confrontations with clients or the general public	134	2.6821	1.85881
My job exposes me to physical harm or injury	134	4.4104	1.13199

My job personally exposes me to potential legal liability	134	2.2612	.97278
The overall quality of the physical environment where I work is poor	134	3.7776	1.05998

The results above clarify that majority respondents agree that the factory does not utilize all their potential in terms of skills and experience and also agree that they are not able to complete the work assigned to them in time with Mean=3.617, SD=1.2463 and Mean=3.6328, SD=1.2105 respectively. In addition, the respondents generally agree that they are not treated equally with their colleagues in terms of opportunity for growth (Mean=3.6418, SD=1.2529). Furthermore, the respondents almost unanimously agree that they are dissatisfied with the remuneration that they receive from their work (Mean=3.9, SD=0.1655) and also strongly agree that the factory leaders do not respect them or ask for their opinions before making any major decisions (Mean 4.1343, SD=0.9717). There is a general agreement by the employees that their supervisors and colleagues rarely go out of their way to make life easier for them (Mean= 3.8134, SD=1.1449) and they also strongly agree that the noise in the areas that they usually work is high (Mean= 4.2985, SD=1.0181). Moreover, they agree that the temperatures in their work areas is usually uncomfortable (Mean=3.6567, SD=1.1179) and the case is similar regarding whether the level of air circulation in their work areas is poor (Mean= 3.6791, SD=1.0732). Besides, the same majority strongly agree that their job exposes them to physical harm or injury (Mean=4.4104, SD=1.1319) and also agree that the overall quality of the physical environment where they work is poor (Mean= 3.7776, SD=1.0599).

On the other hand however, most respondents are uncertain regarding the issue of the factory not offering them a variety of tasks such that they do not have to do repetitive tasks every now and then (Mean=3.4030, SD=1.2452). Similarly, the issues of whether the employees are well protected from exposure to dangerous substances and whether their job exposes them to verbal abuse and confrontation with clients or public are met with uncertainty as shown by (Mean=3.1045, SD= 1.0478) and (Mean= 2.6821, SD= 1.8588) respectively. Additionally, they are uncertain whether the lighting in the areas they work is usually poor (Mean= 3.5373, SD=1.1081) It is also noteworthy that majority respondents are uncertain whether their job requires a great deal of concentration and remembrance of many different things (Mean=2.7910, SD= 1.2689). Similarly, the respondents are also uncertain if their job requires them to think very fast and hard with little time to do it (Mean=2.6045, SD=1.1634). The employees disagree that their job personally exposes them to potential legal liability (Mean= 2.2612, SD=0.9727).

The above analysis makes it evident that the employees are faced by various issues that cause stress and elevate the indicators of stress. For instance, the employees feel underutilized and are not able to complete their assignments in time which means that they lack motivation yet they are faced with high workload which in turn strains them leading to stress. Additionally, the employees generally feel that they are not treated equally with their colleagues, the factory leaders neither respect them nor ask for their opinions before making major decisions and they are dissatisfied with the remuneration they receive from their work. To make matters worse, the supervisors and colleagues do not go out of their way to make life easier for the respondents which implies poor employee relations that further cause stress.

The issue of poor working conditions also stands out in the tea factories. This is shown by the high levels of noise, uncomfortable temperatures, poor levels of air circulation, exposure of employees to physical harm or injury and poor physical environment of the areas where they work. This means that the environmental disturbances in terms of noise, heat, cold, strong fumes and paranoia of impending injury are what the employees are faced with each working day and under such, stress is definitely inevitable.

However, some of the causes of stress stipulated in the research tool do not entirely apply in the tea factories because they were met with uncertainty the employees. This means that they could be there or not and at this point they cannot be verified. Among these includes whether the factory offers the employees a variety of tasks such that they do not have to do repetitive tasks every now and then, whether their jobs require a great deal of concentration, whether their jobs require them to work very fast with little time to do it, whether the level of lighting in the areas they work is poor, whether they are well protected from exposure to dangerous substances and whether their jobs exposes them to verbal abuse and confrontations with clients or the general public.

However, it is clear that exposure to legal liability is not a cause of stress in the tea factories. It is important to note that the observations above do not generally apply across the board in the respondent base. This is because most of the standard deviations are more than 1 ($SD \geq 1$) which implies that there is lack of consensus in the various views. This could be explained by the different job descriptions in the job categories and also the personalities which dictate how far one can cope with stress.

4.5 Employee Performance Measures in the Factories

The section sought to measure the level of occupational stress in terms of causes of stress (stressors) and indicators of stress being experienced by the employees in tea factories in Murang'a County. A scale of 1 – 5 was used. The score “Never” was represented by a mean score equivalent to 1 - 1.5 on the continuous Linkert scale ($1 \leq \text{Never} \leq 1.5$). The score “Few times” was represented by a mean score equivalent to 1.5 - 2.5 on the continuous Linkert scale ($1.5 \leq \text{few times} \leq 2.5$). The score “Some of the time” was represented by a mean score equivalent to 2.5 - 3.5 on the continuous Linkert scale ($2.5 \leq \text{some of the time} \leq 3.5$). The score “Most of the time” was represented by a mean score equivalent to 3.5 - 4.5 on the continuous Linkert scale ($3.5 \leq \text{Most of the time} \leq 4.5$). The scores of “All the time” were equivalent to 4.5 - 5.0 on the Linkert scale ($4.5 \leq \text{all the time} \leq 5.0$).

Table 4.11: Performance Measures.

Performance Measures	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I respect and observe safety rules and regulations in the factory	134	3.2090	.80482
I am involved in team work and I cooperate with my fellow employees of the factory	134	3.1119	.86416
I am committed and I complete my tasks in a timely manner	134	2.4045	1.28777
I understand how my job impacts the organization and my goals are clear	134	2.0821	1.01387
I punctually attend work daily and conform to work hours	134	2.4701	.74531
I always provide new ideas and seek new challenges and opportunities	134	2.9776	.76055
I serve both internal and external customers to the factory satisfactorily	134	3.0672	.79659

I have a positive attitude towards my work	134	3.6343	1.85656
I take responsibility for achievement of my work targets	134	2.4896	.86244
I maintain and improve my knowledge, skills and competencies	134	3.5821	1.37615
I always arrive for work in time	134	2.3403	.80189
I am always punctual in attendance of meetings	134	2.9478	.77864
I always meet the work deadlines set for me	134	3.9522	.87846
I am good at identifying and reporting problems at work	134	3.1418	.79617
I propose solutions to problems at work and take action to solve them	134	3.0149	1.31328
I set appropriate priorities for the tasks assigned to me	134	3.2090	.85025
I use my time at work effectively	134	2.2373	.95309
I consult with supervisors and co-workers as necessary	134	3.1493	.87150
I work without supervision as necessary	134	2.1493	.80886
I effectively collaborate with other department members as necessary	134	2.9030	.80290
I respond appropriately to feedback on job performance	133	3.1504	.86599
I deal appropriately with confidential information and sensitive situations	134	2.3552	.84840
I am fair while dealing with people at work	134	3.2313	.88355
I demonstrate appropriate interactions with colleagues	134	3.0448	1.44881
I deal effectively and professionally with employees in other areas	134	3.1716	.81827
How do you rate the general levels of performance of employees in the factory?	134	2.8060	.86257

The results above show that majority employees have a positive attitude towards their work most of the time (Mean= 3.63, SD= 1.85) and meet the deadlines set for them most of the time (Mean=3.95, SD= 0.87)

However, only some of the time do they respect and observe safety rules and regulations (Mean=3.21, SD= 0.80). They are involved in teamwork and cooperation with fellow employees some of the time (Mean=3.11, SD=0.86) and they always provide new ideas and seek new challenges and opportunities some of the time (Mean=2.97, SD= 0.76). Additionally, the employees satisfactorily serve both internal and external customers some of the time (Mean= 3.0, SD= 0.79) and maintain or improve their knowledge, skills and competencies some of the time (Mean= 3.58, SD= 1.37). Besides, only some of the time are they always punctual in attendance of meetings (Mean=2.94, SD=0.77) or manage to identify and report problems at work (Mean= 3.14, SD= 0.79).

It is only some of the time that the employees are able to propose solutions to problems at work and take action to solve them, set appropriate priorities for the tasks assigned to them and consult with supervisors or coworkers as necessary as shown by (Mean=3.01 SD=1.31), (Mean= 3.20, SD=0.85) and (Mean=3.14, SD=0.87) respectively. It is also some of the time that the majority respondents effectively collaborate with other department members as necessary (Mean= 2.90, SD= 0.80) or respond appropriately to feedback on job performance (Mean = 3.15, SD= 0.86). Majority respondents are fair while dealing with people at work some of the time (Mean= 3.23, SD= 0.88). Some of the time, majority employees demonstrate appropriate interactions with colleagues (Mean= 3.04, SD=1.44) and also deal effectively and professionally with employees in other areas (Mean= 3.17, SD= 0.81).

However, majority respondents deal appropriately with confidential information and sensitive situations a few times (Mean=2.35, SD=0.84) and also use their time at work effectively a few times (Mean=2.23, SD=0.95). The same case scenario happens on the

issue of the employees having to work without supervision as necessary (Mean=2.14, SD=0.80). Additionally, the respondents always arrive for work in time a few times (Mean=2.34, SD=0.80) and also take responsibility for the achievement of their work targets a few times (Mean= 2.48, SD= 0.86). Only a few times are the employees committed and complete their tasks in a timely manner (Mean= 2.40, SD= 1.29) and a similar scenario applies on whether they understand how their job impacts the organization and whether their goals are clear (Mean=2.08, SD=1.01). The employees attend work daily and conform to working hours a few times (Mean= 2.47, SD= 0.74).

The question on how the respondents rate the general performance of the employees in the factory was measured by a scale of 1 - 4 where 0.0 – 1.0 stands for “excellent”, 1.1 – 2.0 stands for “good”, 2.1 – 3.0 stands for “fair” and 3.1 – 4.0 stands for “poor”. The mean response on this question was at 2.8 meaning that most respondents felt that their performance was fair implying that it was not the best.

From the above analysis, it is evident that performance is at stake in the tea factories in Murang’a County. This is because it is only in two instances that the employees indicate good performance i.e. they have a positive attitude towards work and they always meet the deadlines set for them. However, there is uncertainty as to whether the employees in the tea factories in Murang’a County respect and observe the safety rules in the organizations. Similarly, it is not clear as to whether the employees are involved in team work or not. One cannot verify whether the employees in the factories provide new ideas or seek new challenges and opportunities. Additionally, there is doubt as to whether the employees serve both internal and external customers satisfactorily, or whether they maintain and improve their knowledge, skills and competences. It is also not precise as to

whether the employees observe punctuality in meetings or whether they identify and report problems at work. There is no assurance whether the employees propose solutions to problems at work and take action to solve them or whether they set priorities for the tasks assigned to them. Similarly, it is not certain whether they consult with their supervisors and coworkers as necessary nor is there assurance as to whether they collaborate with other department members as necessary. The question of whether the employees respond appropriately to feedback on job performance cannot be verified in the tea factories and a similar case scenario applies to whether they are fair while dealing with people at work. Additionally, there is uncertainty pertaining whether the employees in the factories demonstrate appropriate interactions with colleagues and deal professionally with employees in other areas.

The performance gap in the tea factories is further ascertained by the fact that the employees are neither committed nor do they complete their tasks in a timely manner. Similarly, they scarcely understand how their jobs impacts the organization and their goals are unclear. They hardly attend work on a daily basis or conform to work hours and barely do they take responsibility for achievement of their work targets. They are hardly ever punctual and the occurrence of them using their time at work effectively is minimal. Besides, they seldom work without supervision as necessary or observe confidentiality more in sensitive situations. It is noteworthy that the employees feel that the general performance of the factories is fair which leaves a lot to be desired.

It is noteworthy that majority of the actions that measure performance in the tea factories were seldom exercised by the employees as indicated by the analysis above showing that performance was not at its best and neither was it badly off. But considering that the

questions were meant to measure performance, the assumption is that if performance was at its best, then the majority of the actions that measure performance would be exercised more often. It is also noteworthy that majority of the standard deviations were also below 1 ($SD \leq 1$) showing unanimity of the responses.

4.6 Relationship between Occupational Stress and Employee Performance.

Table 4.12: Pearson’s Correlation Analysis between Stress and Employee Performance

		Stress	Employee's Performance
Stress	Pearson Correlation	1	.634**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.041
	N	134	134
Employee's Performance	Pearson Correlation	.585**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032	
	N	134	134

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

The study sought to find out whether there is a relationship between occupational stress and employee performance in tea factories in Murang’a County through a correlation analysis which is shown by table 5.2 above. It was observed that there was a positive correlation between stress and employees performance since the correlation coefficient values are close to-1 ($R=0.534$). Similarly, the findings revealed that the relationship between the two variables was statistically significant because the p -value=0.41 which is

less than 5%. This therefore means that occupational stress significantly affects job satisfaction in the tea factories.

4.7 Discussion of findings

The analysis above shows that stress is evident in the tea factories in Murang'a County as indicated by the labor turnover from the fact that employees are really willing to look for jobs elsewhere confirming the stipulation by Ruotsalainen & Verbeek (2006) which indicates that when employees are faced with role conflicts and their individual needs are not met, they are likely to look for jobs elsewhere. Furthermore, high levels of complaints and grievances are also evident in the factories as yet another cause of stress which confirms the statement by Selye (1993) that increase in complains and grievances may be as a result of work related stress which develops because a person is unable to cope with the demands being placed on them. Additionally, the agreement by the factory employees that they do not attend work on a daily basis and in time confirms the argument by Pestonjee et al, (1999) that when employees are subjected to a lot of pressure in their work places, there is a high possibility to bring about increase in absenteeism among employees in the work place. Besides, physical illness is an indicator of stress rampant among the factory employees which supports the stipulation by Johnson et al, (2005) that it is easy to detect whether employees are stressed by the level of physical illnesses such as headaches among the employees.

The fact that the employees are not able to complete the work assigned to them in time indicates the presence of work overload as a cause of stress among the factory employees as stipulated by Meurs & Perrewe (2011) on the integrative theoretical approach to work stress found that overworking on employees part, is a widely source known of stress.

Besides, there is an element of employment inequality shown by gender imbalance in the factories and the fact that the employees agree that they are not treated equally with their colleagues in terms of opportunities for growth which leads to stress according to (Fiona & Wilson, 2004). Poor remuneration as a cause of stress in the factories is also outstanding among the employees because they agree that they are not satisfied with the remuneration they receive from their work as stated by Mc Gowan et al, (2006) that failure to remunerate employees well leads to stress that lowers performance. Additionally, the factory employees strongly agree that their leaders do not respect them or ask for their opinions before making any major decisions which acts as a stressor. This is as ascertained by Luthan and Fred, 2003) when they argued that the kind of leadership and culture and organization practices has the potential to cause considerable amount of stress in the workplace.

The fact the employees feel that they are not treated equally with their colleagues, the factory leaders neither respect them nor ask for their opinions before making major decisions and they are dissatisfied with the remuneration they receive from their work. This means that they lack the interventions demanding justifiable responses to their effects at work in terms of lack of appreciation and poor remuneration which acts as a potential stressor as stipulated in the intervention theory (Van der Klink et al, 2001) discussed earlier in this work. The issue of poor working conditions also stands out in the tea factories. This is shown by agreements that the levels of noise are usually high, the temperatures are usually uncomfortable, the levels of air circulation are usually poor, the employees are exposed to physical harm or injury and that the physical environment of the areas where they work is poor. This means that the environmental disturbances in

terms of noise, heat, cold, strong fumes and paranoia of impending injury are what the employees are faced with each working day and under such, stress is definitely inevitable.

The analysis also indicate that performance poor in the tea factories. Majority of the things that indicate good performance in the factories are done by the employees some of the time e.g. respect and observe the safety rules in the organizations, involvement in team work, satisfactory customer service, identifying and reporting problems at work and responding appropriately to feedback on job performance among others. Besides, the same majorities respondents agree that only a few times are they committed, punctual at work, take responsibility for achievement of work targets, use time at work effectively or work without supervision. This being the case therefore, it is impossible to rule out the existence of behaviors such lack of commitment, absenteeism and tardiness, poor customer service, knowledge stagnation, ineffective usage of time, lack of total fairness while dealing with people and disclosure of confidential information just to mention a few. These are the parameters by which performance in the factories is measured as adopted from their performance appraisal forms and the fact that these behaviors stand out only serves to indicate that the employee performance in the tea factories is poor.

The analysis therefore concludes that performance in the tea factories is low and due to the fact that there is evidence of existence of stress, then it can be concluded that stress is responsible for the poor performance in the factories. According to Inagaki et al (1997), one of the major outcomes of stress is illness which consequently deters performance due to incapacitation and absenteeism that results there from. (Fiona & Wilson, 2004) further indicate that work overload leads to stress that consequently lead to poor performance.

Remuneration is a motivator for performance and once it lacks, an employee gets stressed and this affects their performance. Besides, poor employee relations and too much workload as evidenced in the factories indicate an imbalance in the social and technical subsystems according social- technical systems theory Trist (1981) which leads to stress and consequently affects performance. Additionally, employees experience significant higher stress level in noisy, open offices than in quiet areas (Evans, 2000) and this makes it hard for them to perform better as is the case in the tea factories.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations for the study that was carried out to investigate the impact of and relationship between occupational stress and employee performance in tea factories in Murang'a County.

5.2 Summary of the Findings.

This study aimed at establishing the perceived relationship between occupational stress and employee performance in tea factories in Murang'a County has been able to establish that majority of the respondents are casual employees employed on a short contract basis which means that job insecurity as a potential stressor is rampant among the employees of the factory. Most employees in the factories are male and this shows that the gender profile in the factories is imbalanced. This is a form of employment inequality that triggers stress and consequently lowers performance. Most employees in the factories have worked in the factory for 2–5 years meaning that have been in the factories long enough to understand and respond to issues of stress and performance in the factories.

Most of the employees in the factories are within the 29–38 years age bracket which means that they are within a healthy age bracket and are mature enough to decipher the issues of stress and performance in their work. However, this age bracket is usually characterized by young nuclear family settings that come with lots of responsibility and makes it hard for the employees to balance family and work life and this could trigger stress. Moreover, a majority of the employees work in a rotating 12 hour shift which

means that they end up working for 72 hours a week instead of the 40 hours stipulated in the law. This therefore indicates that the employees are subjected to work overload and burn out from working too many hours which triggers occupational stress. Besides, most factory employees' work for 6–12 overtime hours per week which only asserts the element of work overload that strains the employees.

Uncertainty about what the future career picture looks like the most prevalent indicator of stress among the employees of the tea factories in Murang'a County because it implies job insecurity. The employees in the factories are willing to look for jobs elsewhere which implies impending labor turnover which is also an indicator of stress in the tea factories. Additionally, the presence of many complains and grievances in the tea factories are an indicator that stress is present because employees who are satisfied with their work would not complain. Withdrawal tendencies as an indicator of stress is also present among the factory employees because they rarely talk to their bosses or coworkers whenever they have personal problems. Stressed employees fail to show up for work which leads to absenteeism which is evident in the tea factories due to the fact that employees do not attend work on a daily basis and in time. Besides, the fact that most of them experience stress symptoms such as headaches and dizziness further ascertains the existence of stress among them. If the employees were not stressed, then these indicators of stress would be totally absent meaning that the presence of stress in the factories cannot be ruled out. However, stress in the tea factories is not expressed through decrease in performance or through the occurrence of illnesses and accidents.

Regarding the causes of stress, the employees feel underutilized and are not able to complete their assignments in time which means that they lack motivation yet they are

faced with high workload which in turn strains them leading to stress. They are also not treated equally with their colleagues or respected by their leaders and they are dissatisfied with the remuneration they receive from their work which causes stress to them. To make matters worse, the supervisors and colleagues do not go out of their way to make life easier for the factory employees which causes stress emanating from poor employee relations. Furthermore, poor working conditions as a cause of stress in the tea factories cannot be ruled out. This is because there are high levels of noise, uncomfortable temperatures and low levels of air circulation, exposure of employees to physical harm or injury and poor physical environment of the areas where they work. This means that the environmental disturbances in terms of noise, heat, cold, strong fumes and paranoia of impending injury are what the employees are faced with each working day and under such, stress is definitely inevitable.

However, not all the causes of stress stipulated in the research tool apply in the tea factories which are attributed to ambiguity in their occurrence. This means that they could be there or not and at this point they cannot be verified. Among these includes whether the factory offers the employees a variety of tasks such that they do not have to do repetitive tasks every now and then, whether their jobs require a great deal of concentration, whether their jobs require them to work very fast with little time to do it, whether the level of lighting in the areas they work is poor, whether they are well protected from exposure to dangerous substances and whether their jobs exposes them to verbal abuse and confrontations with clients or the general public. However, it is clear that exposure to legal liability is not a cause of stress in the tea factories.

The overall performance of the employees in the tea factories in Murang'a County is not satisfactory. This is because good performance is only verified in two instances where the employees confirm they have a positive attitude towards work and they always meet the deadlines set for them. In most of the proceeding instances, there is ambiguity as to whether the actions that measure good performance in the tea factories are executed or not. Consequently, there is uncertainty as to whether the employees in the tea factories in Murang'a County respect and observe the safety rules in the organizations. It is not clear as to whether the employees are involved in team work or not. One cannot verify whether the employees in the factories provide new ideas or seek new challenges and opportunities. Additionally, there is doubt as to whether the employees serve both internal and external customers satisfactorily, or whether they maintain and improve their knowledge, skills and competences. It is also not precise as to whether the employees observe punctuality in meetings or whether they identify and report problems at work. There is no assurance whether the employees propose solutions to problems at work and take action to solve them or whether they set priorities for the tasks assigned to them. Similarly, it is not certain whether they consult with their supervisors and coworkers as necessary nor is there assurance as to whether they collaborate with other department members as necessary. The question of whether the employees respond appropriately to feedback on job performance cannot be verified in the tea factories and a similar case scenario applies to whether they are fair while dealing with people at work. Additionally, there is uncertainty pertaining whether the employees in the factories demonstrate appropriate interactions with colleagues and deal professionally with employees in other areas.

Additionally, the unsatisfactory performance in the tea factories is enhanced by the fact that the employees are not committed and they do not complete their tasks in a timely manner. Similarly, they scarcely understand how their jobs impacts the organization and their goals are unclear. They hardly attend work on a daily basis or conform to work hours and barely do they take responsibility for achievement of their work targets. They are hardly ever punctual and the occurrence of them using their time at work effectively is minimal. Besides, they seldom work without supervision as necessary or observe confidentiality more in sensitive situations. It is noteworthy that the employees feel that the general performance of the factories is fair which leaves a lot to be desired.

5.3 Conclusion

The study sought to establish the perceived relationship between occupational stress and employee performance in tea factories in Murang'a County. The findings demonstrate that occupational stress is present among the employees of the factories due to the presence on indicators of stress such as impending labor turnover, many complains and grievances, absenteeism, tardiness, withdrawal and symptoms such as dizziness and headaches. Additionally, there are many causes of stress that the employees have to deal with every day of their lives at work and this includes work overload, poor remuneration, inequality at work, poor leadership, poor employee relations and poor working conditions such as heat, noise, low air circulation and exposure to physical harm and injury just to mention a few. The findings also demonstrate that the performance of the employees in the tea factories is wanting. This being the case therefore, it is impossible to rule out the existence of behaviors such as lack of commitment, poor customer service, ineffective usage of time, lack of total fairness while dealing with people and disclosure of

confidential information just to mention a few. These are the parameters from which performance is measured as adopted from their performance appraisal forms and the fact that these behaviors stand out only serves to indicate that the performance in the tea factories is poor.

The presence of stress has a negative impact on the employee performance in that it reduces it. However, this does not apply across all the employee categories but rather to short contract (casual), technical and then management employees in that order. This can be explained by the different job descriptions, the workload and the number of hours that one is required to work just to mention a few. The casual employees in the tea factories have a lot of physical work to do for long hours and for very low wages. They also have to work in a hot and noisy environment filled with strong tea fumes and exposed to physical harm or injury by the machines which all add up to potential stressors. Besides, using Pearson's Correlation Technique, the two variables (stress and performance) have a positive relationship with a magnitude of 0.634. This implies that there is a moderate degree of positive correlation between the two variables.

5.4 Recommendations for policy and practice

From the study, it is clear that occupational stress reduces employee performance. It is therefore imperative that the employers should address the stressors that employees are facing in a bid to improve performance in the tea factories. As such, the employers should revise the workloads that the employees are given, reduce the number of hours that they work per day, increase their remuneration and improve the working conditions that the employees work under. Besides that, they should build an open communication system in order to improve the workplace relations and build trust amongst themselves.

This will help in balancing the social subsystem and the technical subsystem aspects of workplace to combat stress as stipulated in the social- technical systems theory Trist (1981).

5.5 Recommendations for further research

Since this study focused on the occupational aspects of stress and how they affect performance, other aspects of stress such as social lifestyle could be examined as a contributor to occupational stress to enrich the findings of this study. In addition, since this study was carried out in tea factories in Murang'a County, it may be worthwhile to conduct the same study in tea factories in other counties to determine whether the results presented here reflect the general situation of the other tea factories. Besides, related studies can be done in other organizations in different sectors such as hotel industry, education sector and service industry.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS: *Kindly complete the questionnaire by ticking in the boxes provided for each question*

PART ONE: BIO- DATA

1. Indicate your job category in the factory
Management () Technical staff () Short contract staff ()
2. How many years have you served in this tea factory?
1-12 months ()
1-2 years ()
2-5 years ()
5-8years ()
Over 8 years ()
3. What is the highest level of education attained?
Doctorate () Masters () Degree () Diploma () Certificate () Secondary ()
4. State your age bracket in years
20-28 () 29-38 () 39-48 () 49 and over ()
5. What is your gender
Female () Male ()
6. Select the most appropriate description of your JOB SITUATION
Full-time permanent employee ()
Full-time temporary employee ()
Part-time permanent employee ()
Part-time temporary employee ()
7. Select the description that comes closest to your present WORK SHIFT
Rotating 8 hour shift () Permanent night shift ()
Rotating 12 hour shift () Permanent day shift ()
8. How many hours do you work overtime in your job in an average week?
Less than 6 hours ()
6 – 12 hours ()
2 – 18 hours ()
More than 18 hours ()

PART TWO: STRESS IN THE FACTORIES

1. Please answer the following questions about your work situation. Please tick in the space provided at the end of each statement

1= strongly disagree 2= disagree 3= Uncertain 4= agree 5= strongly agree

Indicators of Stress	1	2	3	4	5
I am not satisfied with the work at the factory and would look for a job elsewhere					
There are many complains and grievances going around in the factory					
My job performance is not satisfactory or is getting worse					
I do not attend work on a daily basis and in time					
I am not certain about what my future career picture looks like					
I always experience headaches, sweats, dizziness or lightheadedness while at work					
For the last 12 months, I have been diagnosed with an illness					
For the last 6 months, I have had a job accident					
I rarely talk to my boss or co-workers whenever I have personal problems					
Causes of stress					
The factory does not utilizes all my potential in terms of skills and experience					
I am not able to complete the work assigned to me on a daily basis in time					
The factory does not offer me a variety of tasks such that I do not have to do repetitive tasks every now and then					
I am not treated equally with my colleagues in terms of opportunities for growth					
I am dissatisfied with the remuneration I receive from my work					

The factory leaders do not respect me or ask for my opinion before making any major decisions					
My job require a great deal of concentration and remembrance of many different things					
My job requires me to work very fast and hard with little time to do it					
My supervisor and colleagues rarely go out of their way to make life easier for me					
The level of noise in the areas in which I work is usually high					
The level of lighting in the area in which I work is usually poor					
The temperature of my work area is usually uncomfortable					
The level of air circulation in my work area is poor					
In my job, I am well protected from exposure to dangerous substances					
My job exposes me to verbal abuse and or confrontations with clients or the general public					
My job exposes me to physical harm or injury					
My job personally exposes me to potential legal liability					
The overall quality of the physical environment where I work is poor					

PART THREE: EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT IN THE FACTORIES

Please use the criteria below to tick as appropriate:

- 1= Never**
- 2= Few times**
- 3= Some of the time**
- 4= Most of the time**
- 5= All the time**

Performance Measures	1	2	3	4	5
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I respect and observe safety rules and regulations in the factory					
I am involved in team work and I cooperate with my fellow employees of the factory					
I am committed and I complete my tasks in a timely manner					
I understand how my job impacts the organization and my goals are clear					
I punctually attend work daily and conform to work hours					
I always provide new ideas and seek new challenges and opportunities					
I serve both internal and external customers to the factory satisfactorily					
I have a positive attitude towards my work					
I take responsibility for achievement of my work targets					
I maintain and improve my knowledge, skills and competencies					
I always arrive for work in time					
I am always punctual in attendance of meetings					
I always meet the work deadlines set for me					
I am good at identifying and reporting problems at work					
I propose solutions to problems at work and take action to solve them					
I set appropriate priorities for the tasks assigned to me					
I use my time at work effectively					
I consult with supervisors and co-workers as necessary					
I work without supervision as necessary					
I effectively collaborate with other department members as necessary					

I respond appropriately to feedback on job performance					
I deal appropriately with confidential information and sensitive situations					
I am fair while dealing with people at work					
I demonstrate appropriate interactions with colleagues					
I deal effectively and professionally with employees in other areas					
How do you rate the general levels of performance of employees in the factory?					

2. How do you rate the general levels of performance of employees in the factory?

Excellent Good
Fair Poor

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING. YOUR OPINIONS ARE HIGHLY VALUED