ABSTRACT
Understanding the dynamics of stress and developing the ability to recognize and help others cope with stress are essential management skills now and for the future. Though measuring stress is not easy its measurement is nevertheless important for it may help an organization put in place measures to help it lower the stress levels.
This study will be useful to Kenyan workers in giving them helpful insights on how they can cope with stress. Managers too will be able to recognize work stress and reduce the problem of work stress by identifying common stressors and taking steps to eliminate them. By applying the individual strategies suggested to cope with stress the workers will enjoy greater physical and emotional health. The organization that puts in place effective mechanisms will also stand to benefit by increased performance, morale boosting and enhanced motivation for its workers.
The study was based on a large firm in the manufacturing sector. The data was collected using interviews and questionnaires. The data was collected in the month of September 2002.
The study was done with the following objectives in mind:
To find out the prevalence of work stress among employees in a Kenyan organization
To find out which age groups are more prone to stress
To determine common causes of stress at work
To determine differences in stress levels among different job categories
To find out different ways used by employees to cope with stress
To establish mechanisms if any which the organization has put in place to help its workers cope with stress
A sample size of 32 respondents from different job categories from the manufacturing was done. Data was collected using personal interviews and questionnaires. It was presented using frequency tables. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Percentages, mean, mode and chi-squared were used for analyzing the data.
The major findings were that:
• Work stress is prevalent at the chosen manufacturing firm-Colgate Palmolive.
• Of the age groups the 25-35 years age group was the most stressed age group.
• The female workers were more stressed than their male counterparts
• The married workers also reported higher stress levels than the single workers.
The most common cause of stress for the managers was found to be time pressure and deadlines. The next important cause of stress was responsibility without authority and thirdly thwarted ambition.
Other common stressors were:
• Poor relations with the boss
• Too much work
• Managers’ leadership style
• Under promotion

The most common methods of coping with stress were found to be engaging in physical exercise followed by going into isolation, spiritual activities, relaxation, meditation and engaging in conversation with friends.

This study tallies with other studies that indicate that the most common tips for dealing with stress focus on relaxation.

Of the stress levels in the different job categories receptionists, security officers followed by the 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 the developed countries. More obviously needs to be done in Kenyan organizations to help its workers cope with stress. Counseling which has immense potential has hardly begun to be tapped.

For further research, the researcher suggests a broad based survey that will investigate stress levels of different jobs or professions such as teachers, police officers, journalists, waitresses and compare the stress levels in these very different occupations.