



# **The Impact Of Stress On The Teacher And Learner Performancein The Selected Public Secondary Schools In Mungwi District Of Northern Province Of Zambia**

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**Abstract-** In reality, this study carefully seeks to thoroughly and explicitly analyze the effects of stress on the performance of a teacher and a learner: A case study of three selected public secondary schools in Mungwi district of Northern Province of Zambia. Specifically, the study will seek to establish the effects of stress as a contributing factor to poor performance of teachers and pupils at Mumba, Musenga, Mukosa, St.Anthony and Chisali public day secondary schools in Mungwi district of Northern Province of Zambia.. Few studies on this phenomenon have been carried out in schools in rural areas, as most focus on urban and Secondary school learners. The research will use both qualitative and quantitative techniques or measurements due to the fact that the research study will be a descriptive survey. The data collection will be done using individual questionnaires, interviews and other statistical averages for the target population of about 320 respondents. The sample size for the study will be sixty (66); where thirty three (39) will be pupils, eighteen(18) will be teachers, probably six (6) school administrators and three (3) guidance and counseling teachers of the selected sampled government secondary schools in Mungwi district of Northern province of Zambia. The research study by classification consists of five chapters. Chapter one provides the introduction of the research problem, background of the problem, objective of the study, research questions and the significance of the study. Chapter two provides literature review. Chapter three gives research methodology and chapter four offers the research finding. Chapter five provide the conclusion and recommendations.

**Keywords:** stress, teacher performance, learner performance, academic achievement, rural secondary schools, public schools, Mungwi District, Northern Province Zambia, descriptive survey, qualitative methods, quantitative methods, questionnaires, interviews, educational outcomes, school environment, guidance and counseling.

## **Chapter – I Introduction**

### **Introduction**

First and foremost, i start by defining the term stress; Stress is a natural human response to its environment. Stress has become significant due to dynamic social factors and changing needs of life styles. Stress is man's adaptive reaction to an outward situation which would lead to physical, mental and behavioral changes., In fact, moderate levels of stress are considered essential motivators. However, high levels of stress have the capacity to greatly impact physical and emotional health, not all stresses are destructive in nature. Appropriate amount of stress can actually trigger passion for work, tap latent abilities and even ignite inspirations. Stress can make a person productive and constructive, when it is identified and well managed. Therefore, this research has tried to establish the causes of stress in school, particularly among teachers and on the learning process as well as identifying strategies of lessening stress.

## **Chapter – II Literature Review**

### **2.0 Introduction**



In reality, stress is unpredictable reaction people have, due to severe pressures or other types of demands placed upon them. Therefore, a huge and multi field literature points out a lot of key factors that lead to stress in work places. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE;2016) define stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them”. Recent research shows that this ‘adverse reaction’ can seriously undermine the quality of people’s working lives and, in turn, the effectiveness of the workplace.

Hence, this chapter deals with the past literature on the effects of stress among teachers. The chapter outlines the relationship between stress and performance, highlighting how cognitive and intrinsic factors contribute to teaching as well as the organizational factors. The chapter also highlights the review of the topic by quoting relevant sources and bringing out the overview on the effects of stress on teachers in the Education system which will help in coming up with strategies on how to mitigate the effect of stress on Teachers.

## **2.2 Overview**

Maintaining a viable and effective workforce is every institutional objective. Hence, it is vital for the Education system to identify effects that would render teachers to be ineffective. Stress being one of the effects of underperformance of employees is now part of the regular vocabulary of supervisors and teachers in the Ministry of Education. Stress takes many forms. As well as leading to anxiety and depression, it can have a significant impact on an employee’s physical health. Research links stress to heart disease, back pain, headaches, gastrointestinal disturbances and alcohol and drug dependency. Anderson R, (2003:66) adds that, stress exists in every organization either big or small and affects subordinates and superiors, as work places and organizations have become so much complex due to which it exists. While some stress are part of normal life, stress which is repeated or prolonged leads to individuals experiencing physical and psychological discomfort. The experience of pressure of work can lead to a variety of symptoms of stress that can harm employees’ health and job performance (Myers D. G, 2001:101).

In addition, Adam W.(22nd Mar, 2017) expressed that, Everyone encounters stressful situations on an almost daily basis, from minor pressures that we hardly notice, to occasional traumatic situations which can cause ongoing stress. Many of us do not realise that some forms of stress, known as eustress, can have a positive effect on our performance, and instead refer to those experiences which cause us negative distress as stressful. In recent decades, stress, its causes and our bodily response to stress have been the subject of numerous psychological studies. Researchers identify two major types of stressors, work-related factors and individual factors. According to Bratton J & Jeffrey G (1999:89), work place stress has significant effects over the employee’s job performance, and the organizations are trying to cope with this scenario. For example, illness in the family or divorce can put an employee under pressure and lead to stress which also affects the job performance.

## **2.3 Job stress on individuals**

According to, Bratton J. and Jeffrey G, (1999: 91) individual factors causing stress are equally varied and complex. Individual factors that can produce stress include financial worries, marital problems, pregnancy, problems with children, and death in the family. Cole G.A (2004:342) adds that, since individuals bring their problems with them to work, it scarcely matters in one sense whether the trigger for stress is work related or not, for the effect on the individual is just the same and his or her work performance is likely to be adversely affected. Stress is not only triggered by the external problems faced by individuals, but by the way they cope with those problems, thus most people can cope with a variety of pressures in their life, and many seem to thrive on pressure, especially at work.

(Myron H. D, (1994:257). Once individuals fail to deal adequately with pressure, then symptoms of stress appear. In short term, these can be manifested in such conditions as indigestions, nausea, headaches, back pain, loss of appetite, loss of sleep and increased irritability.



Additionally, in a longer term, such symptoms can lead to coronary heart disease, stomach ulcers, depression and other serious conditions (David G. M, 1996:112). Clearly the effects of stress, whether triggered by work problems or domestic/social problems, will eventually lead to reduced employee performance at work, increased sickness and absenteeism and even to an early death (Cole G.A, 2004:343). However, Myron H. D, (1994:258) indicates that, some of us can tolerate more stress than others and react differently to stressful situations. In fact, there is some indication that an individual's personality may influence the ways in which he or she responds to stress factors. Even outside of a recession, financial worries can affect us all and lead to unnecessary stress which can be a burden to yourself and those close to you. Loans, ever-increasing bills, the ability to pay off credit cards, being able to live comfortably and retire when we wish all contribute to a sense of financial insecurity.

Kanner's Hassles Scale found that a feeling of not being able to pay bills and live comfortably, as well as the burden of supporting others financially to be a key strain in our everyday lives (Kanner et al, 1981) Whilst improved management of money can alleviate financial stress, the unique situation of each individual makes a one-size-fits-all solution to this source of stress impossible. Left unaddressed, however, financial worries can have a significant effect on our lives and can impact on relations with close friends and family.

#### **2.4 Factors that lead to work related stress**

According to Bratton J. and Jeffrey G, (1999:88), "occupational stress occurs when some element of work has a negative impact on an employee's physical and mental well-being. Role ambiguity, frustration, conflict, job design, inadequate finances and harassment will put an employee under pressure and stress may occur and job stress cannot be separated from personal life."

Bratton J. and Jeffrey G, (1999:92) explains in detail that, "role ambiguity exists when the job is poorly defined, uncertainty surrounds job expectations and where supervisory staff and their subordinates have different expectations of an employee's responsibilities, individuals experiencing role ambiguity were uncertain how their performance was evaluated and experience stress."

Frustration as a result of a motivation being blocked to prevent an individual from achieving a desired goal is a major stressor. Conflicts both interpersonal and inter-team are another source of occupational stress. When employees with different social experiences, personalities, needs and points of view interact with co-workers, disagreements may cause stress. Job design is a further cause of stress in the workplace. Jobs that have a limited variety of tasks, low discretion, and do not activate employees upper level needs may cause stress. (Anderson R. 2003:67). Harassment at work is another source of stress. Sexual harassment can take two forms.

First is a hostile environment that involves behaviour that is unwelcome and undesirable or offensive. The second one is alleged perpetrator is normally a superior and the blackmail is either give in to sexual advances and promotion or job prospects suffers. Both forms of sexual harassment are about power relationships. It is about harassment aimed at women by men who occupy positions of power.

According to Bratton J and Jeffrey G, (1999:88), job stress has been considered to be a personal problem until recently, it was recognized that stress is a major health problem at work, and it is a general management responsibility to provide the initiative to eliminate or reduce the causes of stress. At institutional level, attention to basic job design principles can alleviate the conditions that may cause stress. At the individual level, managers have conducted workshops on stress management to help the individual employees to cope with stress and avoid over exposure to stress causing situations. Recognizing that significant changes in the environment can result in increased stress, some institutions have introduced stress management techniques such as lifestyle change programmes (Mitchell S. N, 1986:461). However, Bratton J. and Jeffrey G, (1999:89) states that, workshops designed to change lifestyles by promoting healthy eating and fitness, while helping



employees relieve the strains caused by job stress, cannot eliminate the source of stress. Like other occupational hazards, stress needs to be controlled at the source of stress.

### **2.5 Stress and performance**

The existence of factors other than those intrinsic to teaching can be demonstrated by cross-national comparisons of teacher stress. Travers & Cooper (1997) surveyed 800 teachers in England and France about stress and found substantially different responses. 22% of sick leave in England, as opposed to 1% in France was attributed to stress. 55% of the English teachers as opposed to 20% of the French sample reported recently considering leaving teaching. Interestingly, there was substantial agreement between the English and French teachers as to the sources of pressure, both groups citing classroom discipline, low social status and lack of parental support. However, English teachers reported more problems emanating from long hours of work, overwork and political interference. The original idea of the present study was to study stress in teaching, and the effects that it has on the performance of the teachers. However, its profound relationship with the more generalized concept of occupational stress highlights the need to examine the incidence and characteristics of stress and burnout in the teaching profession in a combined way. Stress and burnout in the context of teaching (though by no means limited to this profession) are pathological syndromes suffered by teachers. They are caused largely by the conditions (organizational and of many other types) in which teaching takes place. A summary analysis of the current situation in education permits the identification of some of the social and organizational factors that constitute sources of stress and burnout: The combination of changes in society and the educational system itself has led to a growing complexity of the teacher's role and has increased the demands of the school environment. Paradoxically, these growing demands are accompanied by a devaluation of, and a reduction in support for the school system, which in turn leads to severe occupational dissatisfaction (working conditions) and health problems among the teaching staff. In general terms, burnout in the teaching profession, results from the imbalance between the demands of the profession and the rewards received, perceived self-efficacy in the achievement of this objective, observing progress in students, receiving recognition from others, among other factors. This profession shares a set of basic characteristics (Pines and Aronson, 1988): "it is emotionally draining, focus on the client, and the people who choose to work in them have certain personality characteristics in common. "

The teaching profession also involves some aggravating factors which contribute to exacerbating burnout problems among teachers: there is constant personal contact and interaction with students; teachers need to be experts, to display patience and sensitivity and to be useful; their work is constantly open to scrutiny and evaluation by a variety of people, they work with people who may not wish to work with them.

### **2.7 Teacher cognitive factors and stress**

Teacher stress is a much talked of phenomenon. However, there is little consensus between different professional groups regarding its aetiology, or how to tackle it. Based on a review of international research, it is concluded that teacher stress is a real phenomenon and that high levels are reliably associated with a range of causal factors, including those intrinsic to teaching, individual vulnerability and systemic influences. Limitations with the current research base of teacher stress are identified; we have a reasonable understanding of the aetiology of teacher stress, but little is known about the effects of reducing or mediating the impact of stressors.

Teacher stress is now firmly on the political agenda, and representations of the nature of stress have become unhelpfully polarized between unions and employers, the former seeing stress as organizational and the latter as an individual issue. The commonality of reported sources of pressure between English and French teachers could lead us to a social representations interpretation of teacher stress in Britain, in which teachers experience stress because they take on a consensual belief about teaching in which its stressful nature forms part of the figurative nucleus of its social representation. However, there are also notable differences in the reported experiences of the English and French groups, which could lead us to the more 'common sense' interpretation that teachers in Britain operate in stressful conditions, in particular with regard to workload



and political intervention. A substantial body of contemporary research has examined the cognitive factors affecting individual susceptibility to stress amongst teachers. Chorney (1998) investigated self-defeating beliefs by asking 41 teachers to identify what they must do to be good teachers. 92% of responses were couched in absolute terms, such as 'must', 'need' among other answers.

### **2.8. Factors intrinsic to teaching and stress**

Research has suggested that a number of stressors are intrinsic to teaching. In their study, Travers & Cooper (1997) found out that, the workload and long working hours emerged as particular issues for English teachers as opposed to colleagues in France. When Travers & Cooper (1997) questioned British teachers across all educational sectors high workload, poor status and poor pay emerged as three of the seven major sources of stress - the others being systemic in origin. A study by Male & May (1998) of learning support coordinators in Further Education colleges, illustrates the importance of these factors. 35 coordinators were assessed for burnout, stress and health, work overload and excessive working hours, associated with emotional exhaustion. Role overload occurs when an employee has to cope with a number of competing roles within their job. Pithers & Soden (1998), highlighted role overload as a significant stressor in teachers. They assessed levels of strain, organisational roles and stress in 322 Australian and Scottish vocational and FE lecturers. Strain was found to be average in both national groups, but there were high levels of stress, with role overload emerging as the major cause. The research by researchers Kinnunen & Leskinen (1989), identified a cyclical pattern in the effects of overwork, contingent on the academic year in their assessment of 142 teachers. The assessment was repeated during the autumn and spring terms of an academic year. It was found that recovery from stress occurred each weekend during the spring term, but that by the end of the longer autumn term weekend recovery no longer took place. Classroom discipline is also a significant source of stress. Lewis (1999) examined teachers' estimations of stress arising from being unable to discipline pupils in the way they would prefer. Overall, maintaining discipline emerged as a stressor, with those worst affected being teachers who placed particular emphasis on pupil empowerment. A study of 1000 student teachers (Morton et al, 1997) revealed that classroom management was their second greatest sources of anxiety, the greatest being evaluation apprehension. Of all the stressors reported, classroom management anxiety was the only one that did not decline following teaching practice. Evaluation apprehension is an issue of increasing importance, as quality assurance procedures increasingly demand lesson observation.

The phenomenon is currently under-researched in qualified teachers, although there is a modest body of research on student teachers. Capel (1997), questioned P.E student teachers following first and second teaching practices on their levels and sources of anxiety.

Evaluation apprehension emerged as the stressor in both practices. Similarly, the Morton et al study (above) found that of all the sources of stress for student teachers, evaluation apprehension was the greatest, although it declined following teaching practice, suggesting that it is reduced by exposure and positive experiences of observation feedback. The moderating effects of exposure to lesson observation are an area requiring further research.

### **2.9 Systemic factors and stress**

At the level of the institution, factors such as social support amongst colleagues and leadership style have found to be important in affecting levels of stress. Dussault et al (1999) assessed isolation and stress in 1110 Canadian teachers and, as hypothesized, found a strong positive correlation. In another study Van Dick et al (1999) questioned 424 teachers from across all German sectors about their work stress, social support and physical illnesses. It was found that social support had both a direct positive effect on health and a buffering effect in respect of work stress.

Leadership style has also emerged as a significant organizational factor. Harris (1999) assessed teacher stress and leadership style in three American primary schools, using the Wilson Stress Profile for Teachers were classified as high in both task and relationship focus - this leadership style being associated with both strategic



vision and a close personal relationship with staff. Leadership style appears in part to be a response to 'trickle-down' stressors. Hoel et al (1999), surveyed English teachers and found that 35% reported having been bullied by a manager in the last five years, as opposed to an average of 24% across all occupational sectors. Cooper interpreted this, in terms of managers failing to cope with workloads and resorting to bullying as a maladaptive coping strategy. Considering the vast literature of generic stress management and that concerning the aetiology of teacher stress, the volume of research into interventions to combat teacher stress is miniscule. PsychINFO, ERIC and British Education Index searches revealed only two studies in the last five years.

In one of these, Hall et al (1997) examined the effect of human relations training on teacher stress. 32 participants took part in a 2-year humanistic-experiential Masters Degree programme and were interviewed at the end of the course. Stress was reported as having been reduced as a result of the course. The other published study, by Anderson et al (1999) concerned with the effectiveness of meditation as a stress-management strategy. 91 teachers took part in a five-week course of meditation, levels of stress being compared before and after. As hypothesized, levels of stress were lower following the course. Experimental manipulation. Systemic factors are clearly important in the aetiology of stress, but do not easily lead them to manipulation to reduce it. Again, outcome studies for attempted strategies are lacking. The limitations of using the existing research base to plan stress-management in British education are compounded by other factors. Studies may not generalize well across education sectors and the base of cross-national and cross-sector comparisons is inadequate to make judgments as to when generalization is justified. Thus the current research intends to find out the effects of stress on the performance of teachers in public schools in Lunte district of Northern Zambia.

## **Chapter –III**

### **Conclusion And Recommendations**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter gives a summary of the research report based on the findings of the researcher. The research has been potentially concluded with recommendations on how stress can be managed to minimize under performance of Teachers in schools have been outlined.

#### **Summary**

As earlier pointed out, work stress has been regarded to be a major challenge in workplaces and the effect of work stress on the employees is evident in the worker's job performance and level of productivity achieved. Therefore, stress in the Ministry of Education has been evident in the teachers loss of interest in work, over reacting and getting frustrated with the learners, having less energy to work than usual and feeling miserable and dull. This is caused by a good number of factors such as; poor work environment, too heavy workloads, too much responsibility, inadequate financial support and working with disagreeable people.

Furthermore, most of the Teachers have failed to cope with stress and resort to reporting late for work, engage in delaying of work, knock off early, withdrawing from work of interest and thinking a lot. To this effect, work stress in schools has been discovered to be a big challenge and has de-motivated the workforce thus, affecting the performance of the Teachers.

To this effect, employers need to take interest in the welfare of employees to maintain a motivated and vibrant workforce which is stress free and goal oriented.

#### **Recommendations**

1. The Ministry of Education(MOE) should take a deliberate step to upgrade/promote Teachers who are performing better in their positions in order to motivate them.



2. The Ministry of Education (MOE) should recruit more Teachers to replace those who have died and those who have retired in order to increase the workforce and reduce stress on the over worked Teachers.
3. The Ministry of Education (MOE) to create a good work environment by providing the necessary school materials to schools in order to enable Teachers work with less difficulty.
4. The Government to provide enough finances to enable the Teachers and Pupils respond positively to the teaching and learning environment.
5. The school administration to come up with deliberate policies of awarding Teachers who perform better in their line of duty.
6. Teachers who have worked for a long time without rest should be granted leave to enable them regain their energy and their mental capability.
7. Job descriptions should be clearly stipulated to spread out responsibilities and avoid conflicts within the institution.
8. In-service training should be strengthened for personal development, for updating knowledge and skills.
9. Up-ward communication should be encouraged by management to avoid workers feel over-controlled by supervisors and avoid fractious relationships between managers and the sub-ordinates.
10. The school administration should realize that skills and abilities of Teachers are under-utilized and get concerned about the lack of commitment from the Teachers.

### **Conclusion**

Therefore, it must be noted that a large percentage of school managers and class teachers are affected by stress in the Education system which eventually leads to poor work performance. This is evident by the responses obtained by the researcher. However, secondary school administrators have turned a blind eye on the existence of stress in schools and this has effects of stress on the teacher and learner performance and the Ministry of Education MOE. Most of the teachers are stressed for being overloaded with work, being in the same positions for a long time without being promoted and working in a poor work environment with inadequate finances. Teachers' morals had gone down because of the poor work environment. Moreover, some of the teachers especially school managers despite being stressed showed a positive response to stress.

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