

Effects of Work-Related Stress on Performance of Administration Police Service in Narok County, Kenya

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Abstract: The Administration Police force in Kenya is one of the country's national security organs charged with preservation of public peace. Since 2008, and for some time now, this unit has been in the limelight for the increased number of fatal incidents and professional errors by its personnel. The demand in terms of workload and work patterns, level of participation in decision making, resources availed for performance and relationships between juniors and their superiors more often act as stress triggers. The main objective of this study was to establish the effects of work related stress on the performance of the Administration Police service in Narok County, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics including frequency distribution tables, means, mode, ranking and percentages. Pearson's correlation coefficient(r) was used to determine the direction and strength of associations between variables while the Chi Square test was used to show significance of variables. The study found that gender, academic qualification, marital status of the officers, working units, rank and number of years in service were significant predictors of work-related stress ($p < 0.05$) at 95% confidence interval. Further, 43.5%, 23.5% and 27.1% reported dissatisfaction with salary, carrying extra responsibilities and 'perfectionist needs' in duty execution respectively as the three main sources of work-related stress. The study concluded that causes of work related stress are in the known spheres and addressing them may only involve interventions that have to address the root causes of and coping strategies. The study recommends that organizational structure and command need to be reviewed to make work environment stress free.

KeyTerms: Work-Related Stress, Performance

I. Introduction

Organizations worldwide are increasingly paying attention to effects of stress on their staff than ever before. Stress is the adverse psychological and physical reactions that occur in individuals as a result of their being unable to cope with the demands being made on them [1]. While agreeing with the preceding definition, [2] pointed out that there was an added external aspect to it and described stress as an adaptive response, mediated by individual differences and/or psychological processes that is a consequence of any external (environment) action, situation or event that places excessive psychological and/or physical demands on a person. The European Union introduced stress management standards in 2004 to address work place stress related issues for which employers were supposed to implement [3]. The report calls for Employers and employees to work together at identifying, preventing and managing work related stress, which it considered among the four most reported work related health problems and cause of the highest number of lost working days. Further, the report established that over 13 million working days are lost every year in the United Kingdom because of stress and it's believed to trigger 70% of visits to doctors and 85% of serious illnesses. According to [4], only 5% to 10% of workers in developing countries have access to workplace health services. The report identifies several benefits of creating healthy stress free work environments, with overall worker productivity going up. It also observed that, to reduce the impact of negative stress, and the incidence of burnout, public emergency services agencies should establish adequate stress management and counseling programs to protect their staff and immediate family resulting from a cumulative or a specific incident of stress.

In Kenya, stress management in organizations is the mandate of the Directorate of Occupational Safety and Health. In 2004, a subsidiary legislation (Legal Notice No.30) was enacted to provide for the formation of safety committees by the occupier of every workplace. The committees are responsible for all health and safety audits. A report [5] on the status of occupational health and safety in Kenya presented during a Safety Training Program in Beijing showed that despite all these, it is almost impossible to characterize the conditions under which employees work due to the scarcity of data. The Administration police service is one of the two arms of the National police service established under section 243(1) of the constitution of Kenya and anchored in part (iv) of the National police service Act 2011. Since 2008, and for some time now, this unit has been in the limelight for the increased number of accidents and errors by its personnel. As an elite policing unit, such professional errors and fatal incidences are not only dangerous but also very costly in terms of loss of finances, human resource and more so the loss of life. According to the AP strategic plan (2009-13), key support sectors have been identified for enhancing motivation as well as training aspects that involve elements of managing individual stress. The organization has also instituted several measures to prevent and manage stress key among these being the deployment of chaplains to all Districts, peer group counseling, welfare organization, daily inspection parades, hospitalization for accidents or chronic illness, and a clear command structure among other human resource motivational practices. However, recent incidences are an indictment on the effect of the curriculum and the efforts undertaken by the organization in current stress management models or those specifically tailored to the different policing units within the forces. While underreporting in various work circles may hide the extent and implications of such incidences, this study seeks to demystify the pattern and workplace implications of these recent mostly tragic incidences involving mostly administration police service.

II. Statement of the Problem

It has been observed in recent years that the number of stress related errors/accidents committed and conflicts between Administration Police officers in Kenya including incidences of fatal shootings and indiscipline have been on the rise. This suggests that the Administration Police Force like all other organizations is no exception when it comes to work related stress. Indeed it is widely accepted that some few professional groups including police force encounter a broad spectrum of stressors since their work involves exposure to stress triggers and traumatic incidences, like threats to officers' lives. The fatal accidents and/or suicide incidences involving predominantly Administration Police officers may be attributed to various psychosocial and environmental factors. However, they would nonetheless have implications on the entire Administration Police organizational performance, the existent of stress management and coping mechanisms instituted by the organization. It is this recorded rise in work related stress incidents in the Administration Police force, in comparison to other security agencies that necessitated an in-depth study into the causes, prevalence levels and the resultant effects on the workforce with a view to developing a stress management model specific to the Administration Police force. This study therefore sought to establish the effects of work related stress on the force in Narok County with a view to ensuring an effective work life balance to enhance productivity.

III. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to establish the effects of work-related stress on performance of administration police service in Narok County, Kenya.

IV. Literature Review

Various work related case studies [1, 2, 3,] have been conducted giving development to a common knowledge of stress and its descriptions. According to a common finding in these studies, almost 40% of work situations, stress are manifested in reduction of work, 10% in sickness absence, 50% in employee grievances reduced and 25% in incidences of disciplinary action taken against employees. According to [6], stress is a form of strain provoked in response to situational demands labeled stressors which occur when jobs are simultaneously high in demands and low on control. It is also defined as the excitement, feeling of anxiety and/or physical tension that occur when demands placed on an individual are thought to exceed his ability to cope. The transactional model of stress proposes that the experience of stress depends on one's subjective appraisal of events in the work system [7]. Thus stress is neither a stimulus nor a response but a stimulus-response transaction. Consequently, the contention is that work related stress is an unpleasant state of emotional and physiological arousal that people experience in work situations that they perceive as dangerous or threatening to their wellbeing which thus best describes the situation in the Administration police force in Kenya.

Similarly, [8] points out that when organization's employees suffer from stress; the results are likely to take one or more of the following: high levels of sickness and absenteeism, reduced productivity and failure to meet targets, increased number of internal conflicts, increased accidents and error rates and undesirably high rate of staff turnover. He adds that other indicators include client complaints, worker difficulties, worker complaints, irritabilities, aggression, and violence at work, smoking and substance abuse. Perhaps the most tragic form of police casualty is suicide [9]. Since the beginning of this year, four suicides, several deaths and civilian injuries as a result of stress related shootings by Administration police officers have been reported (Daily Nation, 2011). [10], observes that most of these suicide victims are young patrol officers with no record of misconduct and most shoot themselves off duty. Miller adds that often, problems involving alcohol or romantic crises act as triggers and easy access to a lethal weapon provides the ready means. He further points out that cops under stress are caught in a dilemma of risking confiscation of their guns or other career setbacks if they report distress or request for help. Other effects of work related stress include impairment of cognitive functioning which may in some people lead to a narrowed form of attention, poor concentration and less effective memory storage.

Another result of severe stress according to [11] is shock and disorientation which can leave people dazed and confused. In these states, he observes that people feel emotionally numb and their behavior frequently has an automatic rigid stereotyped quality adding that burnout is a stress related syndrome wherein one's behavior comes to be dominated by feelings of physical, mental and emotional exhaustion. Horowitz concludes that this leads to feeling of helplessness, hopelessness, trapped and emotionally drained, with mental exhaustion manifested in highly negative attitudes towards oneself, ones work and life in general. [12], observes that a notable effect of stress with a range of implications of for the society is the disruption of social relations. He argues that these disruptions include feelings of alienation, difficulties in relating to spouses and friends and impairments in the capacity to love and trust others. In the domain of common psychological problems, Blanks notes that stress may contribute to poor performance, insomnia, sexual difficulties, drug abuse, excessive anxiety, dejection and depression. Moreover, he avers that evidence shows that stress frequently plays a role in the onset of fully fledged psychological disorders and that work related stress is also the source of physical problems and illnesses including asthma, hypertension, migraine headaches and ulcers.

V. Research Methodology

This study used a descriptive survey design to determine the causes of work related stress among Administration Police in Narok County and the impact of stress on their job performance. The design was chosen since no attempt was made to change behavior or conditions which were measured as they were. The main advantage of the descriptive and inferential approach was that it would measure the frequency of several factors, the size of the problem and also include analytical work to compare the factors. The administration police formed the target population of the study totaling 589 in number. The researcher used proportionate stratified random sampling technique to select respondents for this study. This was informed by reasons; first, Narok County is made up of 4 administrative Districts and two; the service in each of these units is stratified into ranks. The population was divided into 4 different subgroups or strata from which the final sample of 145 was randomly selected proportionally from each stratum. This technique was important for two major reasons: it assured that the researcher represented not only the overall population, but also key subgroups of the population; secondly, it enhanced greater statistical precision. The study used a standard structured questionnaire to collect data from the respondents. Data collection instruments were sent by parcel service to District Administration Police commanders with introduction letters and a list of respondents for them to convey to the respondents. The command structure of the service ensured that response rate was achieved at 100%. Mailing was adopted because it is easy to administer; it's not costly and has greater degree of anonymity. Data collected were ordered, coded, summarized and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The Statistical package for Social Sciences software was used to aid the researcher in the analysis of summarized data. Percentages and frequencies were used to identify the causes and prevalence levels of work-related stress among Administration Police officers in the County. Descriptive statistics such as cross tabulation were used to establish the mean differences in causes, prevalence and effects on performance. Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was used to determine the strength and direction of associations between the variables. Chi Square test was used to show statistical significance of relationships in data. Trends that emerged were presented in tables.

VI. Research Findings And Discussions

The researcher issued 145 questionnaires. Out of the 145 questionnaires administered, five (5) were not correctly and consistently answered hence were excluded from analysis as a way to minimize statistical biases. This gave a 96.6%

response rate. Comparing the current response rates with recommendations by [13] who advocated for a minimum of 30%, a 82.3% response rate for this study was considered adequate for accurate for estimating parameter estimates. The study sought to establish the working experience of the respondents in the manufacturing sector. From the findings, majority of the respondents were males 124(88.6%) while only 16 (11.4%) were females as shown in Figure 4.1.1. The high number of male respondents was noted to be due to the large number of recruits into the police force over the years being male. This is due to the nature of the job handled by the security forces which requires resilience in addition to the tough and dangerous work environment mostly considered as better handled by the male gender. The study further found that, gender was a significant predictor of work-related stress in that; female officers were more likely to have stress as compared to their male counterparts. This study found that majority of the respondents 101(72.1%) had KCSE/KCE qualification. Another 24(17.1%) had CPE/KCPE, 7(5.0%) diploma education, 5(2.9%) graduate and 3(2.1%) had post graduate education. The findings indicate that most of the Administration police have a post-basic education. Majority of the respondents were learned thus were able to understand and answer the questionnaires. The relationship between education levels and the risks of work related stress indicated that, as education levels increased among AP officers, the less likely they were at risk of work related stress.

The result indicated that 51(36.4%) of the respondents had worked in the police force for 1-5 years preceding this study. Another significant number 41(28.9%) of the respondents had worked for between 6-10years. Further, 17(12.4%) of the respondents had worked 11-15 years and over 20 years respectively. The least numbers 10(7.4%) and 4(2.5%) had worked for 16-20 years and below one year respectively. The findings indicated that most respondents had worked in the police force for considerably long period thus had the relevant knowledge and experience on the undertakings within the police force. Although the p- value was greater than 0.05 among the officers who had served for 1 year and 6-10 years respectively, it decreases along the number of years in the service. This finding therefore indicates that the more years an officer served in the force, the more the likelihood of experiencing work related stress.

The study found that most of the respondents 101(72.14%) were married, 38(27.14%) were single, while only 1 (0.71%) was widowed. With respect to marital status, the study found out that there is a significant association between marriage and work related stress ($p < 0.05$ at 95 Confidence interval). The single officers were less likely to have work related stress than those married and widowed. The results of this study revealed that majority 116 (82.9%) of the respondents were in the constable rank followed by sergeants 10(7.1%). Only 9(6.4%), 3(2.1%) and 2(1.4%) constituted the non-commissioned officers cadre of corporals, superintendents and senior sergeants respectively. A direct relationship between work-related stress and the ranks of the officers was depicted. As ranks increases, the likelihood of work related stress increases as well (p value decreases towards 0). This could be because of the technicality of duties and increased volumes of work beyond coping capacities of officers in the higher ranks. Multiple logistic regressions indicated that gender, academic qualification, marital status of the officers, working units, rank and number of years in service were significant predictors of work-related stress ($p < 0.05$) at 95% confidence interval.

6.1 Effects of Work-Stress

From the findings of the study, 55(39.3%) of the respondents indicated that they had experienced none of the listed impacts of stress. A significant number 45(32.1%) of the respondents reported having experienced financial problems as the main effect of stress, 29 (20.7%) of the respondents indicated poor health as an effect of stress while 8 (5.7%) indicated suicidal tendencies. However, the least proportion, 2 (1.4%), indicated insomnia and 1(0.7%) indicated burn out as effects of stress. It is of essence to note that the respondents indicated other effects such as low morale, lack of sleep, a lot of drinking and smoking. Further, a percentage noted for suicidal tendencies 8 (5.7%) was a very significant value revealed by the study. The respondents were asked to give some of the effects of stress that affect the organization. From the study, the respondents' poor performance was noted as the main effect of stress on the organization among 35 (25%) of the respondents. 6 (4.3%) of the respondents indicated absenteeism as an effect of stress while 25 (17.9%) of the respondents pointed out conflicts among the officers as an effect of stress on the organization. The latter is of concern especially with regard to the main objective of this study. All together, a large proportion 44 (31.4%) reported that all the above were the effects of work related stress on the organization. The Chi Square test revealed that exposure to work related stress in terms of gender is significantly different and the impacts affect both the individual AP and the AP organization simultaneously. It can be deduced that effects such as suicidal tendencies, poor health, financial problems and insomnia on the individual APs are significant at 95% Confidence Interval ($X^2=9.674$, $P < 0.05$). The Chi Square test further found that work related stress contributes significantly to poor performance among APs, absenteeism and conflicts among the officers. Altogether, these factors affect the AP organizational performance significantly as well at 95% C.I ($X^2=9.931$, $P < 0.05$).

Table 1: Summary of Effects of Work-Related Stress on Individual AP and the AP Organizational Performance

Characteristic	Effects of work related stress		Chi-square	p-value
	Av. Often (%)	AV. Not often (%)		
Effect on Individual AP				
Gender				
Male	23(18.50)	101(81.50)	0.30	0.59
Female	3(18.80)	13(81.20)		
None	2(8.30)			
Suicidal tendencies	14(11.30)	22(91.70)		
Poor health	35(23.0)	110(88.70)	9.67	0.05
Financial problems	14(20.90)	117(77.00)		
Insomnia	24(19.70)	98(80.30)	4.00	0.26
Burnout	17(13.10)	113(80.9)		
Effect on Organizational Performance				
Poor performance	42(30.00)	98(70.00)		
Absentee	11(31.40)	24(68.60)		
Conflict	0(0.00)	16(100.00)	9.93	0.04
	5(15.60)	27 (84.40)		

On qualitative responses, the respondents indicated that foot patrols, going after cattle rustlers, pursuing bandits, dealing with illiterate people while making arrests, drafting of incidences and dispatching them, breaking demonstrations, counseling officers and their spouses, operations in harsh areas, taking cases to court without proper evidence, long distance travelling duties, guarding tycoons residences, investigating allegations against fellow officers and escort duties were duties that were key sources of work related stress. The respondents were requested to suggest any changes in the organizational structure and command that would make work environment of the officer’s stress free. They indicated a clear command structure, job rotation, motivation, single line of reporting/chain of command to be observed, gender equality in the promotions ,restructuring of the police force, improvement in the training of police officers, implementation of set policies, prompt promotions based on merit, deployment of extra personnel, selecting leaders with integrity, creation of a commission to provide recommendation on the needed changes , cessation of harassment by senior officers in front of other officers and having adequate personnel to aid in operation.

Discussions

The study found that gender, academic qualification, marital status of the officers, working units, rank and number of years in service were significant predictors of work-related stress (p<0.05) at 95% confidence interval. It further found P value was >0.05 among the officers who had served for 1 year and 6-10. It however decreases along the number of years in service. This indicates that the longer the number of years the officers had served in the police force, the more likely they are at risk of getting work related stress. This association may be true due to the fact that when officers move up the ranks, they are confronted with more technical work mostly of a managerial nature with strict deadlines that put pressure on them leading to work related stress. This study finding however, differed with another study by [14], which found that senior officers in the higher echelons may be more concerned with their own welfare, while officers at the

grassroots and middle level management have to contend with pressure from all sides. With regard to marital status, the study found that there is a significant association between marriage and work related stress. The single officers were less likely to have work related stress than those married and widowed $p < 0.05$ at 95% confidence interval. This finding could be attributed to the fact that married administration police officers have double responsibilities in both the work front as well as being confronted with family issues when they get home. It may therefore be right to conclude that married officers are more at risk of work related stress.

The study findings indicate that, as education levels increase among officers, they are less likely to be at risk of work related stress. This finding concurs with that of the World Health Organization report of 1999 which advocated for stress reduction through interventionist worker education or stress management training which looks at relaxation, time management and assertiveness training or exercise. This may also be achieved alternatively by employing educated recruits (at least with basic education) to complement the existing police training curriculum which focuses on stress management and coping strategies. This finding also ties with that of [4] in which he observed that the workplace has changed dramatically due to globalization of the economy, use of new information and communications technology, growing diversity in the workplace (for example more women, older and higher educated people, as well as increased migration). This was quantified by direct relationship depicted between work-related stress and the ranks of the officers as well. As ranks increases, the likelihood of work related stress increases (p value decreases towards 0). This as earlier argued could be due of the technicality of duties and increased volumes of work beyond coping capacities of officers in the higher ranks which would require more training.

On the other hand, an inverse relationship between work-related stress and the units of work was observed among the officers. The officers in the general and field units were more likely to have work related stress ($p < 0.05$) than those in the clerical and chaplaincy units ($p > 0.05$). This was a concurrence with a study by [14], which found that senior officers in the higher ranks may be more concerned with their own welfare, while officials at the grassroots and middle level management have to contend with pressure from all sides. Effects of work related stress affect both the individual workers and the organization to a greater extent. On the individual, majority of the respondents indicated financial problems as the main effect of stress, followed by poor health and insomnia. Other factors included; poor memory, disorientation, use of drugs, low morale, lack of sleep, a lot of drinking and smoking while a null percentage was noted for suicidal tendencies. Further, poor performance was noted as the main effect of stress on the organization. Absenteeism and conflicts among the force members were also identified as effects of stress on the Administration Police force. As highlighted by this study, it is right to allude that police performance receives major setbacks from the effects of work relate stress.

Factors such as absenteeism, conflicts among administration police officers, insomnia, and use of drugs, low morale, drinking and smoking were the results of work related stress ($P < 0.05$) and impacts negatively on the organizational performance of Administration Police service in Narok County. Many Administration Police officers run in to excessive alcohol taking and drug abuse as a way of 'chasing' away stress. [1], similarly found that there are several key factors in the work situation that can influence the effects of stress that may be experienced by the organization and employees and affect directly how the organization copes with the pace of work and frequent changes in external conditions such as economy, competition, and technology. As such, the organizational performance may be lower compared to other similar organizations which do not suffer effects of stress. The Chi Square test revealed that exposure to work related stress was significantly different and the effects of stress affect both the individual Administration Police and the Administration Police organization simultaneously. It can be argued that effects such as suicidal tendencies, poor health, financial problems and insomnia on the individual Administration Police are significant ($X^2 = 9.674$, $P < 0.05$). This study concurred with that by [9], which confirmed that police work, is widely considered to be among the most stressful occupations and that those in law enforcement experience a higher rate of suicide.

Conclusions

From the findings of this study, causes of work related stress fall under the personal sphere; interpersonal sphere, recreational and work sphere. Officers seem to be struggling to adapt to new lifestyles and this may be attributed to frequent transfers with no defined criteria. Dissatisfaction with salary also was prominent and may be as a result of poor individual financial management skills. There currently does not appear to any existing Organizational mechanism for the Administration Police service to profile these causes, prioritizing them for proactive interventions that would assist in prevention, early detection and management of these sources. Effects of work related stress are evident among Administration Police personnel and the existing mechanism for managing effects appear inadequate. Factors such as absenteeism, conflicts among Administration Police officers, insomnia, and use of drugs, low morale, drinking and

smoking were the results of work related stress ($P < 0.05$) and impacts negatively on the organizational performance of Administration Police service in Narok County. It is concluded with evidence from results of this study that work related stress affects the performance of Administration Police officers and the entire organization directly and indirectly through absenteeism, conflicts and increased alcohol intake.

In line with these findings, the study recommended that effects of work related stress should be detected early and managed well before they have any detrimental impact on both the individual and the organization. As such, there is need for the service to come up with an elaborate capacity building framework for the senior officers in command to impart skills to them on early detection of work related stress, effects, best way to cope in such instances and how to reduce both individual and organizational sources of stress. The service should also come up with a formal mechanism to conduct post traumatic incident debrief because currently its ad hoc and quite informal to an extent where the "debrief" is primarily to gather first hand information from the officer. The service should consider deploying fulltime counselors at least in every County to assist officers cope and manage work related stress. Currently, the chaplains deployed double up as counselors but have not enjoyed confidence from the officers. The service also needs to enhance coping measures by introducing sports and other recreational activities within the Administration Police lines such as darts, volleyball and table tennis to ensure that off duty officers are engaged and to avoid them having free time with no activities.

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