REVIEW ARTICLE

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO STRESS AMONG CHILD CARE GIVERS IN KENYA: ACASE OF SELECTED CHILDREN HOMES IN ELDORET TOWN

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ABSTRACT

Stress has become an important term in everyday language, meaningful to most individuals found in industrial societies. It not only describes a range of "pains and aches" or as Cartwright and Cooper (1997:1) puts it 'a vague yet often a sense of disquiet', but a legitimate concern in our modern way of life. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the factors that contribute to stress among child care givers in Kenya especially in children Homes in Eldoret. A descriptive research design was adopted. Under it, survey method was used to solicit information. Data was collected using questionnaires. The sampling procedure adopted in this study was purposive, proportionate and systematic random sampling. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Output was presented in the form of pie charts, graphs and frequency tables. The salient findings were that stress is inevitable at the place of work. Job satisfaction, fatigue, low productivity, headache and tension are the effects of stress experienced by the staff; task demand, organizational structure, organizational leadership and role demand are organizational factors contributing to stress among child care givers; economic problems was an individual factor contributing to stress among child care takers in children's homes while economic and political uncertainties are environmental factors contributing to stress among staff in children homes. The study recommended that staff be trained on ways of coping with stress, staff to be given payment which is worth work done and that the government to fund the children homes to some extent to ensure its sustenance.

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INTRODUCTION

Work is an activity central to lives and well-being of most people. It provides not only the economic means to survival but also the disposable income for the acquisition of those things we desire. Work, paid or voluntary, also contributes to our sense of self-esteem, community connection and it is a source of needed routine and structure. (Wahl, 2000:39). Stress has

become an important term in everyday language, meaningful to most individuals found in industrial societies (Wainwright & Calnan, 2002: v). It not only describes range of "pains and aches" or as Cartwright and Cooper (1997:1) put it 'a vague yet often sense of disquiet', but a legitimate concern in our modern way of life. Work stress is indicative of the "natural limit of human endurance and resilience (Wainwright & Calnan, 2002:v) and is part of life unavoidable, good and bad, constructive and destructive (Jacobs, in Van Zyl, 2002:26). Stress costs corporations all over the world large sums of money and on an individual level it affects the physical and psychological well being of the employee. All employment generates stress and strain to some degree (Koeske & Kirk, 1993:319) and people tend to associate stress with something bad (Lithans, 2002:395). A certain amount of stress is not automatically bad for the individual working in an organization and can enhance job performance (Luthans, 2002:411).   It is imperative therefore that factors that contribute to stress among staff in Kenya organizations is urgently assessed. This research therefore aims at evaluating the factors that contribute to stress among care givers in children homes in Eldoret and any additional suggestions for stress managements at children homes.

Statement of the Problem

Stress in the work place is a common phenomenon in an organization especially when the welfare of staff members is not critically looked into. A wide range of factors contribute to stress amongst employees more so those dealing with groups such as children and young adults. Continued existence of children's homes highly depends on the availability of well motivated, stress-free staff members to take care of the children. However, most of those working in children homes complain of work-stress which hinders them from participating fully in delivery of quality services to their respective children's homes (pers.com). It is from this statement that the study seeks to find out the various factors responsible for stress amongst child care givers in selected children's homes in Eldoret, Kenya.

Research Objectives

The study was designed to establish the factors that contribute to stress among child care givers in children's homes in Eldoret.   More specifically, it sought to achieve the following objectives:

I.   To determine individual factors that contributes to stress among child care givers in Children homes in Kenya.
II.   To determine organizational factors that contributes to stress among child care givers in Children homes in Kenya.
III.   To determine environmental factors that contribute to stress among child care givers in Children homes in Kenya.
IV.   To investigate effects of stress among child care givers in Children homes in Kenya.
V.   To explore coping strategies adopted by child care givers in Children homes in Kenya as a result of stress.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

1.   What are the Individual factors that contribute to stress among child care givers in Children homes in Kenya?
2.   What are the organizational factors that contribute to stress among child care givers in Children homes in Kenya?
3.   What are the Environmental factors that contribute to stress among child care givers in Children homes in Kenya?
4.   What are the effects of stress on Child care givers in Children homes in Kenya?
5.   What are the coping strategies that have been adopted by child care givers in Children homes in Kenya as a result of stress?

Significance of the Study

This study was of important to various people and institutions as shown below:

Children homes in Kenya Management will be the first beneficiaries to understand the importance of considering various factors that contribute to stress among child care givers in children's homes in Eldoret hence it will enable them to improve their organization especially on how to handle stress at the workplace. Furthermore, it will provide Children homes in Kenya management with information relevant on establishing the best policies for stress management in the organization. They will use these findings in drawing the strategy when adopting stress management techniques for the organization. To the academicians, the study will shed some light into the field of the factors that contribute to stress among child care givers in Children homes in Kenya. It will give an appreciation of the factors that contribute to stress

among child care givers in children's Homes in Eldoret into the management of Children homes in Kenya It will also help the academicians to develop appropriate syllabus for students of strategy and management especially on the aspect of stress management in organization. Other scholars may benefit from the study by developing teaching – learning materials for use by learning institutions. This way, the study may extend knowledge in this field. It will highlight changes that have taken place in the management of children homes in Kenya over the years and assist in evaluating the pace of stress management among care givers in children homes in Kenya. Finally, other researchers on the factors that contribute to stress among child care givers in children's homes in Eldoret will use the study as a point of reference.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive cross sectional design was used to establish the factors that contribute to stress among child care givers in Children homes in Kenya This allowed analysis of all relevant variables at the same time. The main research design adopted in this case was survey. This is because the study sought to solicit the opinions of the staff of Children homes in Kenya on the factors that contribute to stress in their work place.

Target population, sampling design and sample size

The target population of the study comprised all the staff working at children homes in Eldoret. This mainly comprised staff working in 6 different departments in the children homes in Eldoret. The departments were: Support and Maintenance Crew, Accounting, Education, Mothers/Aunts, Youth Care Co Workers and Administration. The main sampling technique that was first adopted is Purposive sampling. The study only had interest on children homes staff in Eldoret in the above mentioned departments.

According to Kirlinger (1964), 10-30% of the total population forms a representative sample. However, for our case, we took 50%. Thus, the sample chosen for this study was,

Sample Size$= \underline{50*105} = 52.5$ (53)
$\qquad\qquad\quad 100$

Thus, this study picked 53 of Children homes staff in Eldoret. The sample size for Children home staff was picked proportionate. The staffs were classified based on

departments. Thus the 6 departments shared the sample size of 53 as shown in the table 1 below:

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these findings in drawing the strategy when adopting stress management techniques for the organization.

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Sample Size= $\frac{50*105}{100}$ =52.5 (53)

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Table 1. Target Population, Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Department	Number Of Staff At Children Homes in Eldoret	Sampling Procedure	Sample Size
Education	36	$\frac{36*53}{105}$= 18.5 (19)	19
Support and Maintenance	31	$\frac{31*53}{105}$= 15.6 (16)	16
Mothers/Aunts	24	$\frac{24*53}{105}$= 12.1 (12)	12
Youth Care	6	$\frac{6*53}{105}$= 3.02 (3)	3
Accounting Department	3	$\frac{3*53}{105}$= 1.51 (2)	2
Administration	2	$\frac{2*53}{105}$= 1.00 (1)	1
TOTAL	105	53	53

Source: Children homes in Eldoret, 2010

The researcher then used systematic random samplings in each department the staff is found. In each department, the researcher picked a sample after every 3rd element until the population of sample in each category of classification was exhausted. A list of all the staff in the above mentioned departments was requested from the Human resource department. The assumption in using the list provided by Hr department is that they have an up to date list of all their staff. After that each staff in the list provided was provided with questionnaire.

Data Collection Procedures /Instrument

A questionnaire was used as the main research tool for this study. The questionnaire was distributed to 53 staff members identified in the study.

Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistics technique was used to analyze the quantitative data and these included frequencies, means, standard deviation and percentages. The data was presented in form of tables and graphical presentations such as pie charts and bar graphs. The use of Microsoft excels and the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) program was used in analyzing the data.

Major findings, conclusion and recommendations

Stress at Work

The first objective of the study was to investigate the effects of stress among child care givers in Children homes in Kenya This was measured by looking at the following variables: Whether stress is experienced at the work place, frequency of occurrence of the stress at the work place and effects of stress on the staff of Children homes in Kenya.

Whether Stress is experienced at the Work Place and Frequencsy of Stress Experienced at Work

When respondents were asked whether stress is experienced at their workplace, they all acknowledged that stress is very much present and it is experienced at work. Certain amount of stress in the body is very important and health but when the level of stress goes high, it has both physical and psychological impacts which can result in headaches, depression, low productivity at the place of work among other effects. The study established that stress is not experienced all the time. Table 2 below summarizes the findings.

Table 2. Frequency of Stress Experienced at Work

Frequency of Stress Experienced at Work	Frequency	Percent
Rarely	3	5.7
Sometimes	34	64.2
Often	16	30.2
Total	53	100.0

In the above table, it can be stated that majority (64.2%) of the respondents agreed that stress is experienced sometimes. However, 30.2% of the respondents agreed that stress at the place of work occurs often while 5.7% said that it occurs rarely.

Effects of Stress on the Staff of Children Homes

Accumulation of stress in the body has both psychological and physical effects. The study therefore sought to find out the effects of stress on the staff working at children's homes in Eldoret. Likert scale was used for answering (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Not sure, 4 = Agree, 5 = strongly agree). Thus, this question was analyzed by using the mean to identify the rank of each attribute. As a result, it was established that stress lead to job dissatisfaction. This is as shown in table 3 below.

From table 3 above, it is clear that decrease in job satisfaction was the major effect of stress experienced by the staff of children's homes in Eldoret. Majority of the respondents mentioned that stress at work emanates as a

result of numerous factors ranging from organizational to social and finally to environmental factors. When these factors are not well addressed, then job dissatisfaction would occur. Some of the respondents mentioned that stress was mainly occurring when they had too much to do with little or no break, no holiday and above all, when

Table 3. Effects of Stress on the Staff of Children homes

Effects of Stress on the Staff of Children's homes	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Decrease in Job Satisfaction	3.98	1.08	1
Fatigue	3.77	1.37	2
Low Productivity	3.57	1.18	3
Headaches	3.53	1.34	4
Tension	3.51	1.28	5
Concentration and Memory problems	3.49	1.34	6
Anxiety	3.38	1.15	7
Turn Over	3.36	1.30	8
Depression	3.34	1.11	9
Aggression	3.32	1.22	10
Absenteeism	3.04	1.45	11
Heart Disease	2.91	1.32	12
High Blood Pressure	2.89	1.31	13
Substance Abuse	2.85	1.34	14

they were being paid less than the work done. In some cases, they experienced stress when the staff were pressurized to meet the set deadlines, and at the same time they have a lot to do, also lead to job dissatisfaction.

Other effects of stress on the staff working in children homes include frequent headaches as a result of long working hours, tension amongst staff members due to pressure of work and multiple directives from senior staff members. Memory problems, anxiety, high staff turn-over, depression and aggression are equally some of the effects of stress on child care givers in Eldoret. All these effects adversely affect service delivery in the children homes and by extension imply that children in these homes do not get quality services. The third category of effects of stress on child care givers include; absenteeism, heart diseases, high blood pressure and substance abuse. Absenteeism relates to being out of work for a number of days. Absenteeism from work by a number of employees results in overburdening of other staff members which in essence reduces efficiency and delays service delivery to children. According to the study, a few cases of heart diseases, high blood pressure and substance abuse have been reported. Overall, stress among child care givers in Eldoret negatively affects the services children in such homes receive.

Ways in Which Staff Cope with Stress

The second objective of the study was to explore coping strategies adopted by child care givers in Children homes in Kenya This was measured by looking at the following variables: whether respondents; takes a smoke break, take alcohol after work, work out with exercise, confront the problem, take time out and take it out on someone. People's ability to cope with stress is dependent upon their own perceptions of their abilities to cope and their coping in other aspects of their lives. The study therefore, sought to establish ways in which staff of children's homes village copes with stress in their place of work. As a result, it was established that majority confronted the problem while others took time out. This is as shown in the table 4 below.

Table 4. Ways in Which Staff Cope with Stress

Ways in Which Staff Cope with Stress	Frequency	Percent
Confront the problem	19	32.2
Take Time Out	19	32.2
Take it Out on Someone (Colleague/Family)	9	15.3
Work Out With Exercise	8	13.6
Take Alcohol after Work	3	5.1
Take a Smoke Break	1	1.7
Total	59	100.0

N/B, *n=59*, due to multiple responses

From table 4 above, it is clear that majority (32.2%) of the respondents will confront the problem as it comes while others will take some time out. Confronting or dealing up with the stress is the right way of looking for a solution. Once in a stressful environment, the stressed will develop some innovative ways of coping with the stress at his/her place of work. On the other hand, others may find it very soothing when they take some time out. When stress occurs in a working environment, for example, due to huge workload, changing of the environment may yield positive results. When a stressed individual changes his/her environment, s/he will be able to perceive new stimulus which will refresh s/her minds and therefore be able to cope with stress efficiently.

Moreover, it was established that 15.3% of respondents acknowledged that taking out on someone was their stress coping strategy. Different people perceive and react to stress in various ways. There are those people who when stressed becomes so emotional. The resulting effect is that they cause destruction to property and people. When in stressful moment, a lot of energy is released and if not correctly directed, it can be very destructive. In an interview with one staff member of children homes over stress management, he said, "*Mimi huwa nina shida especially ile wakati ambapo niko na stress nyingi sana mwilini. Huwa sitaki kuongea na mtu yeyote kwa maana hatutasikizana. Nikifika nyumbani, stress yangu huwa naimalizia kwa mke wangu na watoto*" (I normally have a problem when am experiencing stress. I avoid interacting with anyone since we cannot agree and when I reach home; my stressful situation is transferred to my wife and children. However, 13.6% of the respondents said that they cope with stress through doing/working out with exercise. Body exercise is very important because it relaxes all the body muscles at the same time refreshing the brains. When the brain is relaxed, it can be able to coordinate and work out things in a new style and therefore, reducing the amount of stress. Five point one percent of the respondents said that taking alcohol after work reduces the amount of stress. When one is drunk, s/he forgets about other problems including work stress. But this is not solving the problem because the root cause of stress will still remain. Taking alcohol does not help someone to accomplish the work on time but instead, it increases mounts the workload increasing the level of stress.

Organizational Factors Contributing to Stress among Staff of Children Homes

The third objective of the study was to determine organizational factors that contribute to stress among child care givers in children homes in Eldoret. This was measured by looking at the following variables: the Task demand, organizational structure, organizational leadership, role demand, organizational life stage and interpersonal demand. Likert scale was used for answering (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Not sure, 4 = Agree, 5 = strongly agree). Thus, this question was analyzed by using the mean to identify the rank of each attribute. As a result, it was established that task demand and organizational structure were given the first priority by respondents as the major organizational factors contributing to stress among staff of children homes. Table 5 below has the summary of the findings.

Table 5. Organizational Factors Contributing to Stress among Staff of children homes

Organizational Factors Contributing to Stress Among Staff of Children Homes	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Task Demand	3.60	1.08	1
Organizational Structure	3.60	1.25	1
Organizational Leadership	3.57	1.18	3
Role Demand	3.55	1.10	4
Organizational Life Stage	3.42	1.03	5
Interpersonal Demand	3.21	1.13	6

Concerning organizational factors contributing to stress, task demand and organizational structure were ranked first (3.60), organizational leadership was ranked third (3.57), role demand was ranked fourth (3.55), organizational life stage was ranked fifth (3.42) while interpersonal demand was least ranked with a mean of 3.21 on the Likert scale. As a result, it was established that task demand and organizational structure are the major organizational factors contributing to stress among child care givers at children homes in Eldoret. When certain task/work is so demanding, it is easy for one to get stress. This is because demanding tasks will leave no resting time to the worker. S/he will not have time to attend to other issues. Demanding tasks leads to fatigue and lethargy hence enabling stress to occur. Therefore, it can be concluded that the higher the demand of a certain task increases the stress associated at work place. Any organization has got its own structure in terms of working rules, relationship between workers and the management, dressing code, among others. A job with not only well-defined procedures, but also constraining and limiting rules, where the slightest deviation is prohibited, would cause workers serious problems. Their lack of need for structure had an obverse of great importance: a need for freedom. It was also established that organizational leadership contributes to stress among workers. This came about when leaders were too rigid to accommodate change, when they imposed duties on workers without involving them in planning and decision making, when leaders wanted the work to be accomplished in time without first bearing in mind the workers conditions, among other factors. Supervisors/leaders putting pressure on workers concerning their duties culminated into stress which later led to low productivity and other effects discussed earlier. It was observed, as work overload increases, workers are likely to adopt more risky work methods. Role overload would be a most common stressor for staff especially in today's downsized organizations. Similarly role underutilization would occur when employees are allowed to use only a few of their skills and abilities. The most prevalent characteristic of role underutilization is monotony, where the worker performs the same routine task over and over. Stress can be caused by too much or too little work, time pressures and deadlines, too many decisions to take, fatigue and from physical strains of the work environment. However, respondents were not sure whether organizational life stage and interpersonal demand were organizational factors contributing to stress among employees at children homes in Eldoret. This is attested by statements having means of 3.42 and 3.21 respectively which indicates 'Not Sure' on the Likert Scale.

Individual Factors Contributing to Stress among Staff of Children Homes

The fourth objective of the study was to determine individual factors that contribute to stress among child care givers in Children homes in Kenya. This was measured by looking at the following variables: economic problems, family problems and personality. Likert scale was used for answering (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Not sure, 4 = Agree, 5 = strongly agree). Thus, this question was analyzed by using the mean to identify the rank of each attribute. As a result, it was established economic problems are the major individual factors contributing to stress among the staff of children homes. This is as shown in table 6 below.

Table 6. Individual Factors Contributing to Stress among Staff of Children homes

Individual Factors Contributing to Stress Among Staff of Children Homes	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Economic Problems	3.89	1.28	1
Family Problems	3.26	1.24	2
Personality	3.08	1.21	3

From table 6 above, concerning individual factors, economic problems were ranked the first (3.89), family problems was ranked second (3.26) while personality character was ranked the least with a mean of 3.08. As a result, from the above findings, it can be stated that respondents agreed with economic problems as being the major individual factor contributing to stress among child care takers in children homes. Poor payment discouraged and demoralized workers which later culminated in stress especially, when they cannot be able to meet their basic needs. Consequently, respondents were not sure whether family problems and personality character are individual factors contributing to stress among child care takers in children homes. However, to some extend, family problems contributes to stress at the work place. When one has problems with his/her family, it implies that the minds will not be settled. When the minds are not settled, the concentration level will be very low and therefore; s/he will not be able to deliver at the place work.

Environmental Factors Contributing to Stress among Staff at Children Homes

The fifth objective of the study was to determine environmental factors that contribute to stress among

child care givers in children homes. This was measured by looking at the following variables: economic uncertainty, political uncertainty and technological uncertainty. Likert scale was used for answering (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Not sure, 4 = Agree, 5 = strongly agree). Thus, this question was analyzed by using the mean to identify the rank of each attribute. As a result, it was established that economic and political uncertainties contributed to stress among staff members. This is as shown in table 7 below.

Table 7. Environmental Factors Contributing to Stress among Staff at Children Homes

Environmental Factors Contributing to Stress Among Staff at children homes	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Economic Uncertainty	3.77	1.25	1
Political Uncertainty	3.51	1.23	2
Technological Uncertainty	3.08	1.09	3

From table 7 above, economic uncertainty was ranked first (3.77), political uncertainty was ranked second (3.51) while technological uncertainty was least ranked with a mean of 3.08 on the Likert Scale. As a result, from the above findings, it is clear that economic and political uncertainties are the major environmental factors contributing to stress among staff in children homes. Lack of economic base in an organization may lead to a lot of problems. These problems may include; poor payment of the staff, lack of enough facilities and other working materials since there is no money to purchase them, poor technology acquired among other reasons. Economic resources are the backbone of an organization's sound achievements. Furthermore, lack of political will and political security will affect the organization's operations which further stresses its workers. However, respondents were not sure with technological uncertainty as a contributor of stress to the staff of children homes. Technological change in an organization is full of stress because workers will find it hard adapting to the new technology. Intense anxiety about technology can be debilitating in many kinds of jobs, from secretarial positions to warehouse management, from assembly line worker to the accountant.

Ranking of Factors Contributing to Stress among Staff at Children Homes

When respondents were asked to rank the factors that contribute to stress among staff of children's home, it was established that organizational factors were given the first priority. This is as shown in table 8 below.

Table 8. Ranking of Factors Contributing to Stress among Staff at Children Homes

Ranking of Factors Contributing to Stress Among Staff at Children Homes	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Organizational Factors	1.47	0.70	1
Individual Factors	2.04	0.71	2
Environmental Factors	2.49	0.72	3

On the issue of ranking of the factors contributing to stress, organizational factors were ranked first (1.47), individual factors were ranked second (2.04) while environmental factors were least ranked with a mean of 2.49 on the Likert scale. As a result, it implies that organizational factors are very important and that they should be well addressed and coordinated to reduce work related stress among employees. On the other hand, it can be observed that environmental factors play a very minor role as far as stress in the work place is concerned.

Conclusions

From the above discussions, the following conclusions were made:

1. Stress at the place of work is inevitable, everybody has got his/her level of stress in the body but when the level rises to a certain height, it may lead to physical and psychological impacts.
2. Decrease in job satisfaction was the major effect of stress on the child care givers of children homes in Eldoret.
3. The main forms of coping with stress at the work place by employees of children homes are confronting the problem and taking time off.
4. Task demand and organizational structure are the major organizational factors contributing to stress among child care givers at children homes in Eldoret.
5. Economic problems were found to be the major individual factor contributing to stress among child care takers in children homes.
6. Economic and political uncertainties are the major environmental factors contributing to stress among staff in children homes.

Recommendations of the Study

Based on the above conclusions, the study made the following recommendations;

1. The staff to be given training education on existence of stress in the organization so that they can be able to understand what stress is and also understand that stress is inevitable in any organization.
2. The management to introduce stress management programs at place of work so that workers can be

taught on the effects of stress and their coping strategies.

3. Workers to be motivated in their work through being given incentives like overtime payment and their salaries to be increased.

4. The management to create clear channels of communication. This will enable them to easily identify issues and problems that workers face and which can be catalyst of stress.

5. The management to involve its staff matters of planning and decision making. This will make the staff to feel part and parcel of the work being implemented but not imposing duties on the staff.

6. The organization should pay workers what is worth. This will help them to solve their economic problems that they are experiencing.

7. Workers should be given some time in order to attend to family issues to avoid family related stress. Off duty, weekends, holidays and leaves should be made available to the workers as these will reduces the amount of stress that they encounter at their work place due to changing of environment.

8. The organization to seek financial support from well wishers and donors so as to equip itself will all the relevant facilities. This will help the workers to perform their duties more easily and faster hence meeting the set deadlines.

9. The government to help such organization with children homes with funds and other materials to enhance their sustenance.

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