



The Effect of Stress Management on Employee Performance in Kenya Electricity Generating Company in Kenya

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Abstract

Employee performance is a driving force behind organizations that carry out their mandate in serving humanity through provision of product and service delivery. However, employees in Kenya Electricity Generating Company (KenGen), among other state corporations in the energy sector in Kenya, experience a variety of work-related stress due to the nature of daily operations of power generation that are involving and labour intensive which affect work life balance and performance at work. The objective of this study therefore was to establish the effect of stress management on employee performance in Kenya Electricity Generating Company in Kenya. The theoretical underpinning of the study was built on Social Exchange Theories using positivist philosophy. Explanatory research design was used and the approach was deductive. The target population was 2487 employees of KenGen Company composed of senior management, middle and junior employees. Sampling procedure proposed by (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) was adopted to identify the corresponding sample size selected from the population. Neyman's proportional allocation formula was used to generate a sample of 331 respondents. A structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data with items anchored on a 5-point Likert Scale. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that Stress Management ($\beta = 0.314$, $p < 0.05$) have direct significant effect on Employee Performance. Further, Pearson Correlation results showed that stress management was positively and significantly related to employee performance ($r = .671$, $p < 0.01$). This implies that within KenGen, when stress management initiatives are effective and well-implemented, there is a strong likelihood that employees' performance across various sections of the company will significantly improve. The study recommends that KenGen and similar organizations should consider investing in stress management programs that provide employees with the tools and resources to effectively cope with workplace stressors. These programs should encompass strategies for managing workloads, improving time management, and fostering a positive work environment.

Keywords: Stress, organizations, Management, Performance, employees

INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced and competitive corporate world, the management of stress among employees has become a critical concern for organizations striving to enhance their performance and maintain a healthy work environment (Swaminathan & Rajkumar, 2010; Shukla & Garg, 2013; Mardikaningsih & Sinambela, 2022). Stress, if left unmanaged, can lead to a myriad of negative consequences, including decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, higher turnover rates, decreased employee performance, and compromised physical and mental well-being (Al-Suraihi, Samikon

& Ibrahim, 2021; Pinheiro, Ivandic & Razzouk, 2017; Hassard et al., 2014). The Kenya Electricity Generating Company (KenGen) plays an indispensable role in ensuring a stable and sustainable supply of electricity to power the nation's development and growth (Kiara, 2013; Gitachu, 2012). Established in 1954, KenGen has evolved over the decades to become the leading electricity generation company in Kenya, producing a significant portion of the country's power through a diverse range of energy sources, including hydroelectric, geothermal, and thermal power generation (Mukura, Shalle, Kanda & Ngatia, 2016; Kabeyi, Oludolapo & Teresa, 2020; Juma, 2012). The multifaceted nature of KenGen's operations, characterized by complex projects, rigorous maintenance schedules, and high-stakes responsibilities, has given rise to various stress-inducing factors for its employees. Moreover, the inherent risks and responsibilities associated with electricity generation, especially in the geothermal and hydropower sectors have intensified the pressures faced by KenGen's workforce (Mutuku, 2012). The maintenance of critical infrastructure, adherence to stringent safety protocols, and the need for rapid response to unforeseen challenges contribute to a high-stress environment for employees at various levels within the organization. Understanding the effects of stress management on employee performance is not only beneficial for KenGen but also holds broader implications for organizations across various industries in Kenya and beyond. To address this issue, this study assessed the effect of stress management on employee performance in Kenya Electricity Generating Company in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical review

This study was guided by Social Exchange Theory (SET). Redmond (2015) explains the SET, which was proposed by (Blau, 1964) as a sociological and psychological theory which studies the social behaviour in the interaction of two parties that implement a cost-benefit analysis to determine the risks and benefits. The theory informs that social behavior (such as job performance) is the result of an exchange process. The exchange is regulated by the norm of reciprocity. This exchange process aims at maximizing benefits and minimizing costs or risks. According to this theory, individuals weigh the benefits and risks of this exchange process or social relationships. Positive relationships refer to those in which the benefits outweigh the risks. When the risks outweigh the benefits, individuals will terminate the relationship. The exchange is based on the norm of reciprocity such as improving job performance in return for utilization of flexible work arrangements. Organizations can motivate employees by offering incentives in return for the contribution (Caillier, 2016). Social Exchange Theory provides a lens through which we can understand how the provision of stress management resources and support by KenGen may influence employee performance. It suggests that when employees perceive that the organization is committed to their well-being and experiences reduced stress as a result of stress management practices, they are more likely to reciprocate with enhanced job performance, contributing to a positive exchange relationship between employees and the organization. This theoretical framework can help guide the research on the effect of stress management on employee performance within KenGen and inform strategies for improving employee well-being and organizational outcomes.

Empirical review

Stress Management and Employee Performance

Stress Management is a self-management strategy that works towards attainment of employee performance. Stress among employees if not handled properly in the

organization may result to low employee performance which would entirely affect an organization due to the cost of health insurance for the affected employee.

In the current world full of dynamism in all contexts whether at the place of work, the family context, or in one's personal life, stress among individuals is increasingly becoming a norm and it is affecting every individual at any point in time no matter the context (Soegoto & Narimawati, 2017). It is encountered differently and it differs among employees depending on work environment and how one performs in the place of work. Stress has been necessitated by heightened competition, work pressures, the need to come up with new innovations in order to beat competitors in the market et cetera. This has pushed employees to put more effort and to perform beyond the minimum capacity and ability hence the need to manage stress. By doing so, employees are affected physically and psychologically hence leads to non-performance. However, as much as certain stress can be advantageous, with the current economic challenges in the world, there is increased pressure of stress which is coupled with negative stress that affects employee work performance in many organizations.

In reference to research carried out by (Jamadin, Mohamad, Syarkawi, & Noordin, 2015) with an Evidence from Malaysia, the objective of the study was to investigate the influence of work family conflict among employees of a semi-government organization in East Malaysia. The specific objectives of the study were to determine the level of work family conflict and job stress among administrative employees of a semi-government organization; Secondly to investigate the correlation between work family conflict and job stress: and to explore the influence of gender and marital status on work family conflict and job stress among the administrative staff. The study found out that in regards to job stress, respondents did not experience the feeling of emotional drain in their jobs, no burn out, no frustrations, no emotional tension, were not mentally nor physically pressured by their jobs. This showed that there was a minimal level of stress in their work and men and women do not demonstrate significant difference on job stress. Marital status had no effect on work-family conflict but with regard to job stress, marital status had an effect on job stress where the single respondents appeared to have significant high levels of job stress compared with those who are married. In conclusion, according to the study, work family conflict is a predictor of job stress and administrative employees have a low level of job stress and work family conflict.

In Indonesian context, (Soegoto & Narimawati, 2017) looked into the contribution of Stress Management and Good Employee Performance towards the success of a company, the main focus of the study was to evaluate stress management and its effect on employee's performance. The study found out that stress management influences employee performance which leads to improved performance hence increased production capacity of workers and the reverse is true in situation where stress increases. The study concluded that as stress management increases among workers in the company, the level of performance also increases. It is a condition that affects employee emotional tension and ones thinking processes and affects their behaviours therefore calls for the need for positive stress control among them. When there is a better performance by employees during work, the less likely it becomes for them to experiences stress.

In the Indian context, (Goswami, 2015) undertook a case study in a bank on Job Stress Management and Employee Performance. The main objective of the study was to find out how stress is caused in employees who work in the bank. Specifically, the study determined the factors of job stress, factors of stress management in banking

employees, and to measure the impact of stress management on employee performance. Findings of the study informed that the sense of being responsible for the job caused so much stress to bank employees, the reason being that the legal adherence in matters was most of the time found to be influencing employee feelings which caused stress. In addition, the study found out that expectations of senior managers, fellow colleagues, disruptions between union and management build role conflict in the employees leading to job stress. Co-workers are not cooperative which leads to incomplete work by an employee leading to stress, this being in line with the works of (Michie, 2002); (Ratnawat & Jha, 2014).

Findings of the study also found out that for the purpose of managing stress, co-worker support may be improved, and introduction of better time schedules would be sufficient to avoid issues arising in an urgent mode, and also by improving inter-personal relationships. In terms of managing stress for better performance, results also informed that if employees manage their stress, they improve their performance. Existence of positive relationship between stress management and employee performance was also found. The study therefore, perceived that if the banking employees focus on time management, having better inter-personal relationships, and involving themselves in leisure activities, they would improve their performance, thus contending with the works of (Bamba, 2016).

In the Nigerian context, (Adim, Ibekwe, & Odunayo) undertook a study on Stress Management and Employee Performance of Deposit Money Banks in Port Harcourt. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between stress management and employee performance. The study found out that stress management has a significant relationship with employee efficiency and effectiveness. The study also concluded that stress management bears a positive and significant influence on employee performance. The study recommended that management of deposit money banks should design tasks and jobs in ways that would make for effectiveness and efficiency to bring out improvement in their employee performance and that flexible job schedules should be incorporated into human resource managers strategies, policies and plan of deposit money banks to enhance easy employee performance and commitment that would increase corporate survival.

In the Kenyan scenario, (Wafula and Nyaboga, 2019) performed a research study on Stress Management and Employee Performance by use of psychotherapy as a mitigation in selected schools, a case of the School of Business and Economics and Health Sciences in Kisii University. The purpose of the study was to investigate stress management and employee performance by us of psychotherapy as a mitigation measure. It was found out that causes of stress are positively correlated to employee performance, that work-related stress is positively related to employee performance, stress copying strategies are positively correlated to employee performance. The study concluded that work related stress, causes of stress, and stress copying strategies have an effect on employee performance. The study recommended the need for University Management to identify suitable stress copying strategies to help reduce employee stress and employee workplace stress. The following hypothesis was formulated to guide the study:

H₀₁: Stress Management does not have a significant effect on employee performance

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a positivist paradigm and explanatory research design. The study was conducted in Kenya Electricity Generation Company (KenGen). The company is

composed of 2487 employees spread in all its branches covering the Head Quarters in Nairobi County, Sondu Miriu Hydro Power Plant in Nyanza, Olkaria Geothermal Plant in Nakuru County, Kipevu I and III Turbine in Kilifi County, and Ngong Hills Wind Power Station in Kajiado County. KenGen's strategy is to deliver affordable clean energy by creating value for shareholders and while expanding energy sources and revenue streams. It is the largest energy producer in Kenya therefore, staff are expected to operate under a dynamic working environment in terms of balancing their official duties and responsibilities and personal responsibilities. This study extracted research data from Nairobi Headquarters, Turkwell, and Olkaria Power Plants of the company where the sample size was a representative of the company employee population and it was adequate to enable data collection. The target population of the study was 2487 comprising of employees working in Kenya Electricity Generation Company Limited. The respondents of the study comprised the employees, who are categorized into junior, middle, and senior employees who were in the Management team in Olkaria and Turkwell power stations that operate on shift working.

The study adopted and utilized a sampling procedure proposed by (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) to identify the corresponding sample size to be selected from the population for the study. The calculations entailed picking the corresponding sample of 331 employees from a population ranging from 2400. Then sample size was distributed using Neyman's proportional allocation formula.

Neyman's Proportional allocation formula: $n_h = (N_h / N) * n$

where n_h is the sample size for stratum h , N_h is the population size for stratum h , N is total population size, and n is total sample size.

The study utilized stratified sampling technique and simple random sampling technique. First stratified sampling technique was used to categorize respondents by placing the entire population into homogeneous sub-groups/stratas based on their level of service to the company, that is senior management, middle and junior cadres. Each stratum of employees from various sub-sections was sampled according to their population size.

During data collection phase, the study collected primary data by use of a questionnaire, which was quantitative in nature and contained close-ended structured questions to 3 cadres of employees. A questionnaire is a research tool that contains a series of questions asked to individuals to obtain statistically useful information about a given topic. The researcher chose to utilize a questionnaire because Kenya Electricity Generation Company is an organization that contains branches that are spread in various locations of Kenya and it would only be administered to a representative sample of the entire KenGen employee population.

A 5-point Likert Scale type tool was used to collect data on stress management. Stress management was measured using a questionnaire containing 12 items that were developed by the researcher in consultation with the works of Bakker Demerouti and Schaufeli (2005) and were operationalized on existence of policies geared towards employee stress management, top Management support in terms of meeting both individual and organizational objectives, team work, scheduling of training on stress management, employee working environment, employee work load, work relations with supervisors/managers/peers, performance evaluations, and role conflict. Respondents indicated their preferences by indicating the extent to which they agree

In terms of distribution of daily workload employees informed that there was fair distribution of work giving a (mean = 4.03, standard deviation = 1.00, skewness = -1.127, kurtosis = 1.035) which helps to eliminate physical and mental exhaustion among them. Distribution of work load among employees was sufficient to complete tasks within the recommended work hours, (mean = 4.09, standard deviation = .906, skewness = -1.196, kurtosis = 1.659). The interpretation of this is that there was fair distribution of work and therefore, employees appreciated their workload vis a vis the work hours provided. Additionally, whether quarterly performance evaluations contribute towards employee stress, (mean = 2.96, standard deviation 1.34, skewness = -.008, kurtosis = -1.207) employees did not have a problem with performance evaluations and it was not contributing to stress. In regards to teamwork being emphasized in the company in order to enhance individual and overall performance employees consented to it as the results indicated a (mean = 4.44, standard deviation = .868, skewness = -2.098, kurtosis = 4.965). On whether company management emphasizes on good working relations as a strategy towards improved performance (mean = 4.33, standard deviation = .805, skewness = -1.598, kurtosis = 3.514) shows that on average employees concurred that company management preaches good employee working relations. Whether mechanisms are in place to cushion employees from experiencing conflict in work roles and personal roles, (mean = 4.08, standard deviation .945, skewness = -1.151, kurtosis = 1.331), employees appreciated that the management provides demarcation of duties and responsibilities which when not done, brings about conflicts among employees, leading to low performance. Besides, employees are able to manage workload demands at work hence a healthy work life balance (mean = 4.13, standard deviation .880, skewness = -1.209 kurtosis = 1.786). A good number of respondents agreed that the work environment is ideal for employee motivation and performance (mean = 4.20, standard deviation .952, skewness = 1.561, kurtosis = 2.666). In general, all the statements that described the effect of stress management on employee performance strongly indicated a high means of >3 meaning that employees were in agreement a part from the statement stating whether quarterly performance appraisals contribute to employee stress rating at a mean of 2.96.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics results for Stress Management

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
The company management has full support of policies to reduce employee stress for the purpose of performance.	4.119	.911	-1.248	1.748
Employees are trained in handling stress experiences within the workplace.	3.699	1.109	-.671	-.262
Employees are equipped with refresher courses on planning skills to enable them plan their time well to avoid stress.	3.566	1.125	-.682	-.181
Individual employee daily targets are a contribution to the overall company targets.	4.341	.789	-1.528	3.442
There is fair distribution of	4.037	1.001	-1.127	1.035

workload to eliminate physical and mental exhaustion among employees.				
Employee workload is sufficient to complete tasks within the recommended work hours.	4.099	.906	-1.196	1.659
Quarterly performance evaluations contribute towards employee stress.	2.962	1.340	-.008	-1.207
Teamwork is emphasized in the company to enhance individual and overall performance.	4.443	.868	-2.098	4.965
Management emphasizes on good working relations as a strategy towards improved performance.	4.337	.805	-1.598	3.514
Mechanisms are in place to cushion employees from experiencing conflict in work roles and personal roles.	4.085	.945	-1.151	1.331
Employees are able to manage workload demands at work leading to a healthy work life balance.	4.136	.880	-1.209	1.786
The work environment is ideal for employee motivation and performance.	4.201	.952	-1.561	2.666

N = 293

Source: Research Data (2023)

Factor Analysis for Stress Management

Results from factor analysis performed on stress management variable showed that all the factor loadings were above 0.5 with the lowest loading indicating a 0.556 mark and the highest loading being 0.771. All the 12 items that explain the variable of stress management had a cumulative variance of 55.1% where all items were loaded on 2 factors. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy value (0.890) was above 0.5 hence met the threshold requirement. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant at ($p = 0.000$). The statistical output on Stress Management informs that all the 12 factor loadings were retained for further analysis as indicated in the results shown in Table 4.17 below.

Table 2: Factor Analysis for Stress Management

Items	Factor 1 Loadings	Factor 2 Loadings
The company management has full support of policies to reduce employee stress for the purpose of performance.		0.556
Employees are trained in handling stress experiences within the workplace.		0.713
Employees are equipped with refresher courses on planning skills to enable them plan their time well to avoid stress.		0.771
Individual employee daily targets are a contribution to the overall company targets.	0.690	
There is fair distribution of workload to eliminate physical and mental exhaustion among employees.	0.777	
Employee workload is sufficient to complete tasks within the recommended work hours.		0.737
Quarterly performance evaluations contribute towards employee stress.		0.687
Teamwork is emphasized in the company to enhance individual and overall performance.	0.742	
Management emphasizes on good working relations as a strategy towards improved performance.	0.672	
Mechanisms are in place to cushion employees from experiencing conflict in work roles and personal roles.	0.599	
Employees are able to manage workload demands at work leading to a healthy work life balance.	0.662	
The working environment is ideal for employee motivation and performance.	0.685	
Total Variance Explained: Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
% of variance	35.951	18.899
Cumulative %	35.951	54.850
KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.890	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, Approx. Chi Square	1365.392	
Degree of Freedom	66	
Sig.	0.000	
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.		
Source: <i>Research Data (2023)</i>		

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis is a term used to explain the association or relationship between two or more variables and it is based on the assumption of a straight line or rather linear relationship between quantitative variables. Correlation measures the strength or the extent of association between variables and the direction, where coefficients values range from -1 to +1.

A correlation coefficient of +1 indicates that the two variables are perfectly related in a positive manner. While a correlation co-efficient of -1 indicates that the two variables are perfectly related in a negative manner. When the value is Zero (0), it indicates that there is no linear relationship between two variables. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation test was applied to analyze correlations among variables. Correlation results showed that stress management was positively and significantly related to employee performance. The association and the strength between stress management and employee performance in the various sections of the company are strong ($r=.671$, $p<0.01$) as indicated in table 3 below.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis Results

Variable	E.Perf.	Str.
Employee Performance	1	
Stress Management	.671**	1

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

Dependent Variable: Employee Performance (E.Perf.), **Independent Variables:** Stress Management (Str.),

Source: Research Data (2023)

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the study stated that stress management does not have a significant effect on employee performance.

H₀₁: Stress Management does not have a significant effect on employee performance.

Based on the analysis results presented in Table 4.29, the beta coefficient for stress management was ($\beta=0.314$, $t=5.897$, $p<0.05$). Due to low p -value associated with t -ratio, the null hypothesis was rejected. It was therefore, concluded that there is a statistically significant effect of stress management on employee performance hence we accept the alternative hypothesis. This informs that for each unit increase in stress management, employee performance improves by 0.327 units. The effect of stress management was almost 6 times the effect attributed to the standard error as indicated by the t -test value of 5.897. The study therefore, concludes that use of stress management techniques by employees improved on employee performance in Kenya Electricity Generation Company (KenGen) based on the statistical results.

DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was to establish the effect of stress management on employee performance in Kenya Electricity Generation Company (KenGen). The study hypothesized that stress management did not have a significant effect on employee performance. However, study findings found out that stress management had a positive and significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.314$, $p = <0.05$) hence the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative accepted. These finding therefore, confirms that stress management as a construct of employee work life balance

contributes to overall employee performance. In relation to the study by (Jamadin et al., 2015) whose study found out that employee respondents did not experience the feeling of emotional drain or physical pressure in their jobs, it corresponds with the findings of this study that no matter the magnitude of work operations in the company under study, employees have learned to manage their work life and do not consider their daily operations as a stressor but a challenge to tackle their daily tasks.

Results of the study support the social exchange theory which studies the social behavior in the interaction of two parties that implement a cost-benefit analysis to determine the risk and the benefits. Use of flexible working arrangement according to the study enabled employees to manage their work and life stress as registered by the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis and rejection of the null hypothesis that stress management has no significant effect on employee performance. The company offered to implement flexible work arrangement to employees on operational sections as an incentive and employees were able to manage stress due to work related fatigues hence improved performance (Caillier, 2016a). Findings of this study provide additional contribution of knowledge in terms of literature and builds on the existing social exchange theory on the effect of stress management on employee performance.

CONCLUSION

Findings revealed that employees' ability to manage stress in their working environment contributes immensely to their individual performance. This is in support of previous studies done by (Jamadin et al., 2015) who found out that employees devise coping mechanisms that help them to manage their work operations even with the rising magnitude of work load which act as challengers and not necessarily as stressors. Findings of this objective are also in support and has build on knowledge of Social Exchange theory that whenever there is a social behavior in the interaction between two parties, they both determine the risk and benefits of their interaction which according to this study, informs of the utilizations of flexible working arrangement as an enabler of employees to be able to handle their work and life duties and responsibilities. In addition, (Joy, 2020) in their study concluded that stress management bears a positive and significant influence on employee performance and that flexible work creates favourable impacts on employee's wellbeing and reduces work-family conflicts. The mentioned studies supporting this study were conducted in different contexts and results were in support of the current study, therefore, there is sufficient evidence that a part from the current study that was done in Kenya Electricity Generation Company in Kenya, studies done in other contexts also concur with the results of this study of positive significance and the study has made a significant contribution to stress management and employee performance literature.

RECOMMENDATION

KenGen and similar organizations should consider investing in stress management programs that provide employees with the tools and resources to effectively cope with workplace stressors. These programs should encompass strategies for managing workloads, improving time management, and fostering a positive work environment.

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