

Effects of Workplace Stress on Employees' Work Performance a Case of Iringa Municipal Office in Tanzania

Victoria Israel Munisi

Department of Business Studies, University of Iringa

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.8120138>

Received: 26 November 2024; Accepted: 04 December 2024; Published: 07 January 2025

ABSTRACT

The research evaluated the effects of workplace stress on employee performance at the Iringa Municipal Council Office (IMC) in Iringa Municipality, concentrating on identifying stressors, analyzing the correlation between stress and performance, and investigating methods to mitigate stress. A sample of 69 respondents was obtained using qualitative and quantitative research approaches, including stratified random selection, while three top management personnel were chosen for interviews through purposive sampling. The data collection used questionnaires and interviews, which were analyzed by descriptive statistics and Pearson Correlation using SPSS Version 22. The instruments' reliability and validity were verified by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure, Bartlett's test of sphericity, and Cronbach's alpha. The findings revealed that employees were more influenced by personal and personal concerns than by employment-related stress, while workplace stress still affected their performance. The study advocated for the implementation of employee assistance programs, counselling services, recreational activities, and workplace human formation initiatives to effectively manage stress. It additionally recommended that Iringa Municipal council office (IMC) improve its stress management practices and implement regular stress reduction programs. Suggestions for subsequent research were also offered.

Key words: Workplace Stress, Employees, Performance, Stress Management, Workplace Incivility

INTRODUCTION

Workplace stress impacted more than 300 million individuals worldwide, significantly influencing job performance (Mhechela et al., 2020). Employees frequently experienced stress from high-pressure expectations in competitive settings, adversely affecting their productivity (House & Madasamy, 2024). Although extensive research has concentrated on workplace stress across many sectors, studies (Alhassan et al., 2021; Haq et al., 2020) have demonstrated that employees in the public sector also face considerable stress, resulting in decreased job satisfaction and decreased productivity. This area has remained comparatively underexplored relative to other sectors.

The global prevalence of workplace stress and its effects on employee performance have been extensively established. Research conducted in India (Sharma et al., 2019) and Zimbabwe (Mawanza, 2017) identified stressors like role ambiguity, workload, and organizational changes that influenced performance both adversely and positively. Research conducted in Nigeria by (Daniel, 2019) underscored the necessity of Employee Assistance Programs to successfully manage stress and improve performance. The findings emphasized the intricate link between stress and performance, shaped by organizational and economic settings.

Workplace stress in public sectors in East Africa has been thoroughly examined. Research conducted in Kenya (Leiyen, 2017; Morara & Juma, 2023) revealed job overload, conflict, and uncertainty as primary stressors affecting employee performance. Research conducted in Tanzania, including studies by (Mhechela et al., 2020; Mkumbo, 2013), revealed varied results, indicating that while stress might occasionally enhance performance by maintaining employee concentration, it more frequently results in absenteeism, diminished morale, and decreased productivity. The dual nature of stress's effects highlighted the necessity of particular to the setting strategies.

A number of investigations in Tanzania have concentrated on higher learning institutions and hospitals, neglecting other public sectors and locations beyond Iringa, which remain under-explored (Mkumbo, 2013). Notwithstanding this gap, it was clear that stressors such as workload, job conflict, and interpersonal difficulties significantly affect employee performance in different organizational contexts. Mitigating these pressures necessitated specific actions suited to institutional contexts.

This study intended to investigate workplace stress in a private public institution, concentrating on variables including workload, role ambiguity, career advancement, and interpersonal dynamics. The research aimed to mitigate the adverse effects of stress on employee performance by analyzing these factors and implementing efficient stress management measures, hence enhancing an understanding of stress in underrepresented sectors and locations.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of this study were;

1. To identify factors causing workplace stress among Iringa Municipal Council office employees.
2. To assess the relationship between workplace stress and employee's work performance at Iringa Municipal Council office.
3. To explore strategies that can reduce workplace stress among Iringa Municipal Council office employees.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

(Mhechela et al., 2020) emphasized the persistent difficulty in formulating a cohesive theory of workplace stress, despite agreement on stress-related terminology. Two significant theories, Role Stress Theory and Job Demands-Control Theory, were identified as being relevant for analyzing the impact of workplace stress on employee performance at the Iringa Municipal Council Office (IMC). These theories examine both the causes and consequences of workplace stress and offer a framework for assessing its influence on work performance.

The Role Stress Theory, derived from Robert Merton's 1957 research and further developed by Kahn et al. in 1964, examines the impact of occupational roles on stress and employee behavior (Morrissette & Kisamore, 2020). The hypothesis suggests that stress originates from role conflict, ambiguity, and excessive workload, resulting in adverse effects that hinder performance. It highlights that increased expectations from various roles enhance stress, adversely impacting workplace conduct. Nonetheless, (Mhechela et al., 2020) warned that this theory was formulated in a simpler organizational framework, hence questioning its relevance in the existing climate.

The work-related Demands-Control Theory, proposed by Robert Karasek in 1979, examines the impact of employment features, such as demands and control, on employees' psychological well-being and performance (Fila, 2016). It argues that elevated demands combined with decreased control induce stress, whereas increased control minimizes negative impacts and improves performance. Karasek's paradigm emphasizes the necessity of promoting occupational autonomy and supporting interpersonal relationships to effectively manage stress. (Fila, 2016) suggested that stress can be mitigated by supervisory and peer support, enhancing employee well-being and productivity.

Both theories are relevant to this particular study as they explain the connection between workplace stressors, including role ambiguity, workload, and job control, and employee performance. The research aimed to find strategies for reducing workplace stress and enhancing performance at Iringa Municipal Council Office (IMC) through the application of these frameworks. Prior research by (Mukti et al., 2021) and (Mhechela et al., 2020) illustrated the relevance of these theories in comprehending the impact of stress on organizational results, hence rendering them essential for this study.

Empirical Review

Workplace stress is related to numerous factors, as revealed by various research. (Li, 2020) investigated stress management in Chinese and German enterprises, involving 81 employees from China and 37 from Germany. The results indicated that in China, employees face extended working hours and high-intensity labour due to competition for employment chances, professional advancement, and social esteem. This results in excessive workloads and decreased productivity. The research called for economic restructuring and industrial development in China. This research is significant as globalization impacts Tanzanian personnel, particularly in private public organizations, who encounter comparable competitive pressures.

A study by (Ali et al., 2014) examined the effect of stress on job performance at private sector universities in Karachi, Pakistan, involving 133 participants. Workload, occupation conflict, and insufficient financial compensation were identified as key stressors that decrease employee productivity. The study suggested for the reduction of workloads, resolution of role conflicts, enhancement of pay, and provision of training and counselling to improve job performance and satisfaction. This study is significant as it reflects the setting of businesses and governmental institutions in Tanzania, providing a comparative investigation of the causes and effects of stress.

(Azmi et al., 2016) examined occupational stress in a Shared Service Centre in Malaysia, concentrating on role conflict, ambiguity, and insufficient resources. In a study involving 113 front-line personnel, it was determined that these characteristics severely decreased job performance. Recommendations encompassed the provision of explicit job descriptions, clarification of expectations, and allocation of adequate resources. This study corresponds with existing research by employing analogous variable's role conflict and ambiguity to investigate the relationships between workplace stress and performance.

(Ahmed et al., 2017) examined the relationship among job security, employee engagement, and performance within Bangladesh's RMG sector. The examination of 392 responses revealed that job security affects performance through employee engagement. The research emphasized on the importance of policymakers in protecting employment to improve performance in developing countries. This study examines job security as a determinant of employee performance, considering Tanzania's related financial situation.

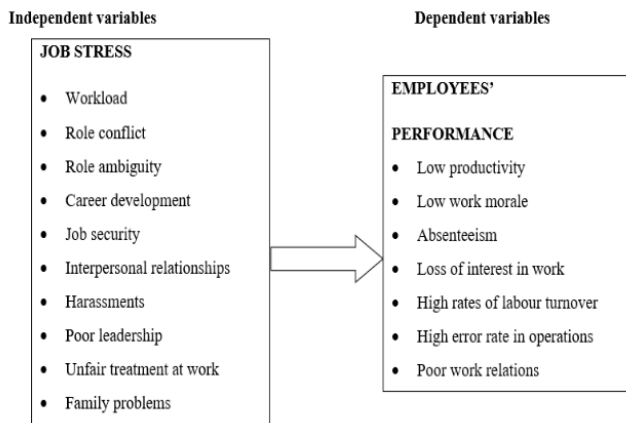
A study conducted by (Kitole et al., 2019) examined stress related to work within Kenya's public sector at the National Treasury Headquarters. In a study involving 1270 employees, work overload, dissatisfaction and ambiguity were identified as important stressors affecting performance. The study advocated for frequent assessments, staff recognition, and conflict resolution techniques that would address these issues. The methods and emphasis on comparable stress factors in this study offer significant insights for the ongoing research in Tanzania.

Lastly, (Ali et al., 2014) assessed stress among 133 employees in private universities in Karachi. They recognized workload, role conflict, and inadequate financial compensation as critical stresses that reduced efficiency. Recommendations included lowering workloads, resolving dissatisfaction and enhancing remuneration. This study is particularly relevant as the disciplines and environment align with those of the Iringa Municipal Council Office, giving a basis for understanding the effects of stress in Tanzanian public institutions.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework highlighted the relationship between workplace stressors (independent variables) and employee performance (dependent variable) at the Iringa Municipal Council Office. It identified critical stressors, including organizational workload, role conflict and ambiguity, career advancement, job stability, and relationships with peers, along with their effects on productivity, creativity, and commitment. This approach was important in examining the impact of workplace stress on employee performance and established a foundation for formulating ways to mitigate stress and improve employee performance.

Figure: Conceptual Framework



Source: Adapted from (Cox et al., 2000) and modified by the researcher (2024)

METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopted a mixed-methods strategy in order to capitalize the benefits of both qualitative and quantitative techniques, hence increasing the validity of the data gathered. The qualitative methodology offered a comprehensive insight into the causal relationship between workplace stress and employee performance in a natural environment, employing targeted samples and instruments such as semi-structured interviews, structured questionnaires, and document analysis. Additionally, the quantitative method produced numerical data from closed-ended questionnaire responses, which were subsequently transformed into statistics during analysis to investigate correlations among the measured variables.

(Sharma et al., 2023) define research design as a comprehensive structure that explores the hypothesis, data collection methods, analysis, and operational implications of a study. It functions as a framework for the collection and analysis of data, taking into account time, cost, and appropriate skills. This study utilized an exploratory research design to clarify the research challenge and create ideas and insights. This design's independence enabled the examination of many different aspects of workplace stress and its effects on employee performance, allowing for alterations in research methods to efficiently collect pertinent data.

The study's population consisted all 84 administrative personnel of the Iringa Municipal Council Office, possessing attributes relevant to the research. The sample size was established using Slovic's formula, resulting in a total of 69 employees, which properly represents the greater population. The sample was obtained from various departments, assuring adequacy for reliable statistical analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

Respondents' Characteristics

The research identified key characteristics of respondents, including gender, age, marital status, academic qualifications, and duration of work. Out of 69 respondents, 35 (50.7%) were male, and 34 (49.3%) were female. This demonstrates a gender balance in Iringa Municipal Council Office (IMC) IMC's recruitment policy. Respondents aged 26-35 years made up the largest group (33%), followed by those aged 18-25 and 36-45 years, each at 25%. Most respondents were below 40 years, reflecting a youthful workforce. Among respondents, 50.7% were single, 46.4% married, and 2.9% divorced or widowed. The high percentage of single employees suggests Iringa Municipal Council Office (IMC) needs strategies to retain these mobile staff. Half of the respondents (50.7%) held a bachelor's degree, while 20.3% had master's qualifications. Those with certificates and diplomas may need development opportunities to enhance productivity. The largest group (45%) had worked for 1-5 years, showing enthusiasm and innovation. Employees with over 11 years of experience offered mentorship to younger staff, fostering workplace guidance and stress reduction.

Validity Analysis

To ensure validity, the research instruments were reviewed and revised based on feedback from the supervisor and experts, with irrelevant questions removed and multiple data collection methods employed. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure (0.75) and Bartlett's test of sphericity (significant at $p \leq 0.05$) confirmed the adequacy and appropriateness of the instruments for the study.

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.75
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	76.918
	df	10
	Sig.	0.000

Source: Researcher (2024)

Reliability Test

Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaires, yielding a score of 0.783, indicating a consistent and reliable measurement of the relationship between workplace stress and employee performance.

Thematic Analysis

Factors causing workplace stress

The study aimed to understand the factors contributing to occupational stress among employees at the Iringa Municipal Council Office (IMC). Data obtained from close-ended questionnaires distributed to 69 respondents revealed that role conflict and ambiguity were the major stressors, followed by career growth, interpersonal connections, and workload. Descriptive statistics revealed that unclear job descriptions and duties significantly contributed to stress, affecting total work performance. Career instability and poor interpersonal connections also were identified as significant causes.

Interviews with Iringa Municipal Council Office (IMC) employees supported these findings, indicating financial limitations as a principal source of stress. Respondent A stated that "delays in salary, allowances, and gratuities were a significant source of stress". Respondent B indicated that "personal matters, such as family conflicts and the challenge of balancing professional and private life, substantially contribute to stress". Employees experience stress from managing numerous personal responsibilities during work hours and dealing with family-related difficulties. Furthermore, Respondent C observed that "the absence of study support for professional development increased anxiety levels."

Hence, the findings show that alleviating workplace stress necessitates procedures focused on financial assistance, well defined job responsibilities, career advancement prospects, and developing good interpersonal interactions. These strategies might reduce stress and improve employee performance at IMC.

The relationship between workplace stress and employee's work performance

The second objective of the study aimed to determine the correlation between workplace stress and employee performance at the Iringa Municipal Council Office (IMC). A hypothesis was formulated, positing that the null hypothesis indicated no correlation between stress and performance, whilst the alternative proposed a strong

correlation. Regression analysis indicated a negative correlation of -0.112, signifying that increased workplace stress correlated with decreased employee performance. The correlation was significant at the 0.01 level, addressing the second research question on the relationship between the two variables.

Interviews with Iringa Municipal Council Office (IMC) top management supported these findings, with respondents noting that personal issues often overshadow workplace stress in affecting employee performance. Respondent A stated, "Employees are mostly affected by stress due to personal issues, which impacts their performance." Respondent B also added, "Absenteeism is not due to workplace stress but personal issues. Additionally, Respondent C highlighted that "the presence of external auditors and the Chancellor increased stress and strained relationships, which affected work performance".

The gathered information from the questionnaires and interviews indicates the correlation between workplace stress and employee performance. Stress reduces morale, thereby impairing employees' capacity to carry out their responsibilities efficiently. This relationship emphasizes the necessity for organizations such as Iringa Municipal Council Office (IMC) to address both occupational and personal stressors to enhance employee performance.

Strategies that can reduce workplace stress among Iringa Municipal Council office employees

The third objective of the study was to assess strategies for reducing workplace stress among employees at the Iringa Municipal Council Office (IMC). Descriptive statistics were employed to evaluate the effectiveness of different stress management techniques. The findings indicated that work descriptions were the most beneficial technique, with 58% of participants seeing it as essential for reducing stress. Training and development ranked at 52.2%, while mentorship and conflict resolution to enhance interpersonal connections were considered to be successful at 50.7%. Conversely, initiatives such as reducing workloads and job redesign proved less efficacious, garnering support from merely 17.4% and 29% of respondents, respectively.

Interviews with Iringa Municipal Council Office (IMC) senior management also examined stress management measures. Respondent A emphasized the significance of teaching employees in stress management, emotional regulation, and the differentiation of professional and personal challenges. Respondent B proposed enhancing the organization's financial resources to guarantee timely payment and improve social events, such as sports, to reduce stress. Respondent C emphasized the necessity for the public organizations to comply with established procedures, have departmental meetings, and adhere to national legislation that will reduce stress and enhance staff performance.

The study's findings underline the crucial role of management in minimizing workplace stress through clear communication, organized strategies, and the provision of essential guidance, including financial benefits, training, and leisure activities. Ensuring compliance with policies and providing opportunities for professional development were considered as essential elements in establishing a better work environment, which can eventually enhance employee performance.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study examined the determinants of occupational stress among employees at Iringa Municipal Council (IMC). The questionnaire revealed primary stressors as role conflict, role ambiguity, and professional development challenges, along with interpersonal interactions and workload. Employees lacking a clear understanding of their duties were more susceptible to stress, resulting in diminished performance. Financial challenges, particularly inadequate wage packages, were substantial factors contributing to stress, as employees endeavored to manage work with personal or familial obligations. This corresponds with previous studies by (Ali et al., 2014) and (Ahmed et al., 2017), which identified role conflict and insufficient rewards as primary stressors.

The study examined the relationship between occupational stress and employee performance, showing a negative correlation. The results revealed that workplace stress adversely affects employee performance, supporting the research of (Mhechela et al., 2020), which identified that role ambiguity and insufficient

resources contribute to diminished job performance. The interviews with senior management corroborated these findings, highlighting the adverse impact of stress on staff productivity.

The study subsequently identified strategies for mitigating workplace stress at Iringa Municipal Council Office (IMC). Effective stress management measures comprised the provision of clear job descriptions, the facilitation of training and development, and the implementation of mentoring programs. Alternative proposed strategies including enhancing financial incentives, providing counselling services, and encouraging recreational activities such as sports and excursions to mitigate stress. Departmental meetings were advised to improve communication and interpersonal interactions. These solutions aligned with the recommendations of (Morara & Juma, 2023), who underscored the need of enhanced communication and professional help in reducing stress and enhancing employee well-being.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that Iringa Municipal Council Office (IMC) employees experience stress related to inadequate pay, insufficient financial assistance for further studies, and unclear roles. A negative correlation was identified between occupational stress and employee performance. Stress management strategies comprise maintaining a balance of professional and personal life, as well as the provision of fair compensation that corresponds to governmental standards. These methods are crucial for lowering stress and improving performance.

RECOMMENDATION

The research recommends Iringa Municipal Council Office (IMC) to establish an employee support programmer including a psychologist to mitigate job stress and provide counselling services for employees. Iringa Municipal Council Office (IMC) ought to strengthen its stress management tactics, implement stress reduction programs, and promote leisure activities to improve staff relations and productivity. Furthermore, the government must guarantee that employers adhere to labour regulations to mitigate stress and enhance performance.

REFERENCES

1. Ahmed, S., Haderi, S. M. S. Al, Ahmad, F. Bin, Jaaffar, A. R., Walter, J., & Al-Douis, G. A. A. (2017). Employee job security and performance relationship in developing economy through employee engagement: Critical analysis with PLS-SEM. *International Journal of Economic Research*, 14(19), 133–147.
2. Alhassan, M. D., Adam, I. O., Musah, A., & Wahaga, E. (2021). The Effects of ICT Adoption on Public Sector Performance. *International Journal of E-Adoption*, 13(2), 36–51.
3. Ali, W. U., Raheem, A. R., Nawaz, A., & Imamuddin, K. (2014). Impact of Stress on Job Performance : An Empirical study of the Employees of Private Sector Universities of Karachi , Pakistan. *Research Journal of Management Sciences*, 3(7), 14–17.
4. Cox, T., Griffith, A., & Rial-Gonzalez, E. (2000). Research on Work-related Stress. In *Safety And Health*.
5. Daniel, C. ogohi. (2019). Effect of Job Stress on Employee Performace. *International Journal of Business, Management and Social Research*, 6(2), 375–382.
6. Fila, M. J. (2016). The Job Demands, Control, Support Model: Where Are We Now? 1(1).
7. Haq, F. I. U., Alam, A., Mulk, S. S. U., & Rafiq, F. (2020). The Effect of Stress and Work Overload on Employee's Performance: A Case Study of Public Sector Universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. *European Journal of Business and Management Research*, 5(1), 1–6.
8. house, L. K. K., & Madasamy, D. S. (2024). To Study Job-related Stress on Employee Performance between Private and Public Sector Banks. *Journal of Advanced Zoology*, 45(03).
9. Kitole, A. . M., Ibuta, M., & Matata, K. (2019). Effect of work stress on employee performance in the public sector in Kenya: A case of the National Treasury. *International Journal of Business & Law Research*, 7(4), 8–28.

10. LEIYAN, N. N. (2017). Influence of Job Design on Workplace Stress in Public Universities in Kenya: a Case of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. *Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 4(4).
11. Li, D. (2020). Stress Management at Work Place: A comparative study between Chinese and German Companies. *Occupational Mental Health*, 3(1), 15–20.
12. Mawanza, W. (2017). Effects of Stress on Employees Productivity: A Perspective of Zimbabwe's Social Economic Dynamics of 2016. 9(1), 22–32.
13. Mhechela, J. L., Mbao, E. H., Yusuf, D., & Waziri, T. I. (2020). The Relationship between Work Stress and Employees' Performance in Public Health Sectors: A Case of Mbeya Regional Hospital, Tanzania. *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies*, 8(9), 229–235.
14. Mkumbo, K. A. (2013). Prevalence of and Factors Associated with Work Stress in Academia in Tanzania. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 3(1), 1–11.
15. Morara, D. N., & Juma, D. (2023). Job Stressors and Employee Performance in County Governments in Kenya. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research (IJSSHR) ISSN 2959-7056 (o); 2959-7048 (P)*, 1(1), 550–565.
16. Morrisette, A. M., & Kisamore, J. L. (2020). A Meta-Analysis of the Relationship between Role Stress and Organizational Commitment: the Moderating Effects of Occupational Type and Culture. *Occupational Health Science*, 4(1–2), 23–42.
17. Mukti, S., Afrianty, T. W., & Prasetya, A. (2021). Job stress as mediating factor for creating employee performance: A Literature Review. *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence Research*, 6(1).
18. Sharma, D., Kundu, P., Director, D., Professor, A., & Coordinator, P. (2019). Workplace Stress and Quality Work Output: a Conceptual Framework. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR)Www.Ijrar.Org*, 868(2), 868–873. www.ijrar.org
19. Sharma, L. R., Jha, S., Koirala, R., Aryal, U., & Bhattarai, T. (2023). Navigating the Research Landscape: A Guide to the Selection of the Right Research Design. *International Research Journal of MMC*, 4(1), 64–78.
20. Syazreena Azmi, F., Asiah Md. Shahid, S., & Alwi, A. (2016). The Relationship between Job Stress and Front-liners' Job Performance in a Shared Service Center in Malaysia. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 6(7), 510–513.