

Relationship between Psychological Job Demand and the Subjective Well-being among Teachers in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii Central Sub-County, Kisii County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the relationship between psychological job demand and the subjective well-being among teachers in Kisii central sub-county, Kenya. The study was grounded on the self-determination theory of motivation and the demand-control-support theories, it adopted a correlational research design. A total sample of 194 participants was selected using simple random and purposive sampling techniques. Quantitative data were collected using the 17-item demand-control-support questionnaire and a 24-subjective well-being questionnaire. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study established a weak positive relationship between psychological job demands and subjective well-being. This suggests that as psychological job demand increases, subjective well-being also tends to increase slightly. The positive correlation psychological aspect may indicate that individuals who thrive under pressure or find fulfillment in challenging work environments might report higher subjective well-being. The study implies the need to increase teamwork in the working environment in schools to continue fostering the subjective well-being of teachers. The study recommends a suitable teacher-to-student ratio, to reduce the demand strain and hence increase the subjective well-being of teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

The nature of the place of work influences the performance of the staff and consequently impacts the structural capacity of any organization. An efficient workplace setting involves ensuring that the work environment is appealing, calm, adequate, and inducing to workforces hence granting the workers a sense of belonging and objectivity in their pursuit (Aveyard, 2014). However, this has not been the case in Kenya, particularly in the Kisii Central sub-county Kisii County. The most recent County education report stated that Kisii teachers have consistently shown workload becoming a difficult task with an increased number of lessons, over-enrollment of students in secondary school, and a lack of commitment and fulfillment at their places of employment. This is demonstrated by the unpredictability of the teaching profession and the rise in cases of reported suicides brought on by problems at work leading to a disturbing rise in teachers leaving the profession altogether. The enduring problem of teachers' and school leaders' experience of work remains a policy problem. Systemic responses largely focus on targeted responses to workload, such as reducing the number of teaching hours or providing suites of lesson plans (Carroll & Heffernan, 2022). These responses reveal a simplistic understanding of pressure points within teachers' work, influenced by the poor demarcation between the concepts of workload and work intensification.

Workers will continuously feel satisfied when they perceive that their environment, is in harmony with their responsibilities, and how efficiently workers connect with their proximate work environment, is a predictor for their potential work error, competence and innovativeness, teambuilding, absenteeism, and in due course their tenure at the workplace (Hans, et al., 2013). The psychosocial realms studied in organizational psychology characteristically include mental job demands, job constraints and control, social reinforcements, and extrinsic demands. These aspects which represent the organizational work system are frequently used to describe the "psychosocial work environment" (Smaldino et al., 2019).

Teaching or instructing young or adolescent learners can be exceedingly demanding and hence stressful. This anxiety or tension might cause reduced job satisfaction, fatigue or burnout, and low productivity. While stress is a typical reaction to shocking or hostile episodes it can be extreme when persistent and is often referred to as distress (Seo, et al., 2017). Teacher assignment and workload a frequent sources of distress (Kamal et al. 2021) but there is a dearth of methodical knowledge about stress measurement, its prevalence, and the determinants of stress among teachers.

According to Demerouti et al. (2018), job demands are psychological, institutional, and/or job aspects that encourage people to exert more physical and mental effort. They are frequently associated with physical and psychological outlays. Additionally, it should be noted that several authors defined teacher workload as the number of responsibilities, duties, and tasks carried out by teachers either inside or outside of the workplace. These responsibilities include teaching, attending meetings, creating lesson plans, and conducting research. It affects all professions and is a frequent source of stress for teachers. They spend the entire day pondering this issue and how and when to complete their tasks. Additionally, it encourages educators to work outside of the classroom and beyond their working hours to be productive and able to complete the tasks that are expected of them.

Studies indicate that job demand has a significant effect on the subjective well-being of teachers. Skaalvik (2018) conducted a study on job demand and job resources as predictors of teacher motivation and well-being in Norway. While job resources more moderately predicted higher well-being, a second-order job demand variable strongly predicted lower teacher well-being.

A study carried out in Indonesia by Kurnia and Widigdo (2021), aimed at exploring the effects of work-life balance, and job demand on employee wellbeing and performance. The study adopted the explanatory research design. The study used saturated sampling (census). The findings concluded that the job demand had a positive and significant effect on employee's well-being but had a negative effect on employees' performance. The higher workload demands may lead to stress, which would lower employee welfare. Further, Employees who were subjected to intense and protracted work demands experienced psychological exhaustion and alienation from their jobs, both of which had a negative impact on their well-being. The findings indicate that work demands had a detrimental impact on the welfare of employees. It's true because if the work demand expects the teacher to do more than he can attain, psychologically the teacher becomes stressed and may not be productive hence the negative impact on the well-being of teachers.

Noermijati and Ratnawati (2023) investigated how social support and job burnout affected how much work demands affected workers' output. The study made use of the 131 survey responses that came from a state-owned banking organization in Malang, India. The results show that job burnout among employees is directly impacted by high job demand. Additional research revealed that social support plays a part in amplifying the impact of job demand, which results in a decline in workers' productivity. Social support will enable workers to meet job demands without compromising the performance they are developing.

This study is relevant to the current study because it talks about how lessening job demand with social support can increase employee performance in an organization.

A study on when a high workload is bad for teachers' well-being was carried out by Jerim and Sims (2021) in the United States. Cross-sectional research design and correlational research methodology were used in the study. The study looked at relationship management among teachers in the United States as well as the workload and well-being of teachers concerning age. A three-part questionnaire and standardized tools were used to gather the data. The results demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between a heavy workload and poor teacher wellbeing. The current study, which aims to determine how the school environment affects teachers' well-being, benefits from the attention that Jerem and Sims' study gave to workload and teacher wellbeing.

It is equally clear that significant efforts have been made to discover the role of job demand on teacher's well-being. Mohamed et al. (2020) conducted a study in Egypt to evaluate the role of job demand, job resources, and work-life balance among academicians. The study aimed to review the academician perception of their ability to balance between their work and life. The study used the JD-R model to find the relationship between job demand,

job resources, and work-life balance. This study is relevant to the current study because it looks at job demand and work-life balance which is a necessity to any teacher hence positive well-being.

In Tanzania, Onyango (2022) carried out a study to investigate the effect of the shortage of teachers on job performance in public secondary schools in Geita District. The study used a descriptive case study as part of a mixed research methodology. The secondary schools in the Geita District made up the study's population. A single questionnaire and an interview guide were used to gather data, and inter-rater reliability was employed by the researcher to help guarantee the accuracy of the research instruments. This study sheds some light that when there is a teacher shortage in a school environment the job demand goes up on the available teachers hence these teachers end up overworking themselves leading to poor well-being for individual persons.

Studies have looked at secondary school teachers' job demand and their wellbeing. Odisa et al. (2021) conducted a study on the influence of work-life balance practices on teacher's levels of job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Nairobi, Kenya. The equity theory of motivation was used. The study's survey design was descriptive. Questionnaires and an interview schedule were used to gather data. The findings of the study were, that teachers felt overwhelmed with the workload which led to rising levels of stress.

Tallam and Kiplangat (2020) conducted research in the Nakuru West Sub-County, Kenya, to find out how public secondary school teachers felt about their jobs and workload. The study employed a descriptive research design with a target population of 326 teachers chosen from nine public secondary school teachers in Nakuru West Sub County. Then, to obtain a sample size of 150 respondents, stratified random sampling was employed. A structured questionnaire guide was used to collect the data, and both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze the results. Because teachers who are happy in their jobs will have positive well-being, this study, which focuses on job demand and teachers' satisfaction, is relevant to the current study.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A correlational research design was used in this study. The correlation design was used to establish the relationships between psychological job demand and the subjective well-being of teachers in the Kisii central sub-county, Kenya. The method allows the researcher to clearly and easily see if there is a relationship between variables, which can then be displayed in a graphical form.

Target population:

The target population is the total population from which a sample could be taken using survey data (McLeod, 2019). Kisii Central Sub-County's public secondary schools were the study's target population. Records at the Kisii Central Sub-County Education Office (2024) show that there were 40 public secondary schools in the Kisii Central Sub-County and that there were 716 teachers employed by TSC overall. As a result, the total population for the study was 716 teachers.

The sample size was chosen using the stratified sampling technique, simple random sampling technique, and purposive sampling technique. According to Best and Kahn (2006), purposive sampling helps the researcher build a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs. Using stratified sampling, a sample of 12 schools was chosen from the Sub-County's 40 schools. Because Best and Kahn (2000) contend that 30% of the target population is sufficient to generalize the results, twelve secondary schools were included in the sample. The population in the 12 schools was 378 teachers and the Yamane's formula was used to determine the sample size. Therefore, 194 participants in total made up the sample size for this study, of which 194 were teachers chosen at random from a group of 378 after being divided into male and female participants for representational purposes.

Research Instruments

Standardized questionnaires were employed in the study. Since questionnaires collected information from a wide sample, they were used (Orodho, 2003). Data from 194 teachers was gathered via the questionnaires.

Demand-Control-Support Questionnaire

The work environment was assessed in the study using the DCS questionnaire, which was developed in 1990 and was based on the DCS model by Karasek and Theorell (Mauss et al., 2018). The three variables were presented in 17 items that made up the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with each of the five statements that made up the item on a five-point Likert scale. The DCS questionnaire used in this study included items that were already available and validated in English, Swedish, German, and Finnish, among other languages (Mauss et al., 2018). Mureith (2020) conducted research in Kenya using the DCS questionnaire.

The Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire

The 24-scale standardized instrument by Ed Diener (1984) was used in the study. It was created as a tool to gauge mental health. The BBC Subjective Well-being Scale (abbreviated as BBC-SWB) is a new instrument designed to measure respondents' subjective experiences in a variety of domains that are often included in well-being definitions. This study presents the psychometric qualities using 5-point Likert-style responses and tests the hypothesis that the scale measures the three basic dimensions of well-being: psychological, physical health, and relationships.

Ethical considerations

The researcher received an introduction letter from the university before starting the data collection process, which instructed them to apply for permission from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) office. Then, using the NACOSTI permit no (730020), the Kisii County Commissioner's office gave permission. After that, the researcher used identification letters from the County Commissioner's Office to obtain permission from the Ministry of Education's Director's Office in Kisii County, NACOSTI, and the university. The researcher had access to principals from the sampled schools using all of these identity letters to obtain a permit before gathering teacher data. The investigator went in person to the sampled schools and provided the questionnaires to the responders to complete within the prearranged time frame.

The participants' consent was obtained, and the researcher made sure they were willing to participate. When conducting the study, the researcher kept ethical factors like respondent confidentiality and privacy in mind. It was explained to the participants that the responses they provided would be used in research. This was made clear by the researcher. Participants were required to use codes on the questionnaire instead of writing their names to maintain participant anonymity. After the university has approved this thesis, the researcher will destroy all of the completed questionnaires and recorded research data, which have been kept in safe custody.

Data analysis and presentation

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data. Pearson correlational analysis was done to establish the relationship between psychological job demand and the subjective well-being of teachers in Kisii Central Sub-County, Kenya.

RESULTS

Sample characteristics

The study indicated that males were the most participants at 63.4% compared to females at 36.6%.

The study findings showed that the majority of participants were aged 25-34 at 58.1%, followed by age 35-39 at 21.05% lastly, age 40 and above at 20.04%. This indicates that a significant portion of the respondents were relatively young or early-career teachers.

The largest proportion of respondents, 79 individuals (42.5%), fall into the category of 0-4 years of service. This suggests that the majority of the respondents are relatively new to the teaching profession. Of the teachers, 59 respondents (31.7%) have been in service for 5-9 years. This shows that a moderate number of mid-career

teachers are within the sample. A smaller number of respondents, 29 individuals (15.6%) have 10-14 years of service. 9 individuals (4.8%) have 15-19 years of service indicating few long-serving teachers in the sample. The smallest proportion of 10 individuals (5.4%) have 20 years and above showing a limited number of highly experienced teachers in the sample. In normal circumstances, the more one is experienced in a certain field the more amplification of knowledge in the same aspect.

Psychological Job Demand

The table presents a summary of descriptive statistics from a survey conducted among 186 respondents, focusing on various aspects of their work demands and conditions. The statistics provided include the minimum and maximum scores, the mean (average) response for each item, and the standard deviation, offering insights into the general trends and variability in the respondents' perceptions.

Table 1. Psychological job demand

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
my job requires me to work very fast	186	1.00	5.00	3.7204	.92258
the work I do is quite intense	186	1.00	5.00	3.9194	.91767
the work I do requires a lot of effort	186	1.00	5.00	4.1828	.83110
I have sufficient time to perform all my work tasks	186	1.00	5.00	3.3172	1.13967
there are conflicting demands that often occur in my work	186	1.00	5.00	3.5269	1.14459
Valid N (listwise)	186				

Table 1 represents the average response to each statement: My job requires me to work very fast: Mean = 3.7204, Sd= 0.92258. On average, respondents somewhat agree that their job requires them to work fast. The work I do is quite intense: Mean = 3.9194, Sd= 0.91767. Respondents generally agree that their work is intense. The work I do requires a lot of effort: Mean = 4.1828, Sd=0.83110. Respondents strongly agree that their work requires a lot of effort. I have sufficient time to perform all my work tasks: Mean = 3.3172, Sd= 1.13967. Respondents are slightly above neutral, suggesting some agree and some disagree that they have sufficient time. There are conflicting demands that often occur in my work: Mean = 3.5269, Sd=1.14459. Respondents somewhat agree that they often face conflicting demands at work. Respondents generally agree that their work is fast-paced, intense, and effortful. There is a slight tendency for respondents to feel they do not have sufficient time to complete their work, and they somewhat agree that conflicting demands occur frequently. The variation in responses is moderate, with some items showing more variability in perceptions than others.

Subjective wellbeing

Statistics for various measures of subjective well-being among 186 respondents are given as follows:

Table 2. Subjective wellbeing

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
psychological well-being scale items	186	2.00	5.00	3.9384	.62666
physical health and well-being scale items	186	2.00	5.00	3.6039	.59245

relationship scale	186	2.40	5.00	3.9108	.61617
Valid N (listwise)	186				

Psychological Well-Being Scale Items: Mean = 3.9384, Sd= 0.62666. On average, respondents rated their psychological well-being close to 4 on a 5-point scale, indicating generally positive perceptions of their psychological state. Physical Health and Well-Being Scale Items: Mean = 3.6039, Sd= 0.59245. The average score is slightly above the midpoint, suggesting that respondents generally perceive their physical health as fairly good. Relationship Scale: Mean = 3.9108, Sd= 0.61617 The mean score is also close to 4, indicating that respondents generally perceive their relationships positively.

The overall mean scores suggest that respondents have generally positive perceptions of their psychological well-being, physical health, and relationships, with all average scores approaching 4 on a 5-point scale. The standard deviations show moderate variability across all three scales, indicating that while many respondents share similar perceptions, there are some differences in individual experiences. The relatively narrow range of scores (from 2.00 or 2.40 to 5.00) suggests that respondents tend to rate these aspects of well-being in the mid-to-high range, with fewer extreme low or high scores.

Relationship between job demand and subjective well-being.

The section provides a correlation between psychological job demand and various aspects of subjective well-being, specifically focusing on psychological aspects, physical health, and relationship aspects. The table uses Pearson correlation coefficients to measure the strength and direction of the linear relationship between psychological job demand and each well-being variable.

Table 3. Correlation between psychological job demand and subjective well-being variables

		Psychological aspect	physical health	relationship aspect
Psychological job demand	Pearson correlation	.190	.138	.275
	Sig (2-tailed)	.009	.000	.000
	N	186	186	186

The p-value (p=000) is smaller than the significance level (.000< 0.05). This suggests that subjective well-being and psychological job demand have a weak but positive significant relationship.

DISCUSSIONS

The data suggest that respondents generally perceive their work environment as demanding, with high intensity, fast pace, and significant effort being common themes. These aspects of job demand are crucial as they can impact employee well-being, stress levels, and overall job satisfaction. The variability in responses regarding time sufficiency and conflicting demands points to potential areas for organizational improvement. If some employees are struggling more than others with time management or facing conflicting demands, targeted interventions could help balance workloads or clarify job roles to reduce these issues. The combination of high job demands and mixed perceptions of time sufficiency and conflicting demands may indicate a need for better support systems within the organization, such as time management training, better task prioritization, or clear communication regarding job expectations overall, while respondents generally agree that their work is demanding in various ways, the variability in perceptions around time sufficiency and conflicting demands suggests that not all employees experience these demands uniformly. Addressing these areas could lead to a more balanced and supportive work environment. This is supported by a study by Ali et al. (2020) who found out that teachers in East Coast Malaysia are expected to teach a large number of students in addition to constantly

changing administrative tasks that have an adverse effect on their mental health. They run a significant risk of experiencing stress in maintaining their outstanding academic performance. The results corroborate those of Vanroelen et al. (2018), who found that senior teachers in Belgium experienced negative reactions, including burnout, as a result of workloads related to and unrelated to teaching. This means that the school administrators need to offer teachers recreational activities like time out, team building, and bonding activities to help them relax their minds at the end of each term activities. This is in line with the Self-Determination theory on which this study is grounded. In this theory, people who are motivated tend to be driven by a need to grow and gain fulfillment.

The generally positive scores across all three scales suggest that the respondents enjoy a balanced sense of well-being. Psychological well-being and relationships are particularly strong, which are crucial for overall life satisfaction and mental health. While physical health is perceived positively, it scores slightly lower than psychological well-being and relationships. This could indicate a need for more focus on physical health initiatives within the population, such as wellness programs or health education, to boost this aspect of well-being. The relatively high scores across all dimensions highlight the interconnectedness of psychological well-being, physical health, and relationships. Improvements in one area could potentially lead to improvements in the others, fostering a more holistic sense of well-being. The findings reflect a generally positive state of subjective well-being among respondents, with strong psychological well-being and relationships, and fairly good physical health. The results underscore the importance of maintaining and enhancing these areas to support overall well-being. However, the slightly lower perception of physical health suggests an opportunity for targeted interventions that could improve the overall balance of well-being across these dimensions. This is supported by a study by Yao-Ting Sung (2024) whose results show that social utility motivation, which is indirectly mediated by teacher self-efficacy, has a direct and positive impact on the work environment and professional satisfaction, two dimensions of teacher job satisfaction. On the other hand, teachers' job satisfaction within their profession is directly predicted by their personal utility motivation.

The study established a weak positive relationship between psychological job demands and subjective well-being. This suggests that as psychological job demand increases, subjective well-being also tends to increase slightly. The positive correlation psychological aspect may indicate that individuals who thrive under pressure or find fulfillment in challenging work environments might report higher subjective well-being. The slight positive correlation on physical health might suggest that some psychological job demands could motivate individuals to maintain better physical health, possibly due to the structure and routine that demanding jobs provide. The moderate positive correlation on relationships could imply that individuals with higher psychological job demands might develop stronger relationships, perhaps due to shared experiences, teamwork, or support systems developed in demanding job environments. Other factors, such as job satisfaction, personal resilience, and support systems, might influence these relationships. The findings too are based on a sample of 186 individuals, and generalizations to other populations should be made cautiously, warranting further research to explore these dynamics in more detail. The findings concur with Guglielmi et al. (2016) who had the view that high job demand, can be viewed as a challenge that spurs and creates opportunities for professional advancement. These findings are consistent with those of Goodboy et al. (2017), who discovered that high-strain jobs have high psychological demands. High psychological demands can strain workers in ways that prevent them from performing as effectively and efficiently as they should, Mureith (2022) discovered. On the same note, Mureith maintains that a high psychological burden makes workers doubt their competence, which in turn impairs job satisfaction.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings from the descriptive statistics reveal that respondents generally perceive their work to be demanding, characterized by a fast pace, intensity, and a significant requirement for effort. While most respondents somewhat agree that they can manage their tasks within the available time, there is noticeable variability, indicating that time management may be a challenge for some. Additionally, the presence of conflicting demands is a common experience among the respondents. Overall, these insights suggest that the work environment is perceived as challenging, with varying degrees of pressure and time constraints affecting the workforce.

On subjective well-being -participants in the study generally have positive perceptions of their psychological well-being, physical health, and relationships. The average scores for all three scales are close to 4 on a 5-point scale, indicating that most respondents feel relatively satisfied in these areas of their lives.

Implications

Psychologists would likely advocate for proactive measures to support employee well-being, enhance job satisfaction, and maintain productivity.

Given the overall high demands and the presence of conflicting demands, psychologists might recommend that organizations implement strategies to reduce stress and enhance well-being.

Psychologists might suggest that personalized interventions or support systems could be beneficial to address these individual differences in coping resilience.

Psychologists would be concerned about the signs of strain which are potential for burnout, especially since high-intensity and high-effort work environments are common contributors to chronic stress and exhaustion.

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