

## **Strategies Employed by Principals to Overcome Stress in Performance of their work in Secondary Schools in Kisumu County**

Sophia Atieno Ogalo, Florence Odera and Collins Ogogo  
Email: [sophiaogalo@yahoo.com](mailto:sophiaogalo@yahoo.com) / [oderaflorence@yahoo.com](mailto:oderaflorence@yahoo.com)  
Rongo University

### **Abstract**

Globally, there has been an outcry on stress by the principals in the management of public secondary schools in Kisumu County, Kenya. Stress comes about when the principal is subjected to unusual situations such as students' strike, destruction of school properties, teachers transfer or when there are uncalled for demand on the principal and teachers absenteeism. Principals who are stressed cannot provide effective leadership and management. Therefore, there is need to examine problems of principals' stress, strategic management and planning to implement. The objective of this study was to identify strategies employed by the principals to overcome stress in their work performance in schools. The study adopted the Cognitive Activation Theory of Stress (CATS) developed by Levine Ursin (1991). The target population was two hundred and twenty principals, two hundred and twenty deputy principals and seven Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (SCQASOs) in the county. Stratified random sampling was used to select schools, while purposive, stratified and simple random sampling methods were used to select both principals and the deputy principals in various categories of schools. Saturated sampling technique was used to select Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers. Instruments for data collection included questionnaire, document analysis and interview schedule. Questionnaire was used to collect information from both principals and the deputy principals and interview schedule was used to collect data from the Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers. Document analysis was employed to gather information about the principals' transfers, category of schools and performance of the students in the national examinations from the Teachers Service Commission and the Ministry of Education department respectively. The research design was descriptive survey that used qualitative analysis and quantitative statistics in analyzing the data. The results were presented qualitatively into emerging themes and then reported in verbatim form, while quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, mean, percentage and standard deviation using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Programme (SPSS). The study found out that the strategies that were used by the principals to overcome stress included: positive attitude towards self and others, effective management of time, delegation of duties to the staff, seeking support from other school stakeholders, sharing a meal with the family, socializing with the staff members, control of anger, leisure activities, spending time with students at free time, seeking medical help, seeking counseling, keeping praise files, and physical exercise respectively. The study recommended that the government of Kenya through (TSC) should employ more trained counselors and locate them at strategic places like schools, within each sub-county to help principals in solving stress issues and teachers to be trained on leadership in order to handle administrative duties amicably.

**Key words:** Stress, strategies, principals, secondary schools, overcome, Kisumu County

## **Introduction and Literature Review**

The term stress is defined in different ways by various scholars and researchers. Brimm (2001) describes stress as any action or situation that places physical or psychological demands on an individual. Kyriacou (2001) also describes stress as negative emotion, such as anger, anxiety, frustration or depression resulting from some negative aspects of one's work as an employee. Further, Yambo, Kindiki and Tuitoek (2012) state that the term stress is undue pressure put on someone, which is beyond his/her coping abilities. Therefore, stress is viewed as pressure or worry caused by the problems in somebody's life (Turnbull et al., 2010). Similarly, Bett (2016) also states that accumulated stress may lead to burnout. Burnout is the condition of someone who is mentally, emotionally or physically exhausted from demands of jobs. The medical dictionary (2012) further adds that people with burnout do not have adequate skills to cope or to adapt to what is causing the burnout. Burnout is most frequently measured using Maslach's Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Burnout is mediated through various active and passive coping mechanisms and is a result of the accumulation of positive and negative oriented emotional responses that have risen through coping mechanisms.

Globally, stress has been identified as the greatest obstacle to achieving goals in life (Wells, 2013). Stress may cause fear in an individual which may lead the capacity to derail people on their track and reduce defeat regularly (Kimani, 2015). In 2008, report from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics in USA, revealed that the increasing demand placed on principals lead to a greater stress. It was reported that 35 percent of the 415,000 education administrators in the United States worked more than 40 hours per week (United States Bureau of labor, 2008). Yambo et al. (2012) asserts that principals of public secondary schools are also stressed up to the point that some of them have committed suicide, quitted the teaching profession while others continue to be leaders of their schools but sleep on their jobs (Yambo, et al., 2012). According to Campbell et al. (2007), the 12 A team carried out a research in USA on how stress affect leadership with 230 respondents (principals), they found out that eighty eight percent (88%) of leaders reported that too much work was a primary source of stress in their lives and that having a leadership role increases the level of stress (Campbell, et al., 2007). The team further found that more than two-thirds of surveyed leaders believed that their stress level was higher than it was five years ago (Campbell et al., 2007). This finding concurs with that of Philips, Sen and McNamee (2007) who found that secondary school principals have a higher level of stress when working with students discipline and allocating educational resources. The causes of stress that were most reported included parents, workload, government initiatives and time frame for changes (Philips, et al., 2007).

A report on secondary education by the World Bank (1999) revealed that the education system, the world over have been ineffective and have failed to address the matter of principals' stress and burnout in secondary schools. This failure has led to less effort towards building a stronger human resource base which is not valuable for schools' development. Therefore, it is important for this study to identify strategies of coping with stress by the principals so that they can perform their work appropriately and effectively in schools. In Kenya, secondary school principals have been experiencing some challenges such as students' unrest, bullying among students, poor performance of the students, low salary payment, and frequent uncalled for transfers which are quite unpleasant and cause stress to the principals (Abuga, 2018).

A survey report, conducted in 2016 / 2017 by Trendy Consulting International Limited, on customer and employees satisfaction, revealed that principals and teachers of secondary schools are unhappy due to lack of motivation and low pay despite putting more effort into their work (Education Staff Reporter, 2017). The report further found that teacher promotions as per the laid down policy and scheme of service is not appealing to the majority of principals since they have observed

anomalies when it comes to upgrading of teachers. That is, there is unfairness, lack of transparency or lack of professionalism in the recruitment of teachers and the deployment of the principals across the counties. This kind of situation triggers stress among the school principals in the country.

According to Turnbull et al. (2010), strategy is described as the process of planning something or putting a plan into operation in a skillful way. Secondary school principals usually get involved in doing a lot of work at school which may include teaching students, being the secretary to the BoM, supervisor of the school, chairs the staff meeting among others. This kind of work load may cause undue pressure on them which may lead to stress. When the principals are stressed, they may have their own ways of controlling and overcoming stress, depending on one's personality, values, skills, situations and circumstances.

Koome (2007) argued that learning to control responses of stress and to get out of one's own way, has saved companies' money, increased production, encouraged creativity, enables teams to communicate more effectively, reduced the anxieties which surround the process of change, increased the pace of professional learning and development and even reduced accidents and harassment claims. Any organization needs to save money, reduce turn over, increase sales and productivity or improve the quality of work life. It should give consideration to the return on investment of stress management coaching or training.

It has been observed that some principals who are stressed resort to bullying of the employees. Hoe et al. (1999) surveyed English teachers and found out that 35% reported to have been bullied by their managers (principals) in the last 5 years, as opposed to an average of 24% across all occupational sectors. Cooper interpreted this in terms of principals failing to cope with work load and resorting to bullying as a maladaptive coping strategy. According to Ryan et al. (2015), principals can manage stress by keeping "praise files" for keeping positive note from parents, students, colleagues and other school stakeholders. When the principal is stressed, he or she will refer to the file, read the appreciated notes and feel relieved of stress. Praise file is also known as kudos file. The level of stress may also be reduced by getting involved in leisure activities. He further explains that leisure satisfactions are the positive feeling of contentment that results from meeting personal needs through leisure activities. A way of relieving stress is to participate in leisure activities outside the formal working environment which include engaging in a hobby, exercising, trying out new things just for the fun of it and can help increase relaxation prior to tackling a particularly difficult task. When the principal is engaging in a leisure activity, he/she should be fully engaged in leisure activity so that he/she can experience the highest emotional of leisure satisfaction. The purpose is defeated if the principal/manager is still obsessing or stressing about while engaging in leisure activity Ryan et al. (2015).

Stress can also be managed by the principals through proper time management. This means that the school principals should ensure that school block-time table is prepared on time to guide the teachers and the students on what time to teach and learn respectively. He/she should schedule his/her daily activities in school to ensure that each and every activity is attended to. Time management is a cluster of behaviors and that facilitate productivity. Ryan et al. (2015) state that principals who are good planners can eliminate stress easily. The principal can break down larger tasks into smaller ones and creativity and schedule for achieving each small task, makes things more manageable (Ryan et al., 2015 & Kimani, 2015). One study showed that females are better at managing their time than males and felt in better control, set and prioritized goals, and use organized approaches to tasks and work space. It is interesting to note that even though females had a better approach of time management, they still experienced more "self-imposed" stress than males because they do sweat, stuttered, and experience more headaches often due to stress than males. Delegation of duty is also another way of managing stress by school principals. Social support is the

way of being assisted by others at work. The principal should seek help from other staff members, BoM, parents, committee, sponsors and Ministry of Education in order to run their schools well. If the main stakeholders cannot give social support to the principal, then he /she will experience more stress (Fullan, 2001).

The above literature gives an overview of what entails strategies to overcome stress by the school principals in other regions. It is evident that none of the literature done in Kenya has addressed strategies employed by the principals to overcome stress in the management of public secondary schools in Kisumu County. It is against this background information that the study intends to establish strategies employed by the principals to overcome stress in the management of public secondary schools in Kisumu County.

### **Statement of the problem**

Principals in public secondary schools face a lot of challenges in the leadership of their schools that sometimes put a lot of demand and pressure on their work and sometimes make one to be stressed up (Koome, 2007). Yet, many of them are not aware of how to manage stress and carry out their work effectively. (Fleet, 1988) states that managers of institutions should device strategic planning to guide them in general leadership. Such strategies include human resource and financial strategies. However, due to lack of information on strategic planning by the principals to manage stress, there was need to establish strategies that the principals use to overcome stress in their work performance in public secondary schools in Kisumu County, Kenya.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of the study was to identify the strategies employed by the principals to overcome stress in their work performance in public secondary schools in Kisumu County.

### **Methodology**

The study used descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey design depicts the state of affairs as it exists (Kothari, 2004). Orodho (2008) also noted that descriptive survey allows the researcher to collect information, summarize, interpret and present for the purpose of clarification by interview or administering questionnaires to a sample of individuals. This research design was also suitable for the study because the researcher was not able to have control over the variables and only reported what had happened in the field. Consequently, research design was chosen for the study due to the fact that it was appropriate for collecting both qualitative and quantitative data from the respondents. The research design was employed in the study because it enabled the researcher to describe strategies used by the principals to overcome stress in public secondary schools in Kisumu County.

### **Location of the Study and Population**

The study was conducted in Kisumu County which comprised of 7 sub-counties namely; Nyakach, Muhoroni, Nyando, Kisumu East, Kisumu Central, Kisumu West and Seme. Kisumu County is situated within nyanza region, Kenya. The study was carried out in Kisumu County because it is an area in which some principals have quitted principal ship due to stress (Wanzala, 2015). Population of the study comprised of 220 principals, 220 deputy principals and 7 Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (SQASOs) in Kisumu County. The population provided sample size of the respondents who participated in the study. These participants were selected for the study because they have reliable information about principals' stress in public schools in the region. Population of the study is displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Study Population**

Population	Number
Principals	220
Deputy Principals	220
SCQASOs	7
Total	447

**Sample and Sampling Techniques**

Kumar (2011) states that a sample is a sub-set of a population for the study. The sample size for the principals and the deputy principals was calculated proportionately using 30% of each category of the respondents, as agreed by Mugenda and Mugenda (2009). Purposive, stratified and simple random sampling methods were used to sample 66 principals and 66 deputy principals of public secondary schools. Saturated sampling method was also employed to sample 7 Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (SQASOs) for the study because their number was small and could be well managed in the study (Cozby, 2001). Therefore, the total number of all sampled participants in the study was 139. The sampled participants in the study is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Population Sample**

Participants	Total Population	No. Selected	Percentage
Principals	220	66	30
Deputy principals	220	66	30
SQASOs	7	7	100
Total	447	139	

**Instruments for Data Collection**

The research instruments which were employed for data collection included interview schedule, questionnaire and document analysis.

**Questionnaire**

Open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires were used to collect information from the principals' and deputy principals' opinions and attitudes. Cozby (2001) states that the use of questionnaire guarantees confidentiality and can be administered to a large number of respondents. In addition, Mugenda and Mugenda (2009) state that questionnaire is economical to use in terms of time and money.

**Principals' Questionnaire**

The principals' questionnaires consisted of two sections which were A and B sections. Section A provided demographical information of the principals such as gender, age, academic qualifications, professional qualifications, experience in the teaching profession and job groups. Section B covered the areas related to the research objective, strategies used by the principals to overcome stress in schools. It consists of both closed-ended and open - ended questions to be answered.

**Interview Schedule**

In order to gather in-depth information from the Sub – County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers, an interview schedule was used. The interview schedule was not divided into sections. It

consists of closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questions covered the areas related to the research objectives. The in-depth interview was selected because interview questions involved face to face interactions which helped in obtaining data required to meet specific objectives of the study. It was also flexible and in-depth information could be realized during the interview session due to the established rapport between the interviewer and interviewees (Cresswell, 2013).

### **Document Analysis**

Cresswell (2013) describes document analysis as the critical examination of public or private recorded information related to the issue under investigation. The instrument was selected for use by the researcher because it could help to obtain un-obstructive information at the pleasure of the researcher without interrupting the researched. The method was also useful to access data at their convenient time and allowed the researcher to obtain data that were thoughtful in that the informants had given attention to compiling them (Cresswell, 2013). Therefore, in order to get more information about the school principals in Kisumu County, the researcher visited the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST) offices at the county level and requested for the legal documents about the school principals and secondary schools within the county respectively. At the Teachers Service Commission office, the researcher got legal information about the transfer, death, early retirement and deployment of principals. The Ministry of Education provided the researcher with the policy guideline documents about the schools activities and performance of the candidates in KCSE exams from 2011 to 2017 in Kisumu County. During the examination period, the researcher identified the total number of all schools, their names, the type and the category of secondary schools in each sub-county in the region. Also, the number of students (males and females) who sat for KCSE exams and their performance mean grade were produced for the analysis

### **Data Analysis**

According to Marzano (2012), data analysis is the process of systematically editing, coding and arranging research data in a way that it can be understood by the researcher and be presented to others what has been discovered. Gray (2009) points out that data analysis is a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming and modeling data with the goal of discovering useful information, suggesting conclusions and supporting decision making. In this study, descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data quantitatively. Descriptive statistics was selected due to the fact that it could enable the researcher to identify and quantify the relationships between variables and also examined the qualities of a single set of data. Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed as follows:

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

Gray (2009) states that quantitative data analysis involves the use of numbers and what they stand for as the materials for the analysis. Therefore, quantitative data obtained from the closed-ended questions of the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as the calculation of mean, percentages and standard deviation. To get the information from the school principals and the deputies, a five – point Likert - scale was employed. The scale was numbered as: 5 – Strongly Agree; 4 – Agree; 3 – Undecided; 2- Disagree; and 1 – Strongly Disagree. Likert - scale was selected because it was more reliable since respondents were able to answer each statement included in the instrument and it further provided more information than other scales such as Thurston – type scale (Kothari, 2004). The information collected through Likert – Scale was edited, coded, classified and then analyzed through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS

Version 22) at the set value of 0.05 level of significance (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2009) and the findings were presented in Tables and bar graphs.

### Qualitative Data Analysis

Kombo and Tromp (2006) state that qualitative data analysis involves ways of discerning, examining, comparing and contrasting, and interpreting meaningful patterns or themes. That is, it deals in words and is guided by fewer universal rules and standardized procedures than statistical analysis. Data which were collected from the interview schedule and the open – ended questions of the questionnaire were analyzed qualitatively. The data obtained from the interview were written down by the researcher and was organized into themes and sub-themes in accordance with the research objectives after which the conclusions were made by the use of coefficient correlation analysis and reported in the verbatim form. The findings of the research was presented in accordance to the research objective. That is, strategies employed by the principals to overcome stress in their work performance in public secondary schools in Kisumu County.

## Results and Discussion

### Background Information

The research findings were based on the background information of participants on stress that affects their work in public secondary schools in Kisumu County. The results are presented in Figure 1 and 2.

### Respondents' Biographic Information

**Figure 1. Gender Distribution of the Respondents**

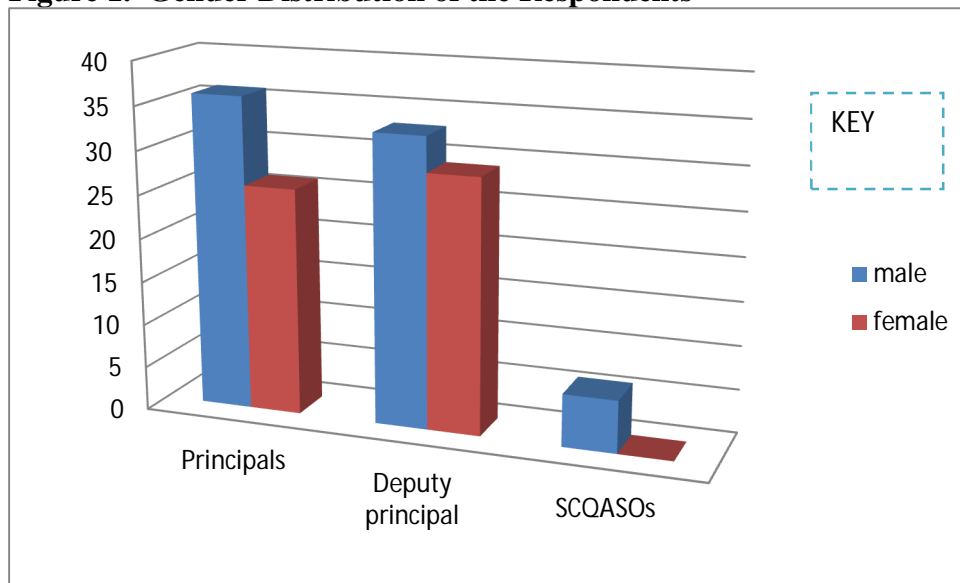
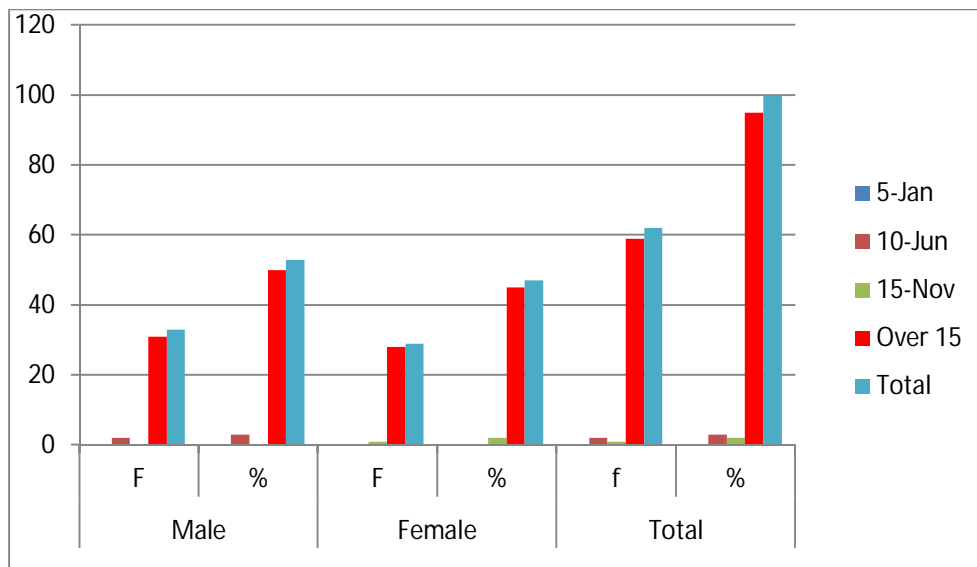


Figure 1 indicates that 36(58.1%) male principals and 26(41.9%) female principals participated in the study. Similarly, 33(53.2%) male deputy principals and 29(46.8%) female deputy principals participated and 7(100%) Sub –County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers participated in the study. This indicates that the majority of secondary schools in the County were managed by

male principals and male deputy principals. The fact that majority of schools were managed by male principals and male deputy principals, could possibly be because most secondary schools in the County are boys only or mixed. It has also been observed that in the county, all 7 Sub County offices are occupied by only male Quality Assurance and Standards Officers. This information about gender is quite necessary because gender of the principals and deputies may influence one's work performance due to stress in their work places. Although the majority of the respondents were male, both gender were given the opportunity to participate in the study, thus there was fairness in the selection of the respondents by the researcher. Therefore, it is suggested that a third rule of gender should be employed in the county for the post of Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers for fair selection. The respondents were requested to give information about their ages. The information they gave is shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Age of the Principals**



The researcher explored the ages of principals who took part in the study since it was considered as an important influencing factor on the respect of principals' transfer and control of anger due to maturity in age, hence may reduce stress level of the school principals.

The findings in Figure 2 indicated that majority of male and female principals in Kisumu County were generally mature. This is clearly shown as most male and female principals fall under the age bracket of 41-60 years. That is, 36(50%) male principals and 26(42) female principals were in the age bracket of 41-50 and 51-60 respectively. The result further revealed that none of the principals was falling under the age bracket of 21-30 and 31-40. This shows that the majority of the principals in the county were mature enough and could manage stress related issues in schools amicably through control of anger and networking with other school principals in other counties, apart from the principals within this region.

The finding of the study further indicated that even though both male and female principals were old, more male principals were older than female principals. This was confirmed by 19(31%) male principals in the age group of 51-60 years while the female principals 12(19%) were in the same age group. This indicated that more male principals would retire earlier than their female counter



parts hence, more deputy principals especially male ones should be deployed by the Teachers Service Commission to replace the leadership positions of the outgoing principals. This means that, deputy principals' data bank should be prepared early enough by the Teachers Service Commission to avoid issues relating to the replacement of principals when they retire. The finding also indicated that Teachers Service Commission (TSC) only promotes mature and knowledgeable deputy principals to headship position for better school management.

### Strategies Employed by the Principals to Overcome Stress in Schools

According to the Oxford Dictionary (Turnbull, et al., 2010), the term strategy is described as a plan that is intended to achieve a particular purpose or the process of planning something or putting a plan into operation in a skillful way. The participants were also asked to state the strategies they employ to overcome stress in performance of work in their schools. The respondents were required to respond to the questionnaire by providing their answers by indicating their level of agreement according to the likert scale level of agreement. In order to establish strategies used by the principals, the study adopted the use of seventeen itemized-Likert scale questionnaire that was administered to the principals, using the responses; very frequently used (5), often used (4), sometimes used (3), rarely used (2) never used (1). The principals were asked to rate the frequency of use by ticking the most appropriate degree based on the actual situation in their schools. The responses of the principals were analyzed using descriptive statistics in form of frequency counts, percentages, mean scores and standard deviation, and the results of analysis obtained from the responses presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Responses of Principals on the Strategies they use to Overcome Stress**

Statement	NU	RU	SU	OU	VFU	Mean	Std. Dev.
I opt for resigning from principal ship.	31(50.0%)	13(21.0%)	13(21.0%)	1(1.6%)	4(6.5%)	1.94	1.172
I think of quitting the teaching profession.	30(48.4%)	7(11.3%)	15(24.2%)	4(6.5%)	6(9.7%)	2.18	1.361
I opt for committing suicide.	44(71.0%)	10(16.1%)	3(4.8%)	3(4.8%)	2(3.2%)	1.53	1.020
I do physical exercises.	7(11.3%)	6(9.7%)	18(29.0)	17(27.4%)	14(22.6%)	3.40	1.260
I socialize with the staff members.	1(1.6%)	3(4.8%)	16(25.8%)	28(45.2%)	14(22.6%)	3.82	.897
I Seek professional help from counselors.	13(21.0%)	11(17.7%)	13(21.0%)	17(27.4%)	8(12.9%)	2.94	1.353
I delegate duties to the staff members.	1(1.6%)	3(4.8%)	11(17.7%)	26(41.9%)	21(33.9%)	4.02	.932
I Control my anger.	3(4.8%)	6(9.7%)	10(16.1%)	24(38.7%)	19(30.6%)	3.81	1.128
I develop positive attitude towards self and others.	1(1.6%)	2(3.2%)	7(11.3%)	28(45.2%)	24(38.7%)	4.16	.872

I network with other principals.	3(4.8%)	2(3.2%)	0(0.0%)	24(38.7%)	33(53.2%)	4.32	1.004
I share a meal with the family.	2(3.2%)	6(9.7%)	10(16.1%)	22(35.5%)	22(35.5%)	3.90	1.097
I effectively management of time.	1(1.6%)	3(4.8%)	5(8.1%)	29(46.8%)	24(38.7%)	4.16	.891
I seek support from other school stakeholders.	1(1.6%)	6(9.7%)	9(14.5%)	26(41.9%)	20(32.3%)	3.94	1.006
I seeking medical help.	10(16.1%)	11(17.7%)	13(21.0%)	21(33.9)	7(11.3%)	3.06	1.279
I go for a nature walk.	6(9.7%)	13(21.0%)	10(16.1%)	17(27.4%)	16(25.8%)	3.39	1.335
I keep praise files in the office.	14(22.6%)	14(22.6%)	22(35.5%)	8(12.9%)	4(6.5%)	2.58	1.167
I spend time with students at their free time.	8(12.9%)	6(9.7%)	18(29.0%)	21(33.9%)	9(14.5%)	3.27	1.217

**Source: Survey Data (2019)**

**Key: 1-Never Used, 2-Rarely Used, 3-Sometimes Used, 4-Often Used, 5-Very Frequently Used and SD-Standard Deviation.**

From Table 3 it can be observed that strategies that were highly used by the school principals to curb stress included socializing with the staff members (M=3.82, D=.897), delegation of duties (M=4.02, D=.932), control of anger (M=3.81, D=1.128), developing positive attitude towards self and others (M=4.32, D=1.004), sharing a meal with the family (M=3.90, D=1.097), effective management of time (M=4.16, D=.891) and lastly seeking support from other school stakeholders (Mean=3.94, D=1.006).

Nevertheless, Table 3 also indicates that strategies which were moderately used included physical exercise (M=2.40, D=1.260) seeking professional help/counseling (M=2.94, D=1.353), seeking medical help (M=3.06, D=1.279), Leisure activity (M=3.39, D=1.335), keeping praise files (M=2.58, D=1.167) and spending time with students at free time (M=3.27, D=1.217). The strategies which were of low use included resigning from leadership position (M=1.94, D=1.172), quitting the teaching profession (M=2.18, D=1.361) and committing suicide (M=1.53, D=1).

These findings concur with that of Ryan et al. (2015) who carried out a research on principals' stress in USA that revealed some of the best strategies that the majority of the school principals used to curb stress included keeping praise files, spending free time with students, leisure activities/nature walk, sharing a meal with the family, effective management of time, networking with other principals, physical exercise, breaking off duty for some time and maintenance of positive attitude towards self and others at all time (Ryan et al., 2015).

Delegation of duty was established as highly used strategy in controlling stress. The mean rating of 4.02 meant that delegation of duty to other staff members by the school principals was highly used. This finding agrees with that of Wells (2013) who noted that the job of a principal is a job too big for one person, thus need to be delegated to yield quality work. That is, the principal of a school has a variety of responsibilities which include; classroom teaching, dealing with students' discipline,

supervision of the curriculum implementation, dealing with teachers' welfare among others. The principal would be overwhelmed with all these tasks hence need to be assisted by other staff members.

Similarly, effective management of time was also employed by the majority of the principals as its mean rate was (4.16). This finding concurs with that of secretary of Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and other team members who carried out a research on TSC Journey towards Transformation of the teaching service in Kenya, observed that planning and effective management of time among teachers, financial literacy and behavioral attributes are low, thus has resulted into some gaps in the teaching profession. This is a clear indication that if time can be managed effectively, appropriate use of finance and good behavior of the teachers, principals, and students, quality work can be realized in education sector. It has been observed in Kenya that teachers take little time with students in class which denies them enough time to complete the syllabus on time (Gicobi, 2015). As a result, performance of the students in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination has been on a downward trend. For instance, in the year 2017, only 11.3% candidates obtained a mean grade of C+ and above compared to 15.4% and 32% scored on the previous years 2016 and 2015 respectively (KNEC Report, 2017).

Table 3 further indicated that principals were keeping praise files (Kudos) and were using them for stress relief. It was used moderately at a mean of 2.58. This finding agrees with that of Ryan et al. (2015) who found out that principals used "praise files" for keeping positive notes which the principal could refer to whenever he was stressed. In schools, there are several activities which are going on, on a daily basis. Both academic and outdoor activities such as games and sports that may yield good presents such as certificates, trophies and positive notes got from the parents, students, colleagues due to the academic achievements of the school. All these may relieve stress from school principals (Ryan et al., 2015).

Table 3 indicated that socialization with the staff members when the principal is stressed was found to be one of the strategies which was being employed to curb stress among the school principals. The mean rating of 3.82 showed that the method was highly used in stress management. This finding agrees with that of Essang (1997) who carried out a study on the extent of the influence of interpersonal factors on administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals in Cross River and AKWA-Ibom States of Nigeria, who revealed that healthy interpersonal relationships with the teachers and other school stakeholders tend to be helpful for administrative effectiveness of secondary school principals, since it relieves leaders from stress. Through socialization, the principal will be able to open up and share his problems with the teachers and other school stakeholders to help him solve the challenges that are facing him. Socialization between the school principal and the teachers or community members can create cohesiveness among the workers which will result into work commitment and high quality work production. A social principal will be capable of supervising teachers, involving teachers and other stakeholders in developing and evaluating the instructional process, and is likely to share the responsibility for instructional association of elementary school principals (NAESP).

Table 3 indicates that 31(50.0%) principals agreed that resigning from headship position was never used to overcome stress in work performance while 13(21.0%) viewed it as rarely used and 13(21.0%) sometimes used. Similarly, 30(48.4%) principals indicated that quitting teaching profession was not a strategy used to manage stress. Moreover, 44(71.0%) principals suggested that committing suicide was never used as a strategy to overcome stress.

However, in Table 3, the findings showed that a total of 55(88.7%) principals indicated that they used physical exercise to help manages tress while 7(11.3%) principals confirmed that they never

used physical exercise as a strategy to overcome stress in their work performance. This implied physical exercise was a common strategy used by the principals to manage stress.

Also, Table 3 indicates that 13(21.0%) principals never sought professional help from counselors to overcome stress, 11(17.7%) rarely used, 13(21.0%) sometimes used, 17(27.4%) often used and 8(12.9%) very frequently used professional counselor to help manage stress. This distribution shows that the majority of the principals sought professional counseling to help manage stress.

Table 3 revealed that 3(4.8%) principals never used control of anger to manage stress while a total of 59(95.2%) principals confirmed that they controlled their stress by self-control of anger. This implied that control of anger was a strategy used by principals to help manage stress in work performance in schools.

Similarly, Table 3 indicated that 1(1.6%) principal agreed that developing positive attitude towards self and others was a strategy that was never used to manage stress while 61(98.4%) agreed that developing positive attitude towards self and others was a technique of managing stress at the workplace, with the majority suggesting that it was often and very frequently used.

Moreover, with regard to networking with other principals as displayed in Table 3, 33(53.2%) principals supported that it was very frequently used, 24(38.7%) other principals indicated it was often used, 2(3.2%) rarely and the remaining 3(4.8%) principals asserted that networking was never used to manage stress. Thus, suggesting that the principals used networking with other principals as a strategy to manage the workplace stress.

Furthermore, the findings in Table 3 indicated that 60(96.8%) principals affirmed that they could share a meal with the family to help them manage workplace stress while only 2(3.2%) principals indicated they never used sharing a meal with the family to manage stress in the workplace. Therefore, this signifies that sharing a meal with the family was a strategy used by the principals to help manage stress.

With regard to the construct of seeking medical help as displayed in Table 3, 10(16.1%) principals agreed that they never sought medical help whenever stressed, 11(17.7%) principals rarely used medical help, 13(21.0%) principals sometimes sought medical help, 21(33.9%) principals often sought medical help and 7(11.3%) principals very frequently sought medical attention to overcome workplace stress. This signals that seeking medical help was sometimes a strategy principals used to overcome stress in the workplace.

Nevertheless, Table 3 indicates that 6(9.7%) principals never went for a nature walk to overcome stress while a total of 56(90.3%) suggested having gone for a nature walk to help manage workplace stress. Out of 56 principals who used a nature walk as a way of managing their stress, 17(27.4%) principals often used and 16(25.8%) other principals very frequently used the strategy to overcome stress.

Finally, Table 3 indicates that a total of 54(87.1%) principals spent some time with students at free time to overcome stress while 8(12.9%) principals never used spending time with students at their free time to manage workplace stress. Similarly, SCQASOs in the County were also asked to suggest some of the strategies that the principals could employ to overcome stress in their schools. SCQASO in Nyakach Sub-County stated that:

According to my experience in this region, adequate staffing, prompt payment of school fees by the parents and the government, proper planning, regular inductions and in-service training, clear and concise communication on policies, delegation of duties, administrative support and mentorship programmes are some of the strategies that principals can use to curb stress in their work performance

The principals were also asked to state the role of the Ministry of Education in curbing principals' stress in schools. They explained that the Ministry of Education has played the following roles in curbing principals' stress. That is, the Ministry has been organizing seminars and workshops for the school principals country wide. During the workshop sessions, the principals are trained on leadership skills and gain more knowledge for better management of schools. The participants further agreed that the Ministry of Education had introduced guidance and counseling department in schools which assists in the counseling of both teachers and the students in schools. The counseling personnel are normally being selected by the staff members including the deputy principal who is concerned with students' discipline. This department helps in solving problems of students who are involved in activities such as drug abuse, students' truancy, boy-girl relationship and teachers who are also involved in drug abuse. The Ministry has also taken care of parental obligations and infrastructure establishment. That is, there is free day secondary education for all children in the county and a variety of teaching and learning resources. The teaching and learning resources which are provided by the government in schools include text books, exercise books, electricity, water, security among others. School principals are also allowed to attend conferences on a yearly basis. That is, the principals normally go out on a yearly basis to attend conference in Mombasa for about two weeks in order to share the challenges that they have experienced among themselves and with their bosses. During the conference session, the principals meet the Teachers Service Commission leaders such as the secretary and the chairman.

The Ministry also allocates bursaries to assist students financially, that boosts their fee payment. The bursary disbursement to schools for students who have applied for it has enhanced students' retention in schools and most of them have pursued high level of education due to the bursaries allocation. The bursary helps the school principals to solve school issues that require funds on time. There are also different leaders in the schools who manage a variety of school issues. That is, the school principals, the deputy, the senior teacher and Heads of Departments (HoDs). All these leaders assist one another in performing administrative duties in schools, hence reduce work load for the school principals. For instance, the deputy of the school will always be in charge of the school when the principal is away and perform all the duties of the school principals. More so, the deputy is in charge of discipline and assists the principal in ensuring proper implementation of curriculum. The senior teacher assists the deputy in dealing with students' discipline, signing professional documents, responsible for the welfare of the teachers and the students. Similarly, Heads of departments also ensure that proper implementation of curriculum in their subject areas are well handled. In big schools, there are two deputies who head different department. That is, one deputy principal is responsible for administrative duties while the other deputy principal acts as the head of curriculum.

The participants stated that human resource personnel who have been distributed in each sub-county, do assist a lot in solving some school issues which cannot be solved by the school principals alone. Human resource officers are also found at the county level that help in solving a lot of school issues among the school principals in each county, before reaching national level, though their number is not enough.

However, among the respondents who gave their opinions on the role of the government in curbing stress among school principals, 29 per cent disagreed that the government assists in curbing stress issues among school principals. Moreover, they claim that the government has added a lot of work in schools. That is, there is a lot of clerical work (paper work) which involves assessing the implementation of the curriculum by the teachers in their subject areas and sending the information to the national level through online services. This is referred to as Teacher Appraisal Development (TPAD). Principals stated that most schools still lack enough computers in schools while some

principals are not yet computer literate. Others also stated that the government has inflicted more stress among school principals because they are being delocalized to other work stations in other counties, a move which takes them away from their families and does not consider their old age.

### Conclusion

The study examined strategies principals used to overcome stress in their work performance in public secondary schools in Kisumu County. The strategies that were highly used by the principals to overcome stress included developing positive attitude towards self and others, effective management of time, delegation of duties to the staff, seeking support from other school stakeholders, sharing a meal with the family, socializing with the staff members and control of anger respectively. The study also found out that the strategies that were moderately used by the principals to manage stress included leisure activities, spending time with students at free time, seeking medical help, seeking counseling, keeping praise files and physical exercise while the strategies that were of low use were quitting teaching profession, resigning from leadership and committing suicide respectively. The study was also significant due to the fact that there has been frequent quitting principal ship post and leaving teaching profession by the school principals in the county, yet the government of Kenya plays a very important role in uplifting the welfare of the teachers and providing quality education in schools. The role that the government play for effective teaching and administration include: upgrading teachers regularly, increasing teachers' salary, provision of workshops for effective school management and provision of teaching and learning resources in schools.

The study recommended that the government of Kenya, through the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) should employ trained counselors and locate them at strategic places like schools within each sub-county to help principals in solving stress issues and teachers to be trained on leadership in order to handle administrative duties in future amicably.

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