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Demographic Characteristics and Occupational Stress by Secondary School Teachers in Greater Bushenyi, Uganda

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Abstract*:* This study sought to establish the differences in occupational stress across socio-demographic characteristics of secondary school teachers in Greater Bushenyi, Uganda through the cross sectional research design. The researchers sampled 33 out of 160 public and private secondary schools through the systematic sampling procedures. From those, 266 were sampled out of 672 teachers. Using descriptive statistics, t-test and ANOVA, the study established that teachers under investigation experienced the occupational stress moderately. The finding was quite similar to previous studies which indicated gender as a determining factor for teachers' occupational stress. The moderately experienced occupational stress, calls for intervention strategies since if not treated earlier it may develop into higher stress levels which may interfere with teachers' academic performance in their schools.

Keywords: Occupational stress; Socio-demographic characteristics; secondary school teachers

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Introduction

While teaching is one of noblest professions, teachers' working conditions reflect realities of the profession, which may result in increased stress levels (Kabito and Wami (2020). Teachers are responsible for day-to-day running of schools for quality education to be realized. The quality and effectiveness of education systems depend on the competences, effectiveness, efficiency and devotion of teachers. However, literature indicates that teaching is not an easy job but it is a stressful occupation (Desrochers, 2021). While each profession causes a specific level of work-related stress, teaching becomes one of most stressful occupations due to increased responsibilities and demanding deadlines. (Zulfakar, 2020).

Many factors have been adduced for the ineffectiveness of teachers but the most prominent appears to be the stress experienced by teachers (Banja, Ndhlovu, & Mulendema, 2021)). Studies indicate that teachers experience a higher level of stress than many other professionals (Charlton, Moulton, Sabey & West (2021); Skinner, Leavey, and Rothi (2021); Zemanova and Knight, 2021; Oducado, Rabacal, Moralista & Tamdang, 2021). A study that was carried out by Shkëmbi, Melonashi and Fanaj (2015) in Kosovo portrays that secondary school teachers confront a number of stressors in their daily activities that cause them different levels of occupational stress.

Female teachers experienced higher levels of stress and greater job displeasure that usually came from negative classroom environments, pupils' behavior as well as work and family interaction (Antoniou, Ploumpi & Ntalla, 2013). A study across 229 schools in India revealed that 43% of teachers had occupational stress (Hemalatha & Rajeswari, 2017). Teaching, with staff working long hours and under increasing pressure from the system of school accountability, was associated with a particular concern about mental health problems (Cooper & Travers, 2012).

A study by Siddiqui (2013) on teachers' occupational stress in India found out that female teachers working in public schools lacked resources like advanced technologies, which was a contributing factor in their stress level. In Nepal, Mondal, Shrestha and Bhaila (2011) reported that teachers' occupational stress was related with their qualifications. Teachers with postgraduate education reported less job satisfaction and more stress compared to those with lesser academic qualifications.

A study in Ethiopia established that secondary school teachers experienced high levels of occupational stress (Gebrekirstos, 2015). Studies in Ghana show that working condition of teachers is troublesome, creating occupational stress and diminishing their work satisfaction and motivation(Asimeng-Boahene, 2012). Some of the issues that make the African work environment unfavorable and make the teachers to be down hearted and frustrated in their work include lack of instructional materials, large sized classes, inadequate professional training and few opportunities to grow professionally. In Kenya, Ngari, et al., (2013) established that teachers experienced high levels of stress resulting from their school workload. In southwestern Uganda, secondary school teachers in Public schools experienced teaching difficulties and feelings of pressure at work leading to stress (Ssenyonga & Hecker, 2021). Therefore, this background formed the basis for assessing the differences in occupational stress across socio-demographic characteristics of in both public and private secondary school teachers in Greater Bushenyi of Uganda. Therefore, this background formed the basis for assessing the differences in occupational stress across socio-demographic characteristics of in both public and private secondary school teachers in Greater Bushenyi of Uganda. The study was guided by two research questions:

1. What is the overall occupational stress of teachers in schools under investigation?
2. Is there a significant difference in the occupational stress by teachers categorized according to their demographic factors?

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a cross sectional research design that was appropriate while inquiring from a large group of participants at one point (Creswell, 2017). According to Kossek et al. (2018) cross sectional research design is inclined to deductive research that involves testing of hypotheses to achieve the objectives, which was the case in this study.

Population and Sampling

The study was carried out in Greater Bushenyi, Southwestern Uganda. Greater Bushenyi had five districts namely Bushenyi, Sheema, Rubirizi, Mitooma and Buhweju. Teachers in both private and government aided schools in the area were considered for the study whereby out of 160 schools, 41 were public and 119 were privately owned (SESEMAT Bushenyi Region, 2020). Basing on Mills and Gay (2019), the researchers sampled 8 public and 25 private schools through the systematic sampling procedure so as to have a total number of 32 schools. From the 32 schools, there were 672 teachers from whom 266 were drawn as sample.

Instrumentation

The study employed a Teacher Stress Inventory questionnaire which had 36 items in a 5 point scale (Schutz & Long, 1988) to collect data from

respondents. Through the questionnaire, it was possible to determine the overall stress of teachers and the differences in occupational stress by demographic characteristics.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The study employed the descriptive statistics in terms of mean scores and standard deviation to determine the overall occupational stress by teachers in schools under investigation. The study further employed the independent paired t-test for assessing the level of occupational stress across binary socio-demographic characteristics of teachers. For multi-categorical socio-demographic characteristics, one-way ANOVA test was used and the mean ranks and levels of significance were reported. Results were considered significant at $p < 0.05$

Results and Discussion

The study was guided by two research questions, the fist seeking to establish the overall level of occupational stress of teachers without categorization while the second seeking to establish the difference in occupational stress by teachers categorized according to their demographic characteristics.

Research Question 1: What is the overall occupational stress of teachers in schools under investigation?

This research question sought to establish the overall occupational stress by teachers under investigation. As reflected in table 1, majority (74.4%) of teachers perceived to be moderately experiencing occupational stress, about a quarter (24.8%) perceived to be experiencing the occupational stress at a low level while insignificant number of teachers perceived to be experiencing occupational stress at a high level. Therefore, teachers generally experienced the occupational stress at a moderate level. The moderate level of occupational stress, if not treated, may grow into higher levels of occupational stress (Larson, 2021; Pivnick, 2021; Akhlaq, Amjad, Mehmood, Hassan, & Malik, 2010).

Table 1: Overall Teachers' Occupational stress

Level	F	%
High	2	0.8
Moderate	198	74.4
Low	66	24.8
Total	**266**	**100**

Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in the occupational stress by teachers categorized according to their demographic factors?

This research question sought to establish difference in the occupational stress by teachers categorized according to their demographic factors. It was tested through t-test and ANOVA as indicated in table 2.

The independent paired t- test results indicate that the male teachers (M = 106.8, SD =15.6) had a higher level of occupational stress compared to their female teacher counterparts (M = 101.7, SD =15.9). The difference was significant (t = 2.57, p = 0.011). According to previous studies, gender is one of determinants of occupational stress among secondary school teachers. For instance, in a study conducted to Indian secondary school teachers, male teachers were significantly more stressed compared to their female teacher counterpart (Aftab & Khatoon, 2012). Similarly, a study in Nepal showed that male teachers reported a relatively higher physical stress compared to female teachers (Mondal et al., 2011). On the contrary, female teachers in another study experienced higher levels of stress and greater job displeasure that usually came from negative classroom environments, pupils' behavior as well as work and family interaction (Antoniou et al., 2013).

Table 2 further indicates that the rest of demographic characteristics of teachers under investigation did not have any significant difference in occupational stress as the p value in all cases was greater than .005.

While this study did not establish any significant difference in occupational stress by age and experience, a similar study in India, on the contrary, established that early years of teaching were more stressful. Furthermore, secondary school teachers with 6-10 years of experience showed the highest level of occupational stress compared to the rest of the teachers (Aftab & Khatoon, 2012). It was indicated in another study that young and less experienced teachers indicate higher levels of burnout and stress compared to the older and more experienced teachers (Bhadoria & Singh, 2010). Finally, Mondal et al. (2011) in Nepal reported that years of experience did not have a significant difference in occupational stress among teachers. The

established stability in occupational stress by age and experience in schools under investigation is therefore a unique feature compared by previous similar studies.

Table 2: Level of occupational stress by socio-demographic characteristics (N = 266)

Variable	Definition	N	M	*SD*	*T*	*p*
Gender	Male	167	106.8	15.6	2.57	
	Female	99	101.7	15.9		.011*
	Private	147	105.2	16.7		
	Urban	45	106.5	16.3		
Age	<26 years	68	101.2	14.1		
	26-30 years	140	101.2	15.8	1.55	.203
	31-35 years	55	107.1	16.2		
	36 years +	74	105.3	15.8		
Experience	1-5 years	66	101.8	16.7	0.92	
	6-10	71	106.3	16.1		.433
	11-15 years	116	105.1	16.0		
	16 years +	138	105.5	15.0		
Qualification	Diploma	12	102.3	16.3		
	Bachelor's degree	183	106.6	15.2	2.81	.062
	Master's degree	83	109.2	17.0		

*p <0.05 = significant difference

Similarly, Harmsen, Helms-Lorenz, Maulana and Van Veen (2018) established no significant correlation between qualifications and level of stress. While this study did not establish any significant difference in occupational stress by qualification, Mondal et al. (2011) in Nepal revealed that qualifications of a teacher related to occupational stress. Specifically, teachers with postgraduate education indicated less job satisfaction and more stress compared to their counterparts with lower education.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study concludes that occupational stress was moderately experienced by teachers. Male teachers experienced more stressful moments in their occupation as compared to their female teacher counterparts. The finding was quite similar to previous study findings which indicated gender as a determining factor for teachers' occupational stress. The moderately experienced occupational stress by teachers under investigation calls for intervention strategies since if not treated earlier it may develop into higher stress levels which may interfere with teachers' academic performance in their schools.

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