

**CAUSES, LEVELS AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES OF  
PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS AMONG TEACHERS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY  
SCHOOLS IN MAARA SUB-COUNTY, THARAKA NITHI COUNTY,  
KENYA**

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Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Education in Guidance  
and Counselling of Chuka University**

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## DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Declaration:

I declare that this Thesis is my original work and has not been previously published or presented for any award in any other university or institution of higher learning.

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## **DEDICATION**

To my late parents, Mr. Robert Mathoka and Mrs. Ann Mukwanjiru Mathoka, my wife Lucy Kiraithe and children Patience, Peace, Caleb and Abigail for their inspiration and support that has propelled me towards greater heights of academic endeavor.

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## ABSTRACT

Teachers in public primary schools handle large classes because of the introduction of free primary education, a policy whose implementation has not been accompanied by adequate human resources to enhance its implementation. This may have led to stress among the public primary school teachers. The purpose of the study was therefore to establish the causes, levels and management strategies of psychological stress among Public Primary School Teachers in Maara Sub County, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Specifically, the study assessed stress levels, their causes and management strategies of stress among the public primary school teachers. The study employed a descriptive survey design using quantitative approach. The study targeted 992 public primary school teachers from which a sample of 278 teachers was selected using stratified random sampling technique. Data was collected using a questionnaire. Validity of the instrument was ascertained through the expert opinion of University supervisors. Prior to data collection, the study instrument was administered to 35 teachers in Igamba Ng'ombe Sub-County to pretest the research instrument. A set of 231 questionnaires were obtained implying a return rate of 83.1%. Data obtained was edited, coded and analyzed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 23 computer software using frequency, percentages, means and standard deviation as well as Chi Square based on research objectives. The study established that a majority of the public primary school teachers had high stress levels. A majority of the teachers were distressed because of occurrences that happened suddenly. They felt that they were unable to control significant things at their work places and had nervous feelings and being stressed. The high level of stress was attributed to overwhelming situations, cause and effect, environment, conflict and alienation. A majority of teachers reported resorting to guidance and counselling, spiritual activities, exercises, use of drugs and optimism in managing work related psychological stress. The study recommends that the administration of public primary schools ensure that teachers have an enabling environment within which they have control over important things at their work places to help lower their stress levels. It was also recommended that public primary school teachers be assisted to minimise alienation, overload, conflicts and information gap in order to lower their stress levels. It is also important that public primary school teachers are encouraged and aided to adopt effective stress management strategies such as guidance and counselling, optimism, spiritual activities as well as involvement in physical activities even as they discharge their duties.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>ANOVA:</b>	Analysis of Variance
<b>BOM:</b>	Board of Members
<b>CDF:</b>	Constituency Development Funds
<b>ECD:</b>	Early Childhood Education
<b>ATS:</b>	Approved Teacher Status
<b>KENET:</b>	Kenya Education Network
<b>KESSP:</b>	Kenya Education Sector Support Programme
<b>KNEC:</b>	Kenya National Examination Council
<b>MOE:</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MOEST:</b>	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
<b>NACOSTI:</b>	National commission of science and technology innovation
<b>NCCA:</b>	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
<b>PTSD:</b>	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
<b>UNESCO:</b>	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>SPSS:</b>	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background Information**

Globally, governments have placed great emphasis on quality education. Quality education is a product of effective teaching-learning process. The extent to which quality education is obtained is much dependent on learning environment as pointed out by Butler and Shibaz (2014), The learner is often placed in through the school administration and teacher's influence. However, the roles of a teacher in classroom, society as well as in the larger world are realized to have taken a different turn. This contrasts with the norms back in the day when teachers were provided with specific curriculum to guide them, among other instructions, in order to effectively undertake teaching of the curriculum (Flook et al. 2013). The role of a teacher is beyond mere teaching. It involves mentoring students, counselling them and teaching them on using knowledge. In addition, it involves equipping the learners with approaches that are needed for the application of the learned concepts throughout their life. These roles have been well received by public primary school teachers and they have gone ahead and sought ways through which they can impact their students wholesomely while inspiring them to strive for excellence. This process requires motivation since well-motivated teachers are able to convey to students their enthusiasm as they encourage them to learn. However, as cited by OECD (2020), the teacher needs as well to be helped so that they can maintain their motivation through acknowledging their good work as they effectively help the students in learning. It is through enhancing this teacher's abilities and understanding as well as encouraging the teachers to engage in activities that will help nurture teaching enthusiasm in the face of other competing pressures which they face in their day to day lives besides other demands.

All workers across the world are faced with diverse workplace situations. Public primary school teachers have not been exceptional. They enter the teaching profession with ideological motivation that is based on service to others and empathy as mentioned by Gray and Freeman (2008). This contrast has not been lived to reality because many of these expectations have been countered by overwhelming vulnerability. This has been so

because most of these idealistic expectations have not matched the classroom reality thus making the noble teaching profession increasingly complex with issues such as accountability, union's litigation, increasing diverse roles, liability as well as fair changing concepts making teaching to become a stressful endeavour (Gustems-Carnicer, Jose, 2013). Teachers wellbeing and stress have for many years been an established educational research area with earlier research highlighting various cases in which stress was a variable of motivation that encouraged change in behaviour and improved work ethics in teaching but presently, teacher stress is identified to create deleterious effects on teacher's performance while eroding their professional morale, confidence and identity. Psychological stress is an emotional strain or mental state or tension that results from demanding or adverse circumstances, hence, many teachers have been forced to frequently cope with this presumed professional inadequacy through modifying their unique professional ideals thus turning to be less compassionate, caring and empathic while solely focusing on content and achievement of their students.

Potential psychological stress impact on teachers is always overemphasized. Even though the impact may seem psychological, it is just a question of time before it is physically felt and until these stressful circumstances are sorted out, stress reacts with the mind and body causing challenging and threatening life events. Psychological stress is experienced by teachers when they are unable to handle, with their usual capabilities, events, situations or are unable to meet the demands put on their mind and body by their supervisors. Many a times these demands could be their daily routine (Yadav et al. 2014). Within the work related or occupational area, teaching in many countries is identified among most stressful professions. The stress related to teaching, being referred to as "teacher stress" is often described as the teachers' unpleasant experiences and negative emotions that include; anxiety, depression, anger, frustration and tension that results from various aspects of their profession as teachers. Similarly, to other occupational forms psychological stress has serious implications on the health of functioning individuals and the institutions they serve (Lindqvist et al. 2017). Teacher stress can negatively impact the performance, well-being and health of a teacher. The negative impact can translate to unproductive behaviour such as absenteeism, apathy and alienation. Hence, efforts of

over three decades that studies on teacher stress have been carried out specifically on its effect, causes and coping mechanisms continues to this day attract attention and interest.

The psychological stress levels for teachers is a crucial factor to scrutinize because it enables teachers to become holistic leaders and managers in a classroom. As well, it is this factor in the personal and professional context that makes teachers in 21<sup>st</sup> century increase their innate qualities (Han, Yin, & Wang, 2016). The government ought to consider teachers' physical, psychological, mental and social well-being considering they have put them as the education system's front liners. This therefore leads to the need to ensure they are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills enhancement, technical competence and cognitive perspective in order to have the capacity to serve learners with diverse needs. Teachers' psychological stress levels ought to be sound and tolerable. However, a study carried out by Butler and Shibaz, (2014) pointed out that teachers have high burn out and stress levels owing to increased pressure from accountability practices that are test-based it requires stress intervention as the initial step to reduce the observed negative outcomes. In addition, Chakr (2021) states that, the global pandemic brought along uncertainties, worries and fear. These steered teachers off the work places and other gatherings. Despite the fact that the "new normal" prepared them to be well versed with new technological competences and adaptive leadership, studies done elsewhere continue to show that teachers' psychological stress levels have since remained high and are still in need of mindful and effective interventions.

Researchers have carried out numerous studies elsewhere to help identify factors that relate to the causes of stress and from these studies, they have come to conclusion that teaching professionals experience burn out which turns out to be a key cause of teachers' psychological stress. The burnout makes a teacher unable to avoid or eliminate stress. Other causes include work environment, assessment and appreciation through supervision, number of their classroom students, marital status and age (Harris et al. 2016). Though both women and men teachers equally experience psychological stress in their attempt to balance the demands of being fathers or mothers, wives or husbands, relatives or children among others. Women teachers have also been realized to bear a

bigger share in both work and home related psychological stress owing to their preponderant roles that they play at home and school. Worth noting, some individuals are generally prone to more stress compared to others. This depends mainly on personality traits. This is similar to Yadav et al. (2014) findings which established that personality characteristics do moderate stressful situations, in a way that specific traits enhance or buffer increased negative outcomes unlike others. These findings are also in line with those of Hepburn, Carroll and McGowan (2006) who established that personality characteristics had a link with burnout or stress dimensions thus backing the transactional model of psychological stress which holds that in order to well understand the psychological stress process, both personality and environmental variables ought to be considered.

Diverse approaches are applied to manage psychological stress. It is always essential to acknowledge Gustems-Carnicer and Calderón, (2013) assertion that we can manage only that which we are aware of. This implies that it is of great importance to establish stress levels so that many stressors can be eliminated while finding both emotional and practical ways to handle other stressors. Not every stress is necessarily bad because it can be applied to motivate teachers into becoming creative and productive. However, this implies that it is difficult to completely do away with psychological stress as it can only be managed. This gives an impression as pointed out by Yunarti, (2020) that despite the fact that teachers do experience minor stresses; they later on come to realize that it is merely a build-up outcome in life. Further, he states that the attempts to learn to reduce control or tolerate the threats attached to psychological stress are simple as well as effective if maintained and practiced regularly. These attempts include keeping the right attitude, taking care of self, creating accommodating atmosphere, maintaining healthy habits, good nutrition and exercising. Other than reinforcing the aforementioned psychological stress managing strategies, Yunarti, (2020) also added that seeking counselling services is effective in stress management strategies while adding that showing the importance of communication or sharing when in fear, joys or frustrations was crucial as well since sharing improves the mind and body well-being thus enriching life.



Psychological stress coping strategies can be classified into physical, emotional or behavioural. These have been found effective in that they help in changing the ways in which people think rationally, constructively and calmly whenever faced with stressful events and thus being able to generate more state of hopeful emotion (David, Clarissa et al. 2020). Additionally, these strategies are helpful in replacing catastrophic thinking with more realistic thoughts. This is where stressors are perceived as being usual challenges and not threats in a process referred to as restructuring cognitive coping. This process does not eliminate stress but it helps the victims substitute stressors with less threatening thoughts, hence making them become less disruptive. Counselling services have been found effective by Han, Yin, and Wang (2016) since it offers clients' reconstruction due to the fact that it is indispensable. Coping skills such as perception change, managing emotion and communication have been recognized as effective strategies as they help in enabling understanding of the stressor's nature as well as how it happened. David and Clarissa et al. (2020) pointed out that all these stress management strategies may not be an omnibus method to deal with each and every stressful situation. Thus, every approach can be considered on its individual relevance and merit and by doing so each step can help in generating alternative solution to each stress phenomena.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Primary Schools provide basic foundation for the future of pupils' academic excellence in Kenya. This makes the performance of primary school teachers an issue of concern to all education stakeholders. Teachers in public primary schools handle large classes. Enrolment in public primary schools increased due to the introduction of free primary education, a policy whose implementation has not been accompanied by adequate human resources to enhance its implementation. This may have led to stress among public primary school teachers. Information from education officials in Maara Sub-county indicates that there are cases of teachers developing behavior that is symptomatic of stress such as poor time management, poor concentration, dissatisfaction, hot temperedness and aggression, introversion and withdrawal from constructive relationships. Moreover, some teachers have been noted to increasingly abuse alcohol, caffeine, tobacco and chronic absenteeism from school. These are some

of the negative strategies that teachers usually use to manage stress. Therefore, the need for this study to find out the levels, causes and stress management strategies that Public Primary School Teachers within Maara Sub-county can put in place for their wellbeing.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to establish the causes, levels and management strategies of Psychological stress among public primary school teachers in Maara Sub-County in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

This study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To determine psychological stress levels among public primary school teachers in Maara Sub-county in Tharaka Nithi County.
- ii. To find out causes of psychological stress among public primary school teachers in Maara Sub-county in Tharaka Nithi County.
- iii. To determine effectiveness of psychological stress management strategies among public primary school teachers in Maara Sub-County in Tharaka Nithi County.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

To fulfill the study objectives, the researcher endeavored to respond to the following research questions: -

- i. What are the levels of psychological stress among Public Primary School Teachers in Maara Sub-county in Tharaka Nithi County?
- ii. What were the causes of psychological stress among Public Primary School Teachers in Maara Sub-county in Tharaka Nithi County?
- iii. How effective are the strategies used by Public Primary School Teachers to manage and cope with psychological stress in Maara Sub-County in Tharaka Nithi County?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study provided useful content that can assist the Ministry of Education enhance the teaching profession and teachers' performance. Through this study, the Ministry of Education and other education stakeholders can identify the problems that interfere with the teachers' performance and seek to come up with mechanisms that can improve the emotional, physiological wellbeing of the primary school teacher. The researcher hopes that the study findings can be significant to teachers by creating awareness on stress levels, causes and management strategies. The awareness can help teachers to avoid palliative stress management strategies that involve behaviors that are in the long run dysfunctional. The study may also benefit counselors as they counsel teachers with stress-related problems or symptoms. Pupils taught by teachers who have eustress rather than distress may perform well in school.

### **1.7 Scope of the Study**

The study was conducted in Maara Sub-County, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The researcher chose the county because of its cultural, social, economic and geographical diversity. The study focused on Public Primary School Teachers because of their availability and distribution across all the divisions within the county. The study assessed psychological stress levels, its causes among Public Primary School Teachers and the management strategies they applied in dealing with their stress. The study used descriptive survey design and relied majorly on primary data collected from teachers. It was carried out between the years 2020-2021.

### **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

The study findings may not be generalizable to all parts of this country because of social, cultural and socio-economic differences across different ethnic communities. Owing to the fact that such kind of study is sensitive in nature as it touches on private life, some respondents were hesitant to give out feedback through the questionnaires. The researcher took a lot of time building the rapport, explaining the importance of the study and assuring confidentiality to ensure that the right responses are given by the respondents.

### **1.9 Assumptions of the Study**

The study assumed that the respondents in the study gave sincere and accurate information based on the method and process employed in gathering data. The researcher assumed from the onset of the study that stress among Public Primary School Teachers was mainly work related.

### 1.10 Definition of Terms

The following were the operational definitions of terms used in the study: -

<b>Psychological Assessment</b>	The act of judging or evaluating a situation or a condition
<b>Burn Out</b>	This is the feeling of physical and emotional exhaustion which is caused by teachers while overworking under difficult and demanding conditions.
<b>Causes</b>	Conditions, experiences or occurrences that lead to a stress on teachers.
<b>Consequences</b>	Any physical, emotional, social or psychological effects of stress on teachers.
<b>Distress</b>	Adverse physical and emotional constrains or tension as a result of reaction to tasks put on a teacher by unsettling circumstances or encounters.
<b>Effects</b>	According to this study, these are changes that occur in the life of an individual teacher due to stress.
<b>External Factors</b>	These are stress causing factors that do not originate from teachers, for example, school work, financial worries, relationship difficulties and family matters.
<b>Internal Factors</b>	These are stress causing factors that originate from inside teachers' personality, for example, low self-esteem and negative thoughts.
<b>Free Primary Education</b>	Learning that is sponsored by the Kenyan government from standard one to standard eight in public primary schools.
<b>Gender</b>	The state of the public primary school teacher being male or female.
<b>Hyperstress</b>	This is the extreme mental or psychological tension that a teacher may feel when overcome by work or responsibility.
<b>Hypostress</b>	This refers a form of stress brought out by boredom and restlessness due to teachers' inactivity.

<b>Job Stress</b>	This is the hurtful physical and emotional responses that are show out when the requirements of the job and the job environment do not match the abilities, resources, or requirements of teachers.
<b>Management strategies</b>	Ways and means that an individual uses to deal with stress.
<b>Occupational Stress</b>	Continuing or recurrent stress a teacher goes through as a result of the responsibilities, conditions, environment, or other demands of the workplace.
<b>Primary teachers</b>	A teacher teaching in any of the classes one to eight in the Kenyan 8-4-4 system of education.
<b>Psychological stress</b>	An emotional or mental state or tension that results from demanding or adverse circumstances.
<b>Public primary school</b>	Any institution that educates pupils from standard one to standard eight and is sponsored by the Government of Kenya.
<b>Self Esteem</b>	This refers to a teacher's overall sense of self-respect or value or rather how he or she appreciates and likes himself or herself.
<b>Stress</b>	The adverse physical and emotional reactions to responsibilities put on an individual by unsettling circumstances or experiences.
<b>Stress level</b>	The extent to which an individual physically and emotionally reacts to demands put on him or her by unsettling conditions or experience.
<b>Teacher stress</b>	A teacher's encounter of unfriendly negative feelings such as annoyance, frustration, anxiety and nervousness, caused by some aspects of work or family.
<b>Work experience</b>	The period of time that an individual has taken in a particular job.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. Concept of Psychological Stress**

The concept of stress has received numerous definitions in various academic disciplines since it is a normal part of life which cannot be ignored. Stress refers to the body's reaction to any physical, mental or physical change that requires an adjustment or response (Potter, 2014). It is a changing process reflecting both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, characteristics of an individual and his or her conditions in addition to the interactions between them and their environments. It is also the physical and psychological incentive that may yield mental and physiological responses that can lead to illness- an interruption of homeostasis which might be brought about by distressing experiences, whether real or imaginary.

The definition of stress can be stated as an organism's reaction to some stimuli that is independent of the reaction of the person's perception (Craven, Hirnle & Jensen, 2013). Another perception of stress is that it is an exterior stimuli or impact exerted to an individual or even a reaction to stimuli (Mah, Szabuniewicz & Fiocco, 2016). Stress may be the product of a person and the situation in which the person experiences difficulty in changing to the demands imposed by his environment (Kariuki, 2001). Colman (2007) states that stress is the process through which environmental occurrences endanger or challenge an organism's wellness and by which the organism responds to this risk.

Psychological stress is a sensation of emotional tension or pressure which causes psychological pain. Stress is a body's response to a state of high physiological and psychological tension. It is the beginning of a number of diseases and preparation for fight or flight. (Sapolsky, 2004). Melgosa (2000) argues that all the body's reactions to stress affect health. Stress is a phenomenon that may lead to both positive and negative consequences. According to Corsini, stress has also been looked at, from the interactive perspective, as an unsuitable fit between a person's resources and the requirements of one's immediate environment. An individual is in a stressful state because of the difference between the demands and his or her own capabilities. The

level of stress is a function of an organism's ability to meet the expectations in the circumstances. An unsuitable fit between an individual and the immediate environment may also happen if the person's motives are not satisfied by meaningful and adequate supplies in the environment (Corsini, 2017).

According to Schlotz, Yim, Zoccola, Jansen and Schulz (2011), considerable minimal amounts of stress is desirable, fruitful, and healthy. Such stress is positive and helps to improve performance as it motivates, and initiates adaptation, and reactions to the stimulus in the environment. Melgosa (2000) observes that a moderate amount of tension is vital and certain levels of stress are actually healthy since it helps one to face challenges, solve difficult problems and reach desired goals.

A high level of stress, may lead to bodily harm, whether mental, physical or psychological. Gatchel and Price as cited in Colman (2007), argue that there is evidence suggesting that prolonged or negative stress can affect immunity. Stress may be external and associated to the environment. However, it may also be triggered by internal perceptions that lead to a teacher experiencing anxiety or other undesirable emotions surrounding a situation. These negative emotions may include, anger, pressure, discomfort among others, which the individual deems stressful (Jones, Bright & Clow, 2001).

Selye (2006) projected four dimensions of stress. On one dimension he pinpoints good stress (eustress) and bad stress (distress). Eustress comes about when a person looks at a stressor as positive. Distress is considered a danger to a person's value of life. It occurs when an expectation greatly exceeds a person's competences (Fevre, Kolt, Matheny, 2006). In addition, there is over-stress (hyper stress) and under stress (hypo stress). Selye advocates the need to balance these: that is the final goal would be to create an equilibrium between hyper stress and hypo stress and try to cultivate as much eustress as possible (Selye, 2014).

Melgosa (2000) highlights that throughout our lives, one is faced with particular stressful events. Many of the frustrations experienced by teachers in their social, personal, and work environments cause stress. Public Primary schools' fast-paced and



continually dynamic atmosphere has made stress to become part of teachers' daily lives. Hughes, Gust. Skoog and Keenan (2002), estimate that 75% of medical problems are directly attributable to high stress levels.

Stress factors can broadly be placed into four classes or categories: physical stress, psychological stress, psychosocial stress, and psycho-spiritual stress. The main focus in this study is psychological stress. Psychological stress is a concept that refers to processes that are alleged to contribute to a diversity of mental and physical conditions. In spite of extensive interest in psychological stress and its consequences to health and well-being, there is little agreement on its definitions. Psychological stress may be defined as “a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being” (Lazarus & Folkman, 2004).

This is a type of stress with broad spectrum in human life. Psychological stress involves emotional stress (resentment, fear, frustration, unhappiness, anger, sorrow or bereavement). Cognitive stress includes information overload, enhanced sense of time, despair, care, guilt, disgrace, jealousy, unnecessary struggle, attachment, self-criticism, self-hate, impracticable perfectionism, nervousness, panic attacks, not feeling like yourself, sensing like things are unreal, and a sense of lack of control. Perceptual stress has beliefs, roles, narratives, perceptions and world views (Antoni, 2003).

When a teacher is experiencing psychological stress, he or she can encounter a diversity of symptoms which may include anxiety and nervousness, panic attacks, physical sensation of anxiety, tendency to expect the worst to happen, conflict evasion, muscle tightness, body tremor, headache, low or excessive intrinsic motivation. Typically, this indicates increased basal ganglia activity in one's brain. According to Sowder (2015), psychological stress comes about when a teacher feels ill-equipped to handle a situation or meditates in a negative or inflated way about the past, the present or the perceived future. Therefore, teachers can bring about stress by their way of thinking. One teacher may feel stressed or overcome by a situation while another may not, or may perceive the same condition as a challenge or an opportunity to excel or

gain experience. A teacher is likely to bring about stress on oneself by thinking negatively or being obsessed with what may go wrong, or how awful situations might be. The latter individual will be less stressed. Teachers have Options on how they reason about and view almost every situation.

## **2.2. Causes of Psychological Stress**

The environmental occurrences that cause stress are called stressors (Colman, 2007). Lazarus and Folkman (2004) point out that most stress emanates from 'chronic' or recurrent situations of living such as boredom, constant conflicts in family relationships, absence of occupation growth, and solitude (Ithinji, 2002). Major events such as losing a parent, a child or a spouse may also cause stress among Public Primary School Teachers.

According to Mulligan (2000), stress is never the result of one isolated cause. It is brought about by a number of interrelated factors. These factors include distinct, interpersonal, organizational, communities, social, national, international and general. Fuster (2000) gives four causes of stress. These are, the genetic, psychological, spiritual and sociological levels. At genetic levels, stress is caused by things such as defective heredity, faulty temperature, low levels of energy, illness, poor diet, deficiency of sleep, and exhaustion. At the psychological level stress comes out due to frustration, conflict and pressure. At the spiritual level, stress varies from confusion about deity and the purpose of one's lives; from impatience and losing one's anger, from failure to forgive those who have offended us, from surrendering to our ungodly leanings and acting contrary to our principles. In sociological levels where stress affects a number of teachers together, the causes fall on issues such as joblessness, poor housing and marriage breakdown.

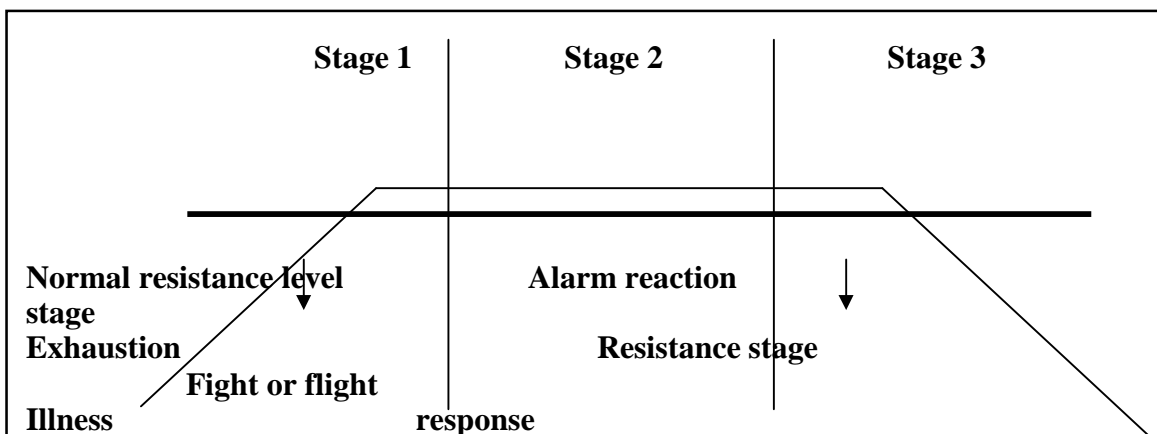
Melgosa (2000) observes that when people, teachers included. are asked where they experience the most stress in their lives, they will begin talking about some interpersonal relationship, whether it is in the family, at work, or with a friend. Most jobs, teaching included, require interaction among various people. A teacher who has poor interpersonal relationships with family members, pupils, colleagues, supportive staff, institutional

administrators and other stakeholders, such as parents, may, therefore, suffer a high level of stress and develop maladaptive behavior.

Stress originates from two sources; external and internal. Situations that produce stress include; traumatic experiences such as earthquakes, floods, accidents and rape, stressful events such as promotion to a higher paying and more responsible position, day-to-day frustrations such as bitter words directed to us by a workmate or a delayed letter, physical and social environment such as overcrowding and pollution, noise, lack of living space and personal space. Some of the internal causes include indecisiveness, hurry, uncertainty and uncontrollable events (Melgosa, 2000). Melgosa further asserts that exaggerated competition along with the resulting desire for power and possessions push many people to work beyond their capabilities resulting to physical and psychological exhaustion. One may experience undue stress because of harboring feeling of guilt. Based on analysis of international research, it is observed that teacher stress can be a real phenomenon and that teachers' high levels of stress are reliably associated with a variety of causal factors, some of which include those inherent to teaching, individual susceptibility and systemic influences (Jarvis, 2002).

### 2.3. Levels of Psychological Stress

Selye (2006) argues that stressors lead to reaction known as 'General Adaptation Syndrome'. A person who displays this syndrome is said to be in a stressed state (Corsini, 2013).



**Figure 1. Stages of Stress** (Adapted from Edworthy, A., 2000: p.4.)

Figure 2.1 shows Selye's description of prolonged stress in terms of physiological reactions. Alarm reaction is the first response made by the body when it experiences stress from any source. This is when an individual teacher perceives that he or she is in a threatening situation. The body makes itself ready for the fight/flight response by producing adrenaline which enables it to face the situation (Edworthy, 2000). The second stage, resistance, occurs when a stressor is more persistent. This results in physiological and mental changes (Mitchell & Larson, 2007). In this stage, stress extends beyond the initial stage and one experiences loss of energy and lowered production level (Melgosa, 2000).

Exhaustion phase occurs when physical and psychological resources are overcome. Some of the common characteristics of this final stage of stress include fatigue, anxiety and depression. They can occur either sequentially or simultaneously. Stressed teachers may suffer from sleeplessness, loss of appetite, memory decrease, and low concentration. Nervousness, irritability, tension and anger are also indicators in this phase. One becomes anxious even when not faced with a stressor, but in moments that would normally produce anxiety (Melgosa, 2000). In this final stage, the body's resources are exhausted leading to various psychosomatic disorders which may include heart conditions, lung complications and intestinal ulcers (Edworthy, 2000). Studies have shown that stress is highest among teachers who report low control over paper work and administrative tasks, low social backing from family, friends and colleagues, high symptoms of depression and high fatigue (Attridge & Colman, 2016).

No matter the level of stress, once it is in a teacher, it manifests itself in several ways depending on its degree of severity. For example, as Melgosa (2000) observes, all the body's response to stress affect health. The heart and circulatory system are affected when the heart is alerted of the presence of stress by the nervous system and the hormonal system. The heart increases its activity, pumps more blood and blood pressure rises. Endocrine glands produce hormones that lead to production of cholesterol, which is deposited in the blood vessels. This can lead to heart attack. A vascular headache or migraine occurs when blood vessels leading to the brain are constricted. The digestive system is affected when the muscles around the oesophagus suffer spasms that prevent ingestion of foods, lead to loss of appetite and the

production of a series of acids and enzymes that may lead to gastric ulcers. Melgosa's sentiments are emphasized by Terry (2007), who cites migraine plus sinus headache, allergy, cold, post nasal drop, hypertension, bladder, kidneys and bowels disorder, colitis, a nervous abdominal, acne and weight challenge as some illnesses that result from stress. A study reported by Michie (2002) suggests that long-term stress has the same effect on the brain as trauma.

There are two levels of stress, that is, hyper stress and hypo stress. Both are caused by factors like poor teaching conditions, work overload and inadequate resources among others. These are part of the major challenges that many public primary school teachers face in Kenya (Asuga, Eacott & Scevak, 2015). There are other challenges as were unearthed by this study. The study presupposed that there are existing and known stress management strategies which teachers can apply to deal with their stress, whether high level or low-level stress. Hyperstress is a type of stress that is caused due to extremely pressurizing situations, for example, when a teacher is forced to take up more tasks or work than he/she can handle. Hypostress is caused when a teacher has nothing to do at all. In simple words, hypostress can be described as insufficient amount of stress. Hyperstress can cause distress and this is the worst form of stress that needs much attention. This can be managed by strategies like Optimism, seeking guidance and counselling, spiritual activities and exercise among others. However, there are some factors that influence how effective these strategies can be. They include teacher's age, gender, marital status and work experience among others.

Brown and Ralph (2014) and Tavers and Cooper (2008) cite lack poor concentration, job frustration, emotional annoyance and aggression, introversion and removal from constructive relationships, inappropriate sarcastic humor, abuse of alcohol, caffeine or tobacco, and if these teachers are left unsupported, absenteeism, resignation and withdrawal from the occupation as behavior symptoms of teacher stress. The teachers further cited fatigue and low energy levels, frequent colds, irregular sleeping patterns, insomnia and bad dreams, eating disorders, and potentially, psychosomatic illnesses and heart condition as long-term physical effects of stress. Even though teachers in Maara Subcounty are undergoing stress, no documented literature is available to inform on the

level of their stress. This study therefore delved into finding out the level of stress among the Public Primary School Teachers in Maara Subcounty by assessing the degree of stress manifestations as shown in Table 2.1.

**Table 1. Manifestations of Stress**

<b>Cognitive area (thoughts and ideas)</b>	
<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Effects</b>
Concentration and attention	Strain in concentrating on a demand or activity. Recurrent loss of attention
Memory	Short term and long-term memory decline
Response speed	Problems that need instant and spontaneous responses are resolved in haphazard and random ways.
Mistakes	Any problems that require rational thinking tend to be resolved with a higher-than-normal rate of error
Analysis of present and future situation	The mind is not able to correctly analyze and evaluate current situations or to project them into the future
Logical and organization of thought process	Thinking fails to follow logic or coherent thought pattern but is disorganized.
<b>Emotional area (feelings and emotions)</b>	
<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Effects</b>
Nervousness	Difficulty in calming emotionally and physically
Hypochondriacal	On top of normal physical illnesses, new illnesses are suspected
Personality traits	Development of irritation, intolerance, authoritarianism and lack of contemplation for others.
Ethics	Ethical and moral principles which rule the life relax and there is less self-control.
Depression and discouragement	Amplified discouragement, decreased wish to live, thoughts of low self-worth and inferiority.
Self esteem	Feelings of low self-worth and subordination
<b>Behavioral areas (attitudes and behavior)</b>	
<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Effects</b>
Language	Incapacity to orally talk to a group of people satisfactorily, stammering. Inability to speak effortlessly.
Interests	Absence of enthusiasm for preferred activities such as hobbies or favorite pastimes.
Absences	Skiving from work or school.
Stimulants	Upsurge in intake of alcohol, tobacco, coffee or drug use.
Energy	Energy levels go down from day to day and incline to the lower side.
Sleep	Sleeping patterns change. Generally, insomnia intensifies to levels of extreme deficiency.
Relationships	Tendency towards distrust increases. A tendency to blame others and put the responsibility for errors upon others.
Change in behavior	The appearance of twitches and odd reactions which are not normally a part of the person.
Suicide	Thoughts of suicide intensify along with suicide attempts.

(Adapted from Melgosa, J., (2000). p. 36 – 37.)

## **2.4 Effectiveness of Stress Management strategies**

Among teachers, life is filled with frustrations, deadlines, demands and hassles. This has made stress so common that it has turned to be a way of life. However, it can only be either harmful or protective, thus managing stress has become a need and essential to every individual as it helps in balancing one's life. Besides, a literature search through undoubtedly confirms that in the last couple decades there has been a research studies proliferation on occupational stress among the educational personnel. However, little is realized regarding stress management effectiveness of these teachers with many attributing work stress with workload resulting to health challenges as well as social isolation among other concerns (Sahoo, 2016).

Stress up to certain levels helps teachers in achieving their objectives while excess stress leads to depression. This means that, living with high stress levels puts a teacher's entire well-being at great risk besides wreaking havoc on emotional equilibrium and general physical health. Stress management in teachers entails understanding of the psychology causing stress, finding approaches or techniques to handle it and reducing or eliminating stress. Reduction of stress is as a result of positively managing situations, taking action, planning, organizing as well as finding solutions. When stress is managed, an individual acquires sense of control over general life situations (Kavitha, 2012).

Furthermore, effective management of stress helps to break the hold that stress has on a teacher's life so they can live healthier, productive and happier. Everyone's ultimate goal is to have a balanced life as well as having time for relationships, work, fun and relaxation while being resilient to the extent of holding up pressure and meeting the challenges that come along head on. Worth to note, effective stress management is not a single-size-fits all approach hence, the need to experiment and establish what works for each individual considering our diversity in the way we live (Gustems-Carnicer, Jose, et al. 2019). Therefore, there is a need to give due consideration to effective stress management strategies so as to encourage a healthy teaching workforce that culminate to a prosperous nation. Human resource continues to be a main asset in every organization and this makes adoption of effective stress management



mechanisms a need for this era as it will enable facilitation of teachers with the required training as well as offering them platforms that can enable them solve all their problems that relate with stress. Guidance and counselling, spirituality, optimism use of drugs and exercising are among few tested and proven useful techniques that have continuously paved way for teachers' productivity and efficiency besides helping them to efficiently balance their work and life (Gustems-Carnicer, Jose, et al. 2019).

#### **2.4.1 Guidance and Counseling Services as a Stress Management Strategy**

One recommendation commonly offered by health service providers is counselling and psychotherapy. Teachers talking with a professional therapist about the challenges they are experiencing can help them understand any underlying aspects that may be causing them stress, for example, aggressive behaviour and low self-esteem (Childs, O'Connor & de Wit, 2011). Teaming up with a counsellor, will be able to identify each teacher's personal stress triggers and discuss ways of managing them effectively. Guidance and counselling for stress at work focuses on identifying the causes of stress especially those that are work-related. When carried out in a private and judgment-free environment, guidance and counselling can help the teachers to know the cause of the stress, and come up with steps to manage and reduce it. It is common for people to go through stress at the work place (Schultz & Schultz, 2010).

Guidance and counselling services will provide teachers with more understanding and appreciation of their responsibilities and its effects on the lives of their learners. Participants in these services will evaluate the differences between the counselling and consulting role and determine the most appropriate role in their current position (Bower & Segerstrom, 2004). For example, if work stress is starting to affect a teacher's personal life leading to sleep deprivation, dread, anxiety and bad habits like drinking alcohol, smoking, or overeating, then it may be necessary for a teacher to seek help. Guidance and counselling aim at getting to the root of work-related stress. Teachers are different and as such they all react differently to certain stressors. It can thus be useful to explore their own unique patterns of thinking and behaving in a context away from their work environment. This venture can help them to unearth their feelings and progress forward more easily as suggested by (Potter, 2014).

Teachers like many other employees work under much pressure with too much load and objectives to fulfill. They are prone to work related stress. Therefore, they need to seek guidance and counselling on how to manage their work-related stress. Moreover, counselling in schools helps to reduce short-term absenteeism, improve teachers' morale and enhance staff retention. Thus, this study investigated whether teachers sought for guidance and counselling as a strategy of stress management in Maara Sub-county.

#### **2.4.2 Spiritual Activities as a Stress Management Strategy**

Spirituality is an understanding or sense to connect with the transcendence, a connection which involves something broader and bigger for one's knowledge. This brings along a unique experience and a sense of meaning or what one can refer to as interconnectedness state. Spirituality is a form of higher life and an awareness of consciousness of the universe, Nandeesh et al (2016) states that, "spirituality can be seen in relationship with the smallest things which people do such as the food they consume, dress they wear and their relationships among others. Also spirituality is a positive sense and it is both human and divine oriented". To describe or define spirituality is never an easy task because there are various spirituality forms, it is unique and is perceived as dependent on religion or can solely be observed inside a practice of religion.

To some individuals, spiritual experiences are sacred and have an intense sense of interconnectedness as well as liveliness. There are people who pray to ensure that they have a relationship with God or a higher power with others having spiritual entanglement with church, temple or mosque. Others have sought meaning through personal connections with art or nature, hence, making spirituality meaning susceptible to change owing to individuals' relationship and experiences. In Puchalski (2001) words, "spirituality is a part of humanity that refers to the manner in which people grasp and express the purpose, meaning and the way they undergo the connection with the moment, to their self, to others, to nature, and to the sacred one." In contrast, spirituality brings about a feeling of hope, positivity and fulfilment. A number of spiritual practices such as saying a prayer among others target eliminating negativity while enhancing psychological

well-being. Several studies including: Puchalski (2001); Radha, Ashu (2014) affirms that Spirituality as well as spiritual practices can be helpful to human beings and they help to reduce stress. Some of the spiritual practices that teachers can apply in effective stress management include:

**Practicing gratitude:** Each and every individual teacher has a different experience on spirituality, however, one thing that make spirituality unique is the practice of gratitude. This forms a stress relieving technique and involves writing down on daily basis things that a teacher is grateful for and acts as a perfect life reminder of great happiness and significant things teachers have in life thus turning a stress relieving source (Radha & Ashu, 2014).

**Prayer:** This entails the act of being mindful. It can make teachers more aware, appreciative and attentive. Besides, it has a calming effect and makes the teachers somehow less harsh or judgmental of self as well as to others. It helps in relieving stress by relaxing their mind (Nandeesh et al. 2016).

**Mindfulness:** This means living for the moment and evading thinking of life's problems and rather relaxing and purposefully slowing down. This is an essential approach to relieve teachers' stress and suggests that, instead of struggling over every little thing presented to them by this chaotic world, they only need to slow down and enjoy the happenings of the present moments in their lives as suggested by (Nandeesh et al. 2016).

**Breathing:** This too is a highly significant approach to stress relieving and it involves taking deep breath while concentrating on self-breathing and can comprise of counting breaths; that is exhaling and inhaling. There are numerous techniques of breathing useful in releasing and managing stress experienced by these teachers in the study. This method has also been applied to treat other ailments such as chronic stress, anxiety and hypertension (Radha & Ashu, 2014).

**Meditation:** Commonly utilized in the modern world, meditation is a sure way to rest the mind while attaining consciousness state quite different with normal waking. It fathoms all “We” levels thus enabling experience of consciousness from within and has been a quick stress fixer and reliver and helps the body to reverse stress responses. This can be part of the teachers’ daily routine because it builds resilience against their stress and can be utilized whenever emotional stress throws them off as concluded (Radha & Ashu, 2014).

Various studies done elsewhere continue to support those spiritual techniques and spirituality hold beneficial impact on the body besides showing significant stress reduction levels. Every day exposures to spirituality have aided many teachers in the world in dealing with lots of negative feelings better while enhancing positive feelings. Hence, it can precisely be understood that with teachers getting involved in spiritual activities such as prayer, mindfulness, visiting places among others, buffers one against stress, it also results to these teachers’ improved physical health, thus enhancing their psychological well-being, decreasing their anxiety, depression and hypertension while promoting positive feelings as pointed out by (Nandeesh et al. 2016).

#### **2.4.3 Optimism as a Stress Management Strategy**

Optimism embraces to concepts that are closely related. The first is inclined to hope while the other is a mere believe tendency that one is in “*the best of all possible worlds*”, devised by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, a German philosopher in the renowned theodicy that is satirized in the Voltaire’s *Candide*. This has resulted to years of significant research in determining optimism as an effective psychological phenomenon and has resulted to various concept formulations which make it to be understood as attributional style, shared illusion, disposition or cognitive bias (Strutton &, Lumpkin, 2002).

According to Strutton and Lumpkin, (2002) taking a positive thinking approach optimism helps the stressed teachers in managing stress since they lower depression and distress levels while equipping them in trying times with coping skills. Further, it allows

approach to hostile scenarios both in school and at home in a constructive manner and fosters a better physical and psychological well-being that leads to many health benefits that include; cardiovascular health, increased lifespan and common cold resistance.

Scheier and Carver (2005) in their research theorized the “disposition” towards optimism which they referred to as “dispositional optimism”, in view of an equilibrated personality trait, in varying situations and time thus influencing the way in which the stressed teachers bear with the present, the past and the future events of their lives. Teachers who are optimistic remain positive about their daily life events. Research conducted on optimism perspective demonstrates that there is a positive correlation between an individual’s physical or mental well-being and optimism. It was well established that optimistic subjects oftentimes have more recurrent defensive attitudes, are inclined to adapt appropriate coping mechanisms and are resilient to stress (Scheier & Carver, 2005).

In contrast, a study by Billingsley, Waehler and Hardin (2003), prevalently directed studies towards the psychological comprehension of the pessimism psychological base and this led to the understanding that optimism which is the opposite of pessimism has an attributional style of believing that all the negative life events are inconstant that is; they will not at all repeat themselves and an individual being external and specific attribute these events to not able to influence other activities in their lives. Optimists argue that positive occurrences are stable and also frequent compared to negative events and often think that problems may be evaded in our day to day lives and be prevented from taking place. As a result, this may assist the stressed teachers to cope with any arising stressful situation successfully. Thus, optimism improves mental and physical health, since it enhances adaptive management of personal development and goals. Active stress coping tactics are significant in aversive situations as well as when critical life -goals are at stake because of stress.

#### **2.4.4 Use of Drugs as a Stress Management**

Drugs use enacts chemical fluctuations in the mind through activating the intellect’s chemical messengers that are used to regulate emotions, impulse control, happiness,

stress, memory and learning, and decision-making management. When a teacher stressed, the body and the mind experience some changes which can be life-threatening because it's during this period when the brain engages the reaction of “flight or fight”, due to the perception of being in danger. The stressed teachers' blood pressure becomes high; respiratory rate and body temperature increase; attention, focus as well as senses dial up; the need to eat and sleep diminishes and heart rate accelerates among others as explained by (Hassanbeigi et al. 2013).

In an attempt to cope with this activated stress, most teachers resort to diverse approaches, which often include; abusing drugs. Although drug abuse may offer temporary stress respite, it eventually makes stress even more prolonged, thus resulting to various physical and emotional health, social and behavioural issues (Sinha, 2008). For instance, some teachers may turn to drinking alcohol to relax. However, the big question is “considering the stress symptoms, does drinking help or does substance abuse help to cope with stress or increase the stress levels?”

**Stress and Alcohol:** Though it is perceived as common practice for stressed teachers to drink alcohol so as to relieve stress, it is not an effective approach since it does not at all help. This is so since the alcohol side effects combined with stress symptoms are capable of wreaking havoc on a teacher's body. To add on its potential health concerns, by teachers turning to alcohol whenever they get faced with stressful situations prevents development of the natural stress coping tactics as warned by (Heshmat, 1999).

**Stress and Marijuana:** Any stressed teacher who abuses marijuana is likely to report decreased anxiety and stress feelings. While these outcomes are true for a number of teachers, stress and marijuana relationship is complex because for instance, when the marijuana effect wears out, an increase rebound on anxiety sets in again and makes the teachers unable to cope with routine teaching stressors as explained (Sinha, 2008).

**Stress and Smoking:** This is a common practice and many people have confirmed that stress smoking relieves stress. Though this may still seem true to many teachers who

already have a developed nicotine dependency, starting an association of stress and smoking raises the chances of turning into an addict more so on teachers who are yet to become dependent on nicotine. These forces repeated results to teachers turning to nicotine whenever stressed so as to cope with stressors, as warned by (Hassanbeigi et al. 2013).

A common risk factor of reversion is stress. Chronic stress is likely to increase one's chances of turning into substance abusers with lots of available statistics being able to clarify the correlation between substance use and stress. Research has also shown that despite the prior lack of substance use, when stress hits, even amongst teachers, alcohol as well as other drugs are often sought, (Hassanbeigi et al. 2013). However, stressed teachers should be made to know that successful treatment requires stress management through developing health coping tactics as this often reduces relapse chances.

#### **2.4.5 Physical Exercises as a Stress management Strategy**

Exercising, resting, nutrition, relaxation and diversion of thoughts also help in managing stress. Under proper conditions, exercises can help improve stressed teachers' emotional stability and mental as explained by (Kariuki, 2001). Rest is vital for physical and mental recuperation. It is important for these teachers to choose what is healthy in diet, drink a lot of water and use socially acceptable drugs and stimulants. Stressed teachers should also engage in activities which should be interrupted regularly by periods of rest and relaxation. Also when little may be done to alter the sources of stress, methods of diverting attention from the stressor can be used as suggested by (Melgosa, 2000).

According to Kyriakou (2001), the various ways through which distinct teachers attempt to manage stress falls into two main groupings: palliative and direct reaction. Palliative approaches do not deal with the cause of the stress but are rather focused on minimizing the impact of the stressor. Synclair (2012) reveals how some palliative approaches include behavior that is in the long run dysfunctional such as excessive drinking of alcohol, smoking and dodging behavior in an effort to reduce feelings of distress. Direct action methods involve attempts to remove the sources of stress. Some researches done

elsewhere on how teachers manage stress, show that direct-action management approaches most often applied by teachers include; acting to solve the difficulties, keeping feelings under control, asking for support from colleagues or the principal, starting important adult relationships, managing time and prioritizing tasks at the work place (Kyriakou, 2001). This study focused into finding out the strategies which stressed public primary school teachers employed in coping and managing their stress.

Kyriakou (2001) suggests three ways in which administrators may assist in enhancing a more positive working relationship for teachers namely, treating teachers as valuable investments rather than as expendable assets, providing clear expectations, feedback and rewards and establishing support systems for them. Many of the internal factors that cause teacher stress can be minimized by appropriate management strategies such as recognizing and avoiding negative management strategies like disengagement, suppression of conflicting activities, alcohol, tobacco and drugs; and defensiveness (Kyriakou, 2001). Whether this is true among Public Primary School Teachers in Maara Subcounty was a subject of investigation for this study. Good organizational skills, time management, focusing on one task at a time, a sense of fun and right perspective as well as realistic goals and self-expectations are keys to reduce stress as pointed out by (Melgosa, 2000)

Other useful strategies for minimizing teachers' stress are physical activity, entertainment and personal interests. Some teachers find relevant meditation, progressive relaxation as well as frequent deep breathing helpful in managing stress. Teachers who are stressed should know their own stress causes and practice the most effective management strategies that. Recent and natural methods of managing stress include use of the sauna, which is a steam bath that leads to elimination of waste substances through the skin enabling better functioning of body organs; hydrotherapy, where an individual takes bath in sea water to increase appetite, stimulate metabolism and help internal secretion glands to function better. Meditation, religious response and prayer are also considered therapeutic (Melgosa, 2000). Even though there are so many management strategies available, there is still an increasing number of teachers under stress each day, especially among long serving teachers. This study therefore



investigated how teachers in Maara Subcounty, most of whom are stressed, are employing the discussed strategies in coping and managing their stress.

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

The study was informed by Carl Rogers' person centered theory and Alder's interpersonal theory.

### **2.5.1 Person – Centered Theory**

This theory was developed by Carl Rogers in 1940s in the United States. It states that, instead of seeing people as inherently flawed, with problematic behavior and thoughts which need therapy, person-centered therapy points out that every person has the ability and zeal for individual development and transformation. Rogers referred to the natural human inclination as an “actualizing tendency,” or self-actualization (Rogers, 1942).

Person-Centered Therapy advocates for the use of non-authoritative approaches that allow individuals to take more lead in discussions so that, in the course of the discussions, they can discover their own solutions. The therapist plays the role of a compassionate facilitator, listening without judgment and acknowledging the client's experiences without shifting the conversation in a different route. The therapist is available to inspire and support the client and to direct the therapeutic process without unnecessarily intersecting or interfering with the client's process of self-discovery (Rogers & Sanford, 1985; (Rogers, 1966).

According to Rogers, anyone, and especially stressed teachers could be better gathering greater self-confidence, a stronger sense of self identity, and the capability to establish healthy interpersonal relationships and to trust one's own personal decisions could benefit from person-centered therapy (Rogers, 1966). Teachers, being educated and with abundant knowledge in managing situations and making decisions, can greatly benefit from this therapeutic process. The environment in which teachers work and live is often stressful especially when the demands put upon them go beyond their ability to fulfill them or when resources available are inadequate for the tasks. The

teachers' working conditions may be poor and the community may be harboring negative attitudes towards teachers and the schools.

Such situations may lead to diverse levels of stress and its consequences such as anxiety, irritability, headache or blood pressure. If the teachers fail to manage stress, the effects of stress will continue to be reflected in their physical, social and psychological maladjustment. As the theory suggests, these teachers need to experience the awareness of their working and domestic environments and the factors that lead to stress in order to create room for applying the right management strategies to deal with stress. Rogers argues that man is always driving towards growth, health and adjustments. He further believes that if stress related obstacles are reduced to minimum, man will achieve self-actualization and find mature answers to his problems. Public Primary School Teachers should therefore be able to manage stress both in their work place and at home, improve their interpersonal relationships and in turn improve the quality of their lives. This can be possible if they turn to positive stress management strategies such as exercises, optimism, seeking guidance and counselling services, spiritual activities among others. Hence, the aim of the study was mainly to assess how effective public primary school teachers in Maara Sub-county have been able to manage stress.

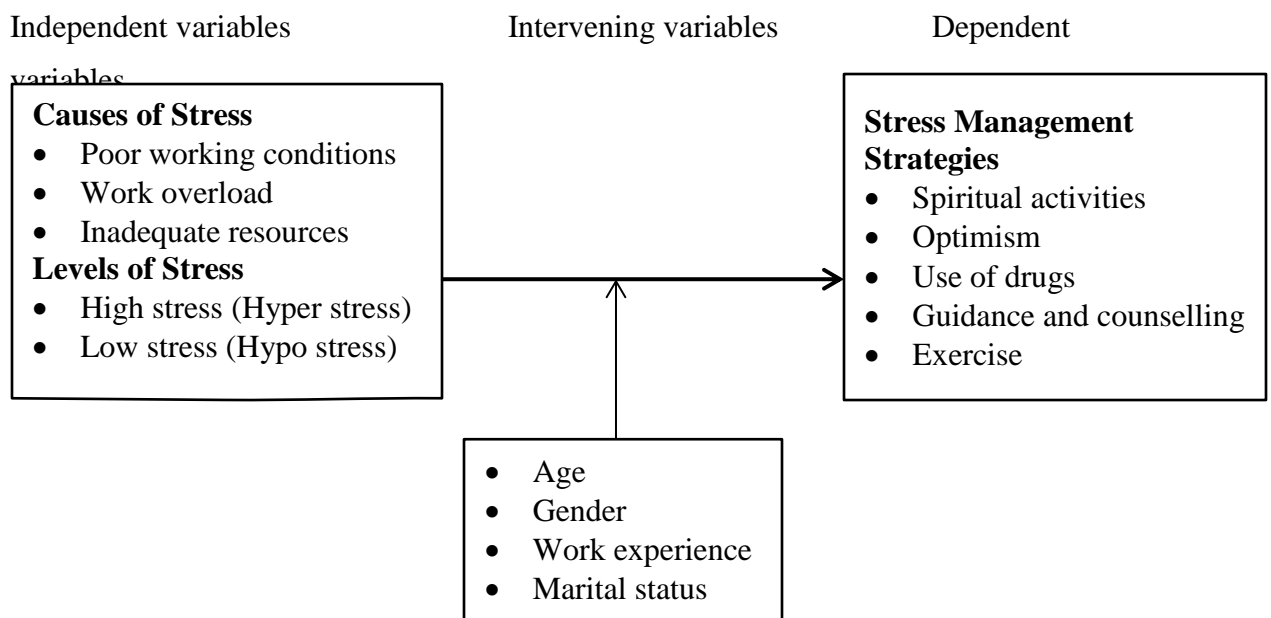
### **2.5.2 Interpersonal Theory**

Interpersonal theory was developed by Henry Stack-Sullivan in the 1930s and states that the key purpose of behavior is for the patient to have his or her desires met through interpersonal interactions, which also decreases or avoids anxiety. According to Sullivan, personality is the outcome of a long sequence of stages through which the individual progressively develops "good feeling" towards others and cultivates a sense of good image towards oneself. Thus, teachers should also learn how to avoid nervousness and to correct wrong perceptions of other persons. Teachers should learn to confirm their ideas by means of consensual validation, and also seek to attain effective interpersonal relationships at a mature level as an importance of life events to psychopathology. Unsatisfactory relationships are the primary causes of maladaptive behavior. Teachers' failed interpersonal relationships with pupils, colleagues and

family members are probable causes of stress. Problematic relationships with workmates can generate stressors like personal conflicts, lack of a communal spirit, a feeling of seclusion, lack of support and unlimited academic and social collaboration with other colleagues (Feiner, 2000). Teachers, like other professionals, desire to belong and participate in groups and when this does not work, they may get stressed. If problem-causing relationships are alleviated and satisfactory relationships started, Public Primary School Teachers can be more effective in their personal lives and in their work. Thus, this study investigated how interpersonal relationship factors contributed toward stress either in accelerating it or in managing it.

## 2.7 Conceptual Framework on Stress Variables

The figure 2.2 presents the conceptual framework that guided the study.



**Figure 2. Conceptual framework showing Stress variables**

Figure 2 presents the conceptual framework based on stress variables. The independent variables in this study are causes of stress which include poor working conditions, work overload and inadequate resources that cause high level stress or low-level stress. Poor working conditions imply working in an environment with poor communication, poor leadership, pathetic physical infrastructure and poor relations between teachers. Resources imply teaching and learning facilities like books,

classrooms, co-curricular facilities among others while workload is the number of lessons a teacher teaches in a day or a week plus other responsibilities given at school.

Dependent variables are the outcome variables that the researcher is attempting to predict. In this study, the dependent variables include optimism, spiritual activities, guidance and counselling, use of drugs and exercises. However, there are other intervening variables that may affect both independent and dependent variables. Intervening variables are any variables that were not systematically manipulated during the experiment but they may still affect the behavior that is being observed. In this study, these include age, gender, work experience and marital status.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Location of the Study**

The study was carried out in some public primary schools within Maara Sub-County. The Sub-County is situated 10 kilometers from Chuka town on the way to Meru town. Maara Sub-County has five divisions.

#### **3.2. Research Design**

This study used a descriptive survey research design. A descriptive research tries to narrate the affairs as they are at present with the researcher having no control over the variables. Moreover, “descriptive studies may be characterized as simply the attempt to determine, describe or identify what is, while analytical research attempts to establish why it is that way or how it came to be” (Ethridge, 2004). According to Fox and Bayat, a descriptive research is “aimed at casting light on the current problem under investigation through a process of data collection that enables researchers to describe situations more completely than it was possible without employing this method (Fox & Bayat, 2007). Thus, descriptive type of research assisted the researcher to illustrate the information on the present existing conditions of teachers in Maara Sub-county in relation to stress in their lives.

Questions were administered in form of a questionnaire and an adopted stress inventory to the respondents. The findings from the questionnaire and the stress inventory administered to the subjects in the sample were used to describe the population of the Public Primary School Teachers in Maara Subcounty. The design was essential in collecting information from the randomly sampled group of Public Primary School Teachers that was representative of the target population in order to describe the causes, consequences and management strategies of stress in the FPE program.

#### **3.3. Population of the Study**

The target population of the study included all public primary school teachers in Maara Sub-County. There were 992 primary school teachers in Maara sub-county

according to data received from the Sub-county Director of Education’s office. Therefore, the total population for this study was 992. Table 2 presents a summary of this information.

**Table 2: Distribution of the Accessible Population**

Zone	Number of schools	Teachers
Kiera	21	197
Muthambi	24	225
Ganga	19	143
Mitheru	21	174
Chogoria/Murugi	23	253
Total	108	992

### 3.4. Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

#### 3.4.1 Sample Size

A representative random sample was estimated with the help of Kathuri and Pals (1993) table for determining a needed size of a randomly chosen sample from a specified population. According to Kathuri & Pals (1993), a population of 1000 should yield a sample of 278. Therefore a sample of 278 respondents was drawn to take part in the study. Table 3 presents a summary of this information.

**Table 3: Sampling Matrix**

Zone	Population	Sample
Kiera	197	55
Muthambi	225	63
Ganga	143	40
Mitheru	174	49
Chogoria/Murugi	253	71
Total	992	278

#### 3.4.2 Sampling Procedure

Representative sample was selected using both stratified and simple random sampling. Initially, teachers were clustered based on the zones from which they belonged. From each zone, a proportionate sample was drawn using simple random sampling.

### **3.5. Instrumentation**

This study employed the use of self-report questionnaires to gather data from sampled respondent. The questionnaire was designed to assess level of psychological stress among sampled respondents, determine the causes of psychological stress among the respondents and establish the effectiveness of the management strategies used by public primary school teachers to manage the psychological stress experienced in the course of their work. The questionnaire was sub-divided into four sections. Section A contained five items inquiring on the respondent's demographic information. Section B contained twenty Likert scaled items intended to assess respondents psychological stress levels and their manifestation. Section C consists of 39 Likert scaled items meant to assess causes of psychological stress among public primary school teachers. Section D contained twenty Likert scaled items meant to assess the effectiveness of various stress management strategies. The items of the questionnaire were adopted from Relaxation – Stress Workbook. A copy of the questionnaire is attached to this thesis as Appendix 2.

### **3.6. Validity of the Instruments**

Runyon (1960) defined validity as the truthfulness and the degree to which results obtained from a test accurately represent the domain of interest. To ensure content validity also, the researcher ensured that the various variables in the questionnaire were measured. The questionnaire was designed such that the test items adequately sampled the domain of possible items and covered all the variables. The designing of the questionnaire was monitored closely by the research supervisors to ensure that it covered the content area and that all the sub-areas were factored and in the correct proportion. This ensured consistency, adequacy and accuracy. The instrument, therefore, was constructed within the conceptual framework and theoretical framework. Moreover, the researcher was careful to ensure that the research focused on the objectives of the project, namely the key research questions, as stated in chapter one.

### **3.7. Reliability of the Instruments**

Before the instrument was applied, it was pre-tested. The research instrument was to be found reliable when the researcher found out how dependable, steady, consistent, predictable and accurate the instrument is, in order to test hypothesis. Therefore, the pre-test was carried out on 30 Primary School Teachers respondents from Meru South Subcounty, which is also in Tharaka Nithi County. This region has more or less similar characteristics in terms of demography, economic, social and cultural factors.

As a result of the relevant feedback received, essential adjustments and restructuring were made to the questionnaire tool. The purpose of administering the pre-test sample was therefore to establish the consistency, dependability and trustworthiness of the outcomes i.e., the reliability of the instrument to find out if the questionnaire responded to another whereby it covered all the variables under investigation and gathered data consistently. In the study, a minimum reliability analysis of 0.70 and above was considered as a reasonable measure of internal reliability as suggested by Amin (2005). Computation scale measure reliability of 0.723 was found. This was judged as a reasonable measure of internal reliability using Cronbach's alpha to determine the coefficient of reliability as shown in the table below.

### **3.8. Data Collection Procedure**

Before data collection, permission from the following authorities; National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), Ministry of Education – Tharaka Nithi County and Department of Education (Chuka University). Approval was also obtained from the District Education Office and the respective schools' principals before carrying out the study. Then schools were visited and teachers were provided with the questionnaires through drop and pick technique.

### **3.9. Data Analysis**

The data collected using the instruments was organized, and analyzed. The data was grouped according to the objectives of the study and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Descriptive and inferential statistics



was used to analyze the data as shown in Table 4. The data was summarized using percentages and frequencies. Stress levels were determined by means.

### **3.10. Ethical Considerations**

Researchers dealing with subjects that are people must consider how they carry out their research and give careful attention to ethical issues associated with conducting their research (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). First, in order to correspond with research protocol, written permissions were sought from the relevant authorities from the ministry of education, university and schools before data collection.

The respondents were contacted in the study face to face whereby they were informed of the purpose and significance of the study. They were guaranteed of confidentiality before, during and after the study. Additionally, to uphold confidentiality of participating teachers, numbers in place of names were used on the questionnaires. Informed consent of the respondents was sought orally and the purpose of the study was explained to each respondent both orally and in written form. Information provided by the respondents was handled with much confidentiality and respondents' anonymity was upheld. The necessary clarification of the contents of the questionnaire was done for the respondents where necessary for proper understanding.

The researcher was honest and sincere with the respondents about the aim and purpose of the study. This openness enabled the participants to agree with the researcher on a convenient period for data collection. Being open and sincere to the participants during the entire investigation guaranteed that all information that was important to them was available. To safeguard unauthorized access to the questionnaires after data collection, they were put under lock and key in a cabinet and the researcher's laptop was password secured to ensure no unauthorized access took place.

**Table 4: Data Analysis Matrix**

Research Questions	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Statistics
What are the levels of stress among Public Primary School Teachers in Maara Sub-County?	Stress	Stress levels	Percentages Frequencies Mean
What are the causes of stress among Public Primary School Teachers in Maara Sub-county?	Stress	Causes of stress	Percentages Frequencies
How effective are the stress management strategies which Public Primary School Teachers in Maara Sub-county use?	Stress	Stress management strategies	Percentages Frequencies Chi-square

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **4.1 General and Demographic Information**

The study sought to assess the psychological stress levels and the stress management strategies among public primary school teachers in Maara Sub-county in Tharaka Nithi. The findings were intended to provide information that could be useful in designing possible intervention strategies to enhance the wellbeing of teachers in public institutions in the country.

##### **4.1.1 General Information**

To achieve the purpose of the study, a descriptive survey research design was employed. A total of 231 public primary school teachers sampled participated in the study. Compared to the total sample of 278 initially targeted, the study attained a return rate of 83.1%. This response rate was deemed sufficient for data analysis as per Babbie and Muoton (2002), who reports that any response rate of 50% and above is adequate for analysis.

##### **4.1.2 Demographic Information**

Respondents' demographic information sought include age, gender and level of education. Information about their teaching experience as well as their workload was also sought. Findings on each attribute were as summarized in Table 5. Data on respondents' age show that slightly more than a quarter of the teachers (25.5%) were less than 30 years old, less than a half (41.6%) were 30 to 50 years old while those who were above 50 years were about a third respectively (32.9%). This means that a majority of the teachers interviewed was either young or approaching middle age.

With regard to their gender, a slight majority were males (51.5%) compared to females (48.5%) implying more or less equity in gender composition in the teaching force. Information on teaching experience indicates that a majority of teachers involved in the study were highly experienced. Specifically, it was observed that more teachers (44.2%)

had over 20 years teaching experienced compared to those with between 10 and 20 years (28.6%) and those with less than 10 years teaching experience (27.3%).

**Table 5: Respondents' Demographic Information**

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age in years	Below 30	59	25.5
	30-50	96	41.6
	Above 50	76	32.9
	Total	231	100.0
Gender	Male	119	51.5
	Female	112	48.5
	Total	231	100.0
Teaching Experience in years	Below 10	63	27.3
	10-20	66	28.6
	Above 20	102	44.2
	Total	231	100.0
Qualification	P1	86	37.2
	Diploma	79	34.2
	Graduate	66	28.6
	Total	231	100.0
Number of lessons	Below 25	3	1.3
	25-35	63	27.3
	Above 35	165	71.4
	Total	231	100.0

Information on professional qualification illustrates that a significant majority of the teachers were either P1 (37.2%) or diploma (34.2%) holders compared to those who were graduates (28.6%). This is consistent with the basic requirement for a primary school teacher which is a P1 certificate. As regards teachers workload in terms of number of lessons, data obtained shows that a significant proportion of the teachers (71.4%) had more than 35 lessons per week. This means that a majority of the teachers had heavy workload based on the stipulated requirement for a normal weekly workload.

#### **4.2 Causes of Psychological Stress among Public Primary School Teachers**

The first objective sought to determine causes of psychological stress among public primary school teachers in Maara sub-county. Probable causes assessed include overwhelming situations, conflicts, work overload and alienation among others. The perceived effect of

each factor was assessed based on a set of five Likert scaled statements. This section presents findings on each factor and the overall assessment.

#### 4.2.1 Overwhelming Situation

The extent to which overwhelming situations could be a cause of psychological stress was assessed based on five Likert scaled statements. The findings were as presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Extent of Effect of Overwhelming Situations**

Statement	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total
I lack the authority to carry out certain responsibilities.	-	1.7	41.6	56.7	100.0
I feel trapped in a situation without any real options.	-	1.7	74.5	23.8	100.0
I am unable to influence decisions that affect me.	-	-	46.3	53.7	100.0
There are a lot of requirements that get in the way of my doing certain tasks.	-	3.5	26.4	70.1	100.0
I can't solve the problems assigned to me.	6.5	14.7	64.1	14.7	100.0

Data obtained show very high rating for elements of lack of control as a cause of psychological stress among public primary school teachers in Maara sub-county. For instance, except for a few, 1.7%, the rest of the respondents indicated having a lack the authority to accomplish certain responsibilities and felt trapped in a situation without any actual options. All the respondents indicated that they were not able to influence decisions that affect them while a significant majority felt that there were a lot of requirements that get between the way of their doing certain tasks (96.5%) and that they couldn't solve problems assigned to them (78.8%). On average, 80.38% of the respondents believed that lack of control was a cause of psychological stress among the teachers.

#### 4.2.2 Information Gap at Workplace

The extent to which information gap at workplace could be a cause of psychological stress was also assessed based on five Likert scaled statements. Findings were as presented in Table 7. Information in Table 7 show an average rating for elements of

information gap as a cause of psychological stress among public primary school teachers in Maara sub-county. The ratings were considerably high for statements including an acknowledgement of not having sufficient information to carry out certain tasks (68.4%) and not understanding the criteria applied to evaluate their performance (83.1%). However, only a few were uncertain about the responsibilities of their teaching job (33.8%). Similarly, less than one out of ten of the respondents (9.5%) indicated that their fellow teachers were not clear about what they do. On average, 38.96% of the respondents believed that information gap was a cause of psychological stress among the teachers.

**Table 7: Extent of Effect of Information Gap at Workplace**

Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Total
I am unsure about the responsibilities of my teaching job.	1.3	6.9	58.0	33.8	-	100.0
I don't have enough information to carry out certain tasks.	5.2	6.1	20.3	63.2	5.2	100.0
I am under qualified for certain tasks I'm expected to do.	5.6	63.6	30.7	-	-	100.0
My fellow teachers are not clear about what I do.	4.3	33.8	52.4	9.5	-	100.0
I don't understand the criteria used to evaluate my performance.	-	-	16.9	54.1	29.0	100.0

#### 4.2.3 Cause and Effect

The extent to which cause and effect could be a cause of psychological stress was also assessed based on five Likert scaled statements. Findings were as presented in Table 8.

**Table 8: Extent of Cause and Effect**

Statement	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Total
There is no relationship between how I perform and how I am rated.	-	1.3	45.9	52.8	100.0
I sense that popularity and politics are more important than performance.	-	17.8	29.4	52.8	100.0
I don't know what my head teacher thinks of my performance.	-	20.8	57.6	21.6	100.0
I don't know what I am doing right and what I am doing wrong.	8.2	51.5	40.3	-	100.0
If I give suggestions, my head teacher does not include them.	-	7.8	46.8	445.4	100.0

Data obtained show relatively high rating for elements of cause and effect as a cause of psychological stress among public primary school teachers in Maara sub-county. Specifically, almost all the respondents (98.7%) thought that there is no association between how they perform and how they are rated. A greater amount, 82.2% believed that popularity and politics are more significant than performance and 79.2% didn't know what their head teacher thinks of their performance. Similarly, 92.2% observed that when they give suggestions, their head teacher does not include them. However, only 40.3% of the respondents acknowledged not knowing when they were right and when they were wrong. The overall percentage rating was 78.52% implying that a majority of the respondents believed that cause and effect was a major cause of psychological stress among public primary schools in Maara Sub-county.

#### 4.2.4 Conflict

The extent to which conflict could be a cause of psychological stress was also assessed based on five Likert scaled statements. Findings were as presented in Table 9.

**Table 9: Extent of Effect of Conflict**

Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Total
I am expected to satisfy conflicting needs.	-	5.3	20.3	54.5	19.9	100.0
I disagree with fellow teachers.	1.3	24.7	60.2	13.9	-	100.0
I disagree with my head teacher.	5.6	17.3	19.5	47.6	10.0	100.0
I am caught in the middle.	4.3	11.2	39.4	35.1	10.0	100.0
I can't get what I need to get the job done.	-	-	6.5	68.8	24.7	100.0

Data obtained show above average rating for elements of conflict as a cause of psychological stress among public primary school teachers in Maara Sub-County. For instance, about three quarters of the respondents indicated that they are expected to satisfy conflicting needs (74.4%), more than half indicated that they disagree with their head teacher (57.6%) and a significant majority (93.5%) could not get what they need to get the job done. However, only 13.9% indicated disagreeing with fellow teachers and slightly less than a half (45.1%) was caught in the middle. Therefore, the variable had an overall rating of 56.9% implying that slightly more than a half of the respondents consider conflicts at the workplace as a cause of psychological stress among public primary school teachers in Maara Sub-county.

#### **4.2.5 Alienation**

The extent to which alienation could be a cause of psychological stress was also assessed based on five Likert scaled statements. Findings were as presented in Table 10. Information obtained show above average rating for elements of alienation as a cause of psychological stress among public primary school teachers in Maara sub-county. Specifically, more than half of the respondents felt pessimistic about opportunities for advancement or growth in teaching (54.1%). Slightly more respondents (55.4%) observed that their head teacher was critical. Similarly, more than two thirds of the respondents lamented that their good work is not noticed or appreciated (71.5%) and that their progress on teaching seems less than it could be (82.3%). However, very few respondents (16.0%) felt unaccepted by their fellow teachers. On average, 55.86% of the respondents believed that alienation was a cause of psychological stress among the teachers.



**Table 10: Effect of Alienation**

Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Total
I feel pessimistic about opportunities for advancement or growth in teaching.	-	3.5	42.4	45.0	9.1	100.0
My headteacher is critical.	-	8.2	36.4	43.7	11.7	100.0
I feel unaccepted by my fellow teachers.	6.5	32.5	45.0	10.8	5.2	100.0
My good work is not noticed or appreciated.	-	3.9	24.6	57.6	13.9	100.0
My progress on teaching seems less than it could be.	-	-	17.7	63.3	19.0	100.0

#### 4.2.6 Work Overload

The extent to which work overload could be a cause of psychological stress was also assessed based on five Likert scaled statements. Findings were as presented in Table 11.

**Table 11: Effect of Overload**

Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Total
I experience little meaning in teaching.	1.3	1.3	21.2	52.4	23.8	100.0
I feel unsupported by my fellow teachers or my head teacher.	-	1.3	10.0	54.5	34.2	100.0
My values seem at odds with those of school management.	2.6	6.1	74.9	16.5	-	100.0
The school seems insensitive to my individuality.	-	12.1	69.7	16.9	1.3	100.0
I find I cannot be myself at school because I feel different from my fellow teachers	-	6.9	47.2	43.3	2.6	100.0

Data obtained showed average level of rating for elements of work overload as a cause of psychological stress among public primary school teachers in Maara sub-county. For example, more than three quarters of the respondents (76.2%) felt that they experience little meaning in teaching. Similarly, a significant majority (88.7%) indicated feeling unsupported by their fellow teachers or their head teacher. However, only 16.3% considered their values to be at odds with those of school management, (18.2%) thought that the school seem insensitive to their individuality while slightly less than half of the

respondents (45.9%) found that they could not be at school because they feel different from their fellow teachers. On average, 49.06% of the respondents believed that work overload was a cause of psychological stress among the teachers. This means that slightly less than half of the respondents consider work overload as a cause of psychological stress among public primary school teachers.

#### 4.2.7 Working Environment

The extent to which working environment could be a cause of psychological stress was also assessed based on five Likert scaled statements. Findings were as presented in Table 12.

**Table 12: Effect of Working Environment**

Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Total
I find my working environment unpleasant.	-	5.2	17.7	60.6	16.5	100.0
I lack the privacy I need to concentrate on my teaching work.	-	-	16.9	53.2	29.9	100.0
Some aspects of my school environment seem hazardous.	-	-	26.4	58.0	15.6	100.0
I have too much or too little contact with friends.	2.6	27.3	59.3	10.8	-	100.0

Information in Table 12 show above average rating for a majority of elements of work environment as a cause of psychological stress among public primary school teachers in Maara sub-county. More than three quarters of the respondents (77.1%) indicated that they find their working environment unpleasant. A significant majority (83.1%) lamented about their lack of the privacy should they need to concentrate on their teaching work. At the same time, a majority of the respondents (73.6%) found some aspects of their school environment to be hazardous thus being a danger to them. However, only 10.8% had too much or too little contact with friends while in school. Consequently, 61.15% of the respondents believed that environment was a cause of psychological stress among the teachers. This means that more than half of the respondents consider work environment as a cause of psychological stress among public primary school teachers in Maara Sub-county.

#### 4.2.8 Value Conflict

The extent to which value conflict could be a cause of psychological stress was also assessed based on five Likert scaled statements. Findings were as presented in Table 13.

**Table 13: Effect of Value Conflict**

Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Total
I must do things that are against my better judgment.	11.3	45.9	37.2	5.6	-	100.0
I must make compromises in my values.	13.4	51.5	33.8	1.3	-	100.0
My family and friends do not respect what I do.	25.6	59.7	14.7	-	-	100.0
I observe my fellow teachers doing things that I don't approve of.	35.5	47.6	15.6	1.3	-	100.0
The school that I work for pressures teachers to do things that are unethical or unsafe.	32.5	54.5	13.0	-	-	100.0

Data obtained show below average rating for elements of value conflict as a cause of psychological stress among public primary school teachers in Maara sub-county. Less than ten percent of the respondents (5.6%) consented to doing things that are against my better judgment. Similarly, only 1.3% considered making compromises in their values. At the same time, a similar number of respondents (1.3%) observed that their fellow teachers doing things that they don't approve of. Consequently, a consolidated ranking of respondents conception of the effects each of the factors were as presented in Table 14.

**Table 14: Causes of Psychological Stress**

Cause	Mean	SD	Frequency	Rank
Overwhelming situations	4.3688	.32474	80.38	1
Information gap at workplace	3.1714	.42412	38.96	7
Cause and effect	3.9143	.43431	78.52	2
Conflict	3.5559	.55172	56.90	4
Alienation	3.5441	.47344	55.86	5
Overload	3.5337	.45122	49.06	6
Environment	3.6721	.56037	61.15	3
Value conflict	2.0251	.43884	-	8

From Table 14, it is evident that overwhelming situations was considered the main cause of psychological stress by the respondents followed by cause and effect, then

environment and conflict in decreasing order of effect. Other causes ranked relatively lowly include alienation, overload, information gap and least of all value conflict. Findings imply that overwhelming situations; cause and effect as well as environment and conflict were the main causes of stress among public primary school teachers in Tharaka Nithi County. According to Michie (2002), workplace factors that have been found to be related with stress and health risks can be categorised into two as those that relate to the content of work and those to do with the social and organisational context of work. Khan, S., Khan, M. and Khattak (2019) found that co-worker relations, remunerations and workload are the key factors associated to stress among schools teachers in private schools of Peshawar city Pakistan.

#### **4.3 Psychological Stress Levels among Public Primary School Teachers**

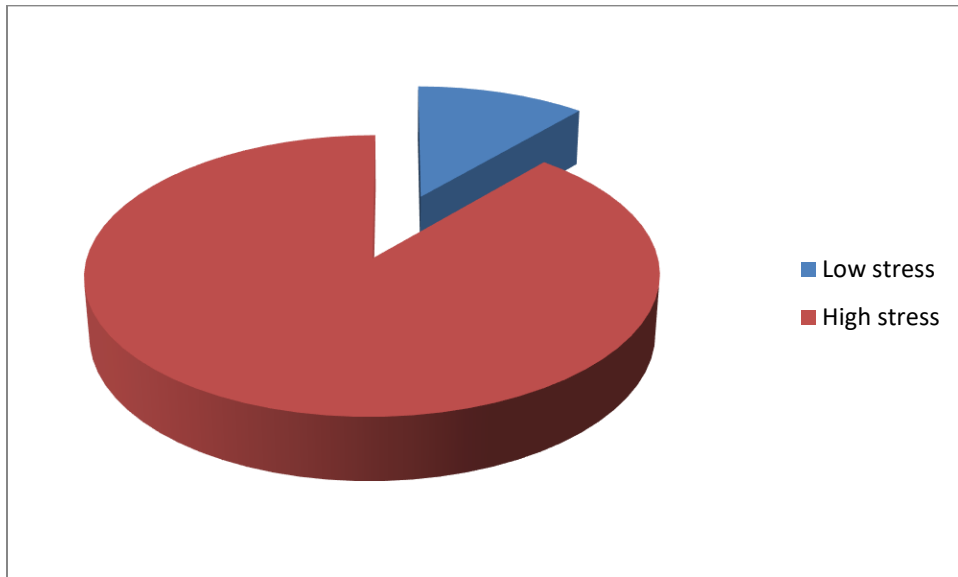
The first objective sought to assess the level of psychological stress among public primary school teachers in Maara sub-county, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Teachers' level of stress was assessed using a set of six Likert scaled statements. Data obtained was summarized using frequencies and percentages. Table 15 presents a summary of the research findings.

**Table 15: Level of Psychological Stress among Public Primary School Teachers**

Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Total
In the last month, how often have you been upset because of a thing that happened unexpectedly?	3.5	3.0	27.3	40.3	25.9	100.0
In the last month, how often have you felt you were unable to control the important things at your work?	3.0	3.0	5.2	45.0	43.8	100.0
In the last month, how frequent have you felt nervous and “stressed”?	-	1.3	15.2	44.6	38.9	100.0
In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	2.2	4.8	5.6	45.0	42.4	100.0
In the last month, how frequent have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?	2.6	3.0	13.8	37.7	42.9	100.0
In the last month, how frequent have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	2.6	3.5	8.7	46.8	38.5	100.0

A significant proportion of the teachers (88.8%) indicated that they usually or always felt that they were not able to take control of important things at their work places compared to those who never or rarely had the same feeling. Additionally, a significant proportion (83.5%) acknowledged having nervous feeling and being “stressed” in the last one month compared to those who never or rarely experienced similar feelings. Similar observation was reported with regard to those who found that they could not, teachers who did so accounting for 87.4% of the total while those who never or rarely had the same feeling constituting only 7.0%. Those who were usually or always angered because of things that were out of their control made up 80.6% of the population while 85.3% usually or always felt that problems were piling up so high that they could not overcome. Overall, the findings established that teachers’ level of psychological stress was relatively high. A majority of the teachers (88.7%) indicated that their stress levels were usually or always

high. Figure 2 summarizes the level of psychological stress among primary school teachers in Maara sub-county.



**Figure 3: Level of Stress**

On average, data obtained showed high level of stress among public primary school teachers in Maara sub-county in Tharaka Nithi County. Sagar et al. (2017) in their study reported variable stress levels among study respondents. Specifically, they observed mild stress among about a third of the respondents (37.1%), moderate levels among about a half (52.1%) while 10.7% were severely stressed. Similarly, Aswathy and Pillai. (2017) in a study on occupational stress among Anganawadi Workers in Kerala State, India observed moderate stress among 83.3% and severe stress among 16.7% of the study sample. However, Ramesh et al. (2016) established a prevalence level which was neither too high to merit immediate intervention nor too low a level to rule out its consequences among IT professionals. According to Schlotz et al. (2011), considerable minimal amounts of stress are desirable, beneficial, and even healthy. Such stress is positive and helps enhance performance since it motivates, and initiates adaptation, and reaction to the environment. Melgosa (2000) observes that a moderate amount of tension is vital and certain levels of stress are actually healthy since it helps one to face challenges, solve difficult problems and reach desired goals. Gatchel and Price as cited in Colman (1997) argue that there is evidence suggesting that prolonged or negative stress can affect immunity.

Data obtained illustrated that the high level of stress among the teachers were manifested through to a number of symptoms as summarized in Table 16.

**Table 16: Symptoms of Psychological Stress**

Symptom	Mean	SD
Headache	3.61	.841
Anxiety	3.92	.635
Chest pain/ palpitations	3.32	.819
Nausea or indigestion	3.66	.752
Sleeplessness	3.63	.610
Irritability	3.68	.876
Backache	3.12	.812
Neck ache	2.42	.776
Stomach disorders	4.38	.687
Inability to concentrate	4.13	.602

Information in Table 16 show that manifestation of stomach disorder was ranked highest (M=4.38, SD=0.687) thus was the most common symptom followed by inability to concentrate (M=4.13, SD=0.602) then anxiety (M=3.92, SD=0.635) and sleeplessness (M=3.68, SD=0.876) in decreasing order. However, the effects of neck ache (M=2.42, SD=0.776) and backache (M=3.12, SD=0.812) was ranked lowest indicating their being felt by comparably less number of teachers. This means that stomach disorder, inability to concentrate and anxiety were the main symptoms of stress among the public primary school teachers while neck and back ache as symptoms was least reported among the teachers. Sowder (2015) noted that psychological stress is created when an individual feels unequipped to manage a situation or thinks in a negative or exaggerated way about the past, present or perceived future. Ramesh et al. (2016) reported insomnia as the most common symptom of stress among their study sample. Dutta, Kar Tirthalli and Nair (2007) observed sleep disorders, phobic disorder, nicotine and alcohol dependence, depression and dysthymia were other comorbidities among the industrial working population.

#### **4.4 Effectiveness of Psychological Stress Management Strategies**

The study also sought after assessing the degree and effect of stress management strategies that the respondents adopted in an attempt to manage stress they encounter in

the course of their interactions. The strategies assessed include guidance and counselling, spiritual activities, optimism, use of drugs and exercises.

#### 4.4.1 Use of Guidance and Counselling Services

The extent of adoption of guidance and counselling services as stress management strategy was assessed using four statements. Table 17 presents a summary of the outcome

**Table 17: Extent of use of Guidance and Counselling Strategy**

Statements	N	R	S	O	A	Total
I actively seek information about negative events that I encounter in teaching to know how to cope with them.	14.3	26.6	54.5	2.6	-	100.0
I seek help from friends or colleagues when I face teaching related challenges.	3.9	27.7	57.1	11.3	-	100.0
I seek help from a professional counsellor when stressed	15.2	56.7	26.8	1.3	-	100.0
I share the challenges I face in teaching with people.	-	-	12.6	73.2	14.3	100.0

Note: **N**=Never; **R**=Rarely; **S**=Sometimes; **O**=Often; **A**=Always

Information obtained on the extent of adoption of guidance and counselling as a stress management strategy show that more than half of the respondents (57.1%) sometimes or often actively seek information about negative events that they encounter in teaching to know how to cope with them. Slightly more than two thirds of the respondents (68.4%) seek help from friends or colleagues when they face teaching related challenges and all the respondents (100%) share the challenges they face in teaching with people. However, less than a third of the respondents (28.1%) seek help from a professional counsellor when stressed. Collectively, data obtained illustrated that more than half of the respondents (63.4%) indicated using guidance and counselling as a stress management strategy.

The effect of the strategy on respondents' stress levels was assessed using Chi-square. Data obtained was as presented in Table 18



**Table 18: Effect of Guidance and Counselling Strategy of Stress Levels**

	Value	df	Asymp Sig (2-sided)	CC
Pearson Chi-Square	15.413 <sup>a</sup>	7	.031	.250
Likelihood Ratio	13.059	7	.071	
Linear-by-Linear Association	.119	1	.730	
N of Valid Cases	231			

Chi-square results  $\chi^2(7) = 15.41, p = 0.031$  indicated a significant effect of guidance and counselling strategy on respondents' stress levels. Contingency Coefficient measure of association (CC) illustrated a 25% change in level of respondents stress due to use of guidance and counselling.

#### 4.4.2 Involvement in Spiritual Activities

Extent of involvement in spiritual activities as a strategy as stress management strategy was assessed using four statements. Table 19 presents a summary of the outcome

**Table 19: Involvement in Spiritual Activities**

Statements	N	R	S	O	A	Total
I engage in prayer, meditation or inspirational reading when I face negative experiences.	10.8	18.6	42.9	19.5	8.2	100.0
I have contact with a spiritual community.	8.7	20.8	40.7	18.6	11.3	100.0
I keep my connection to my conception of supreme authority.	5.6	22.5	43.3	21.6	6.9	100.0
I share experiences with the members of my spiritual community.	20.3	19.9	34.6	18.6	6.5	100.0

Data on respondents' involvement in spiritual activities as a stress management strategy show that more than two thirds of the respondents (70.6%) sometimes, often or always engage in prayer, meditation or inspirational reading when they face negative experiences. An equivalent proportion of respondents (70.6%) have contact with a spiritual community while slightly more respondents (71.8%) keep connection to their conception of supreme authority. At the same time, more than half of the respondents (59.7%) share experiences with members of their spiritual community. Collectively, data obtained illustrated that more than half of the respondents (63.4%) indicated involving themselves in spiritual activities as a stress management strategy.

The effect of involvement in spiritual activities as a strategy on respondents' stress levels was assessed using Chi-square. Data obtained was as presented in Table 20.

**Table 20: Effect of Respondents' Involvement in Spiritual Activities**

	Value	df	Asymp Sig (2-sided)	CC
Pearson Chi-Square	29.631 <sup>a</sup>	16	.020	.337
Likelihood Ratio	24.699	16	.075	
Linear-by-Linear Association	.112	1	.737	
N of Valid Cases	231			

Chi-square results  $\chi^2(16) = 29.63, p = 0.020$  indicated a significant effect of guidance and counselling strategy on respondents' stress levels. Contingency Coefficient measure of association (CC) illustrated a 34% change in level of respondents stress due to their involvement in spiritual activities.

#### 4.4.3 Optimism

The extent of adoption of optimism as a stress management strategy was assessed using four statements. Table 21 presents a summary of the outcome.

**Table 21: Optimism**

Statements	N	R	S	O	A	Total
When things are not going on well, I view the situation as being temporary rather than permanent.	1.7	29.9	35.1	29.4	3.9	100.0
When something bad happens to me, I don't exaggerate its significance.	-	14.3	51.5	31.6	2.6	100.0
When stressed by a complex situation, I focus my attention on those aspects of the situation that I can manage.	-	22.5	48.5	25.1	3.9	100.0
When highly stressed, I am able to change my thinking to calm down.	-	26.3	40.3	30.6	2.6	100.0

Information on the extent of adoption of optimism as a stress management strategy show that more than two thirds of the respondents (68.4%) sometimes, often or always view the situation as being temporary rather than permanent when things are not going well. More than three quarters of the respondents (85.7%) don't exaggerate its significance when something bad happens to them while slightly less than this proportion (77.5%) focus

their attention on those aspects of the situation that they can manage when stressed by a complex situation. Data obtained also illustrated that more than two thirds (73.7%) is able to change their thinking to calm down when is highly stressed. On average, data obtained illustrated that a majority of the respondents (76.33%) indicated adopting optimism as a stress management strategy.

Subsequently, the effect of optimism as a strategy on respondents' stress levels was assessed using Chi-square. Data obtained was as presented in Table 22.

**Table 22: Effect of Optimism on Teachers' Stress Levels**

	Value	df	Asymp Sig (2-sided)	CC
Pearson Chi-Square	10.284 <sup>a</sup>	11	.505	.206
Likelihood Ratio	11.598	11	.395	
Linear-by-Linear Association	.109	1	.741	
N of Valid Cases	231			

Chi-square results  $\chi^2(11) = 10.28$ ,  $p = 0.505$  indicated an insignificant effect of optimism as a strategy on respondents' stress levels. Contingency Coefficient measure of association (CC) illustrated a 21% change in level of respondents stress due to optimism

#### 4.4.4 Use of Drugs and Substances

The extent of adoption of use of drugs as stress management strategy was assessed using four statements. Table 23 presents a summary of the outcome. Extent of adoption of use of drugs as a stress management strategy show that less than half of the respondents (48.9%) sometimes, often or always find fulfillment in taking beer when they face complex situations. Slightly more than a quarter of the respondents (28.2%) indicated that smoking or chewing tobacco relieves them when they feel stressed. Data obtained also showed that very few respondents (18.2%) acknowledged that their head teacher or colleagues complain about their use of alcohol. Likewise, only 21.2% indicated taking marijuana or chewing miraa after work to relieve tension. This means that fewer respondents (29.13%) resorted to use of drugs as a stress management strategy.

**Table 23: Extent of Use of Drugs**

Statements	N	R	S	O	A	Total
I find fulfillment in taking beer when I face complex situations.	32.5	18.6	29.4	16.9	2.6	100.0
Smoking or chewing tobacco relieves me when I feel stressed.	57.6	14.3	20.8	4.8	2.6	100.0
My head teacher or colleagues complain about my use of alcohol.	68.0	13.9	13.0	2.6	2.6	100.0
I take marijuana or chew Miraa after work to relieve tension.	78.8	-	16.0	2.6	2.6	100.0

The effect of the strategy on respondents' stress levels was assessed using Chi-square. Data obtained was as presented in Table 24.

**Table 24: Effect of use of Drugs**

	Value	df	Asymp Sig (2-sided)	CC
Pearson Chi-Square	23.800 <sup>a</sup>	11	.014	.306
Likelihood Ratio	21.215	11	.031	
Linear-by-Linear Association	.498	1	.480	
N of Valid Cases	231			

Chi-square results  $\chi^2(11) = 23.80$ ,  $p = 0.014$  indicated a significant effect of use of drugs on respondents' stress levels. Contingency Coefficient measure of association (CC) illustrated a 31% change in level of respondents stress due to their use of drugs.

#### 4.4.5 Physical Exercises

The extent of adoption of physical exercise as a stress management strategy was assessed using four statements. Table 25 presents a summary of the outcome. Information on extent of adoption of exercise as a stress management strategy show that less than half of the respondents (38.5%) sometimes, often or always indulge in practical healthy ways of relaxing. About a quarter of the respondents (26.4%) engage in physical exercises at home or in school. The proportion of those who participate in a group that engages in physical fitness activities (1.3%) or those who set apart time for physical exercise in their work schedule (7.8%) was even more minimal. This implies that use of exercise as a stress management strategy was considered relevant by very few respondents (17.75%).

**Table 25: Extent of Use of Physical Exercise**

Statements	N	R	S	O	A	Total
I indulge in practical healthy ways of relaxing	20.3	41.1	35.9	1.3	1.3	100.0
I engage in physical exercises at home or in school	28.6	45.0	23.8	1.3	1.3	100.0
I participate in a group that engages in physical fitness activities.	84.4	14.3	1.3	-	-	100.0
In my work schedule, I set apart time for physical exercise.	55.4	36.8	6.5	1.3	-	100.0

The effect of exercise as a strategy on respondents' stress levels was assessed using Chi-square. Data obtained was as presented in Table 26.

**Table 26: Effect of Physical Exercise on Stress**

	Value	df	Asymp Sig (2-sided)	CC
Pearson Chi-Square	4.227 <sup>a</sup>	9	.896	.134
Likelihood Ratio	5.176	9	.819	
Linear-by-Linear Association	.849	1	.357	
N of Valid Cases	231			

Chi-square results  $\chi^2(9) = 4.23$ ,  $p = 0.896$  indicated an insignificant effect of exercise as a strategy on respondents stress levels. Contingency Coefficient measure of association (CC) illustrated a 13% change in level of respondents stress due to their involvement in exercises.

#### 4.4.6 Discussion

The last objective sought to assess the effect of management strategies that the respondents adopted in an attempt to manage stress they encounter in the course of their interactions. Strategies assessed include guidance and counselling, involvement in spiritual activities, optimism, use of drugs and exercises. Information on extent of adoption of guidance and counselling show that a majority of the respondents sometimes or often actively seek information about negative events that they encounter in teaching to know how to cope with them. Similarly, a majority seek help from friends or colleagues when they face teaching related challenges and share the challenges they face in teaching with people. Chi-square analysis indicated a significant effect of guidance and counselling strategy on respondents' stress levels. Contingency Coefficient measure

of association (CC) illustrated a 25% change in level of respondents stress due to use of guidance and counselling. This could be interpreted to imply that guidance and counselling is an important stress management strategy which a majority of teachers resort to manage work related stress. According to De (2017), when work stress is starting to impact an individual's personal life-causing sleep deprivation, fear, anxiety and bad behaviours like drinking alcohol, smoking, or overeating, then it may be useful to seek assistance. Counselling purposes to get to the root of work-related stress. It enables individuals to discover their own exceptional patterns of thinking and acting in a place away from the work environment. This will assist to unravel feelings and move forward more freely. Bower and Segerstrom (2004) in supporting this observation notes that guidance and counselling essentials provides teachers with a greater comprehension and appreciation of their role and its influence on the lives of their learners.

Relative to involvement in spiritual activities, data obtained illustrated that more than half of the respondents (63.4%) indicated involving themselves in spiritual activities as a stress management strategy. Specifically, a majority of the respondents sometimes, often or always engage in prayer, meditation or inspirational reading when they face negative experiences. Similarly, a majority of the respondents have contact with a spiritual community or keep connection to their conception of supreme authority. Chi-square analysis indicated a significant effect of involvement in spiritual activities on respondents' stress levels. Contingency Coefficient measure of association (CC) illustrated a 34% change in level of respondents' stress due to their involvement in spiritual activities. This means that a majority of respondents equally consider involvement in spiritual activities as an important stress management strategy. Yadav and Khanna (2014) in a study on influence of spirituality on stress with the special reference of engineering students of Indian Institute of Technology established a negative correlation ( $r = -0.519$ ) between stress and spirituality of engineering students. Similarly, Raghavendra and Lokesh (2020) in an assessment of spiritual health and its relationship with perceived stress among medical students established significant association between perceived stress and spiritual health among medical students. Consequently, Perera, Pandey and Srivastava. (2018) in an assessment of the link between religion and

spirituality in stress management among nurses advocated for a more comprehensive analysis of many levels at which religious and spiritual managing may moderate/mediate the relationship between work stress and behavioural/emotional outcomes among human service workers who go through high emotional labour demands.

An assessment of the effect of optimism showed that a majority of the teachers (76.33%) highly optimistic as a means of managing work related stress. A majority (68.4%) sometimes, often or always view a stressful situation as being temporary rather than permanent. A majority doesn't exaggerate its significance when something bad happens to them and focus their attention on those aspects of the situation that they can manage when stressed by a complex situation. Ultimately, they found that they would be able to change their thinking to calm down when is highly stressed. Chi-square analysis indicated an insignificant effect of optimism on respondents' stress levels. This means that whereas a majority of the respondents were observed to be highly optimistic, they did not consider optimism as an effective stress management strategy. Conversano et al. (2010) noted that optimism is a mental attitude that severely influences physical and mental health, as well as managing with everyday social and working life. Through an adaptive management of personal goals and development and by applying active management strategies, optimists are meaningfully more successful than pessimists in aversive events and when significant life-goals are impaired'. Similarly, Reed (2016) in a study entitled coping with occupational stress: the role of optimism and coping flexibility found that coping flexibility and optimism were correlated, and hierarchical regression analyses showed that the interaction between them predicted a great proportion of the variance in both perceived stress and life gratification. In addition, structural equation modelling revealed that optimism completely arbitrated the relationship between coping flexibility and both perceived stress and life satisfaction.

Use of drugs as a stress management strategy was reported by fewer respondents, (29.13%) acknowledging resorting to use of drugs as a stress management strategy. They reported smoking or chewing tobacco which they alleged relieved them when they felt stressed. Others resorted to taking marijuana or chewing miraa after work to relieve

tension. Chi-square analysis indicated a significant effect of use of drugs on respondents' stress levels, Contingency Coefficient measure of association (CC) illustrating a 31% change in level of respondents stress due to their use of drugs. Findings imply that even though fewer respondents resorted to use of drugs while stressed, those who did so felt significantly relieved of the stress or tension. Chakr (2021) in a study on stress management in Medicine observed that stress and burnout can lead to errors, reduction in patient safety, and reduced productivity. They can lead to absenteeism, depression, destructive behaviour, alcohol, drug abuse, and even suicide. Several factors lead to professional stress, many of which are out of self-control, thus making intervention impossible.

Lastly, the extent to which teachers resorted to exercise indicated that only very few teachers (17.75%) adopted the strategy to manage work related stress. In particular, less than half of the respondents sometimes, often or always indulge in practical healthy ways of relaxing. Fewer respondents indicated engaging in physical exercises at home or in school. Likewise, those who participate in a group that engages in physical fitness activities or those who set apart time for physical exercise in their work schedule was even fewer. Chi-square analysis indicated an insignificant effect of exercise as a strategy on respondents' stress levels. This means that a majority of the respondents did not only adopt exercising but also considered it an insignificant stress management strategy. Contrary to this observation, previous studies found that exercising, resting, nutrition, relaxation and diversion of thoughts helps in managing stress. According to Kariuki (2001), under proper conditions, exercises can help improve emotional stability and mental fitness similarly, it has been suggested that activities should be interrupted regularly by periods of rest and relaxation (Melgosa, 2000).



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary**

The study sought to assess the psychological stress levels and the stress management strategies among public primary school teachers in Maara Sub-county in Tharaka Nithi. Specifically, the study sought to determine the psychological stress levels among public primary school teachers, find out the causes of psychological stress among public primary school teachers and determine the effectiveness of psychological stress coping mechanisms among public primary school teachers in Maara Sub-county in Tharaka Nithi County. A descriptive cross-sectional survey research design was formulated to provide data required to answer the research questions. Data was collected from 231 public primary school teachers within the study area. Data obtained was analyzed descriptively using frequency and percentages and inferentially using Chi-square based on study objectives.

Data obtained relative to the first objective showed that a majority of the teachers indicated that their stress levels were high. Specifically, a majority of teachers were troubled because of a thing that happened suddenly, a majority felt that they were not able to control significant things at their work places and a majority acknowledged having nervous feeling and being “stressed” in the last one month. The high levels of stress was reported to be manifested among a majority of the teachers in form of stomach disorder, inability to concentrate and anxiety while neck and back ache as symptoms was reported among few teachers.

With regard to causes of stress among public primary school teachers, data obtained showed that overwhelming situations, cause and effect, then environment, conflict and alienation were the main causes of stress in decreasing order of effect. Other causes include overload, information gap at work place and least of all value conflict. Findings imply that lack of control; cause and effect as well as environment and conflict were the main causes of stress among public primary school teachers in Tharaka Nithi County.

Data sought to assess the effectiveness of several strategies in managing work related stress established relatively high extent of adoption of guidance and counselling, spiritual activities and optimism in managing work related stress by the teachers. Others such as use of drugs and exercises were adopted by relatively fewer respondents as a stress management strategy. Inferential analysis based on Chi-square indicated a significant effect for guidance and counselling, involvement in spiritual activities and use of drugs on teachers stress levels.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The study sought to assess the psychological stress levels and the stress management strategies among public primary school teachers in Maara Sub-County in Tharaka Nithi County. The first objective sought to determine the psychological stress levels among public primary school teachers in Maara Sub-County in Tharaka Nithi County. Data obtained related to this objective illustrated high psychological stress levels among public primary school teachers. It can therefore be concluded that primary school teachers experience high levels of work-related psychological stress.

The second objective sought to find out the causes of psychological stress among public primary school teachers in Maara Sub-County in Tharaka Nithi County. Findings showed that showed that lack of control, cause and effect, environment, conflict and alienation were the main causes of psychological stress among public primary school teachers in Maara Sub-County, Tharaka Nithi County. It can therefore be concluded that lack of control; cause and effect as well as environment and conflict were the main causes of stress among public primary school teachers in Tharaka Nithi County.

The third and the last objective sought to determine the effectiveness of psychological stress coping mechanisms among public primary school teachers in Maara Sub-County in Tharaka Nithi County. Data obtained established relatively high extent of adoption of guidance and counselling, spiritual activities and optimism in managing work related psychological stress by the teachers. Inferential analysis based on Chi-square indicated a significant effect for guidance and counselling, involvement in spiritual activities and use

of drugs on teacher's stress levels. It can therefore be concluded that guidance and counselling, involvement in spiritual activities and use of drugs are effective strategies adopted by public primary school teachers in Maara Sub- County in managing work related psychological stress.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The study established high levels of psychological stress among public primary school teachers. In order to enable the teachers function optimally and therefore be highly productive, it is recommended that strategies be put in place to lower their stress levels. In particular:

- i. The administration of public primary schools should ensure that teachers have an enabling environment within which they have control over important things at their work places thus lower their psychological stress levels.
- ii. Public primary school teachers should be facilitated to minimise alienation, work overload, conflicts and information gap thus lower their psychological stress levels.
- iii. The study also established that stress management strategies have a significant role in enabling teachers cope with stress. Teachers should therefore be encouraged and aided to adopt a number of coping strategies even as they discharge their duties.

### **5.4 Suggestions for Further Study**

- a) The study was mainly undertaken in Maara Sub-county, Tharaka Nithi County Kenya. Studies in other location to establish the relationship between stress management strategies and psychological stress among public primary school teachers is thus suggested.
- b) A comparative study on the influence of coping strategies on psychological stress among academic (classroom teachers) and administrative staff (Principals) is also suggested.
- c) A comparative study on the influence of coping strategies on psychological stress among teachers in public and private schools is also suggested

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear Respondent,

My name is Humphrey Kinyua Mathoka. I am a Masters candidate and currently carrying out a study on **Psychological Assessment of Stress Management Strategies among Teachers in Public Primary Schools in Maara Subcounty, Tharaka-Nithi County, Kenya**. You have been randomly selected as a respondent in this study to provide information for the study. There is no right or wrong answer. The information obtained will be held in strict confidence and will only be used for the purpose of this study. Do not write your name on the questionnaire. Kindly respond to all questions. Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Humphrey Kinyua Mathoka  
(Researcher)

## APPENDIX II: TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is divided into sections A, B, C and D. Answer each section according to instructions given.

### SECTION A: Demographic Characteristics

a) What is your gender?

Male  Female

b) Kindly tick the appropriate box that best describes your age bracket

Below 30 years  30-50 years  Above 50 years

c) For how long have you been in the primary school teaching profession (after receiving your primary school teaching certificate)?

Below 10 years  10- 20 years  Above 20 years

d) Tick your appropriate professional teaching grade in the appropriate box

P1  Diploma  Graduate

e) On average what is your weekly lessons' workload in a normal term?

Below 25  25-35  Above 35

### SECTION B. Level of Stress

1. In a scale of 1 to 5 where 1= Never, 2= Almost Never, 3= Sometimes, 4= Fairly Often, 5= Very Often; indicate the extent to which each of the following indicates your level of stress.

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	1	2	3	4	5
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your work?	1	2	3	4	5
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?	1	2	3	4	5
4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	1	2	3	4	5
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?	1	2	3	4	5
6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	1	2	3	4	5
7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your work?	1	2	3	4	5

8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things in your work?	1	2	3	4	5
9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?	1	2	3	4	5
10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	1	2	3	4	5

**2. To what extent do you suffer from each of the following?**

Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. Headache					
2. Anxiety					
3. Chest pain/ palpitations					
4. Nausea or indigestion					
5. Sleeplessness					
6. Irritability					
7. Backache					
8. Neck ache					
9. Stomach disorders					
10. Inability to concentrate					

**SECTION C: Causes of Your Job Stress**

In a scale of 1 to 5 where 1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3=Moderately, 4= frequently, 5= Always; indicate the level to which you feel each of the following could be a cause of stress to you.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Lack of Control</b>					
I lack the authority to carry out certain responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel trapped in a situation without any real options.	1	2	3	4	5
I am unable to influence decisions that affect me.	1	2	3	4	5
There are a lot of requirements that get in the way of my doing certain tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
I can't solve the problems assigned to me.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Information Gap</b>					
I am unsure about the responsibilities of my teaching job.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't have enough information to carry out certain tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
I am under qualified for certain tasks I'm expected to do.	1	2	3	4	5
My fellow teachers are not clear about what I do.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't understand the criteria used to evaluate my performance.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Cause and Effect</b>					
There is no relationship between how I perform and how I am rated.	1	2	3	4	5
I sense that popularity and politics are more important than	1	2	3	4	5



performance.					
I don't know what my headteacher thinks of my performance.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I don't know what I am doing right and what I am doing wrong.	1	2	3	4	5
15. If I give suggestions, my headteacher does not include them.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Conflict</b>					
I am expected to satisfy conflicting needs.	1	2	3	4	5
I disagree with fellow teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
I disagree with my headteacher.	1	2	3	4	5
I am caught in the middle.	1	2	3	4	5
I can't get what I need to get the job done.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Alienation</b>					
I feel pessimistic about opportunities for advancement or growth in teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
My headteacher is critical.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel unaccepted by my fellow teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
My good work is not noticed or appreciated.	1	2	3	4	5
My progress on teaching seems less than it could be.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Overload</b>					
I experience little meaning in teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel unsupported by my fellow teachers or my headteacher.	1	2	3	4	5
My values seem at odds with those of school management.	1	2	3	4	5
The school seems insensitive to my individuality.	1	2	3	4	5
I find I cannot be myself at school because I feel different from my fellow teachers	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Environment</b>					
I find my working environment unpleasant.	1	2	3	4	5
I lack the privacy I need to concentrate on my teaching work.	1	2	3	4	5
Some aspects of my school environment seem hazardous.	1	2	3	4	5
I have too much or too little contact with friends.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Value Conflict</b>					
I must do things that are against my better judgment.	1	2	3	4	5
I must make compromises in my values.	1	2	3	4	5
My family and friends do not respect what I do.	1	2	3	4	5
I observe my fellow teachers doing things that I don't approve of.	1	2	3	4	5
The school that I work for pressures teachers to do things that are unethical or unsafe.	1	2	3	4	5

#### SECTION D: Stress Management Strategies

In a scale of 1 to 5 where 1= Never, 2= Almost Never, 3= Sometimes, 4= Fairly Often, 5= Very Often; indicate the extent to which you do each of the following to manage your stress.

Coping Mechanism	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Counseling</b>					

I actively seek information about negative events that I encounter in teaching to know how to cope with them.	1	2	3	4	5
I seek help from friends or colleagues when I face teaching related challenges.	1	2	3	4	5
I seek help from a professional counsellor when stressed	1	2	3	4	5
I share the challenges I face in teaching with people.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Spiritual activities</b>					
I engage in prayer, meditation or inspirational reading when I face negative experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
I have contact with a spiritual community.	1	2	3	4	5
I keep my connection to my conception of supreme authority.	1	2	3	4	5
I share experiences with the members of my spiritual community.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Optimism</b>					
When things are not going on well, I view the situation as being temporary rather than permanent.	1	2	3	4	5
When something bad happens to me, I don't exaggerate its significance.	1	2	3	4	5
When stressed by a complex situation, I focus my attention on those aspects of the situation that I can manage.	1	2	3	4	5
When highly stressed, I am able to change my thinking to calm down.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Drugs</b>					
I find fulfillment in taking beer when I face complex situations.	1	2	3	4	5
Smoking or chewing tobacco relieves me when I feel stressed.	1	2	3	4	5
My head teacher or colleagues complain about my use of alcohol.	1	2	3	4	5
I take marijuana or chew Miraa after work to relieve tension.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Exercises</b>					
I indulge in practical healthy ways of relaxing	1	2	3	4	5
I engage in physical exercises at home or in school	1	2	3	4	5
I participate in a group that engages in physical fitness activities.	1	2	3	4	5
In my work schedule, I set apart time for physical exercise.	1	2	3	4	5

**APPENDIX III: TABLE FOR DETERMINING THE SIZE OF A RANDOMLY CHOSEN SAMPLE**

Table for determining the size of a randomly chosen sample for a given population of N cases such that the sample population (P) will be within plus or minus 0.05 of the population within a 95% level of confidence.

S	N	S	N	S	N
	10	10	220	140	1200
	15	14	230	144	1300
	20	19	240	148	1400
	25	24	250	152	1500
	30	28	260	155	1600
	35	32	270	159	1700
	40	36	280	162	1800
	45	40	290	165	1900
	50	44	300	169	2000
	55	48	320	175	2200
	60	52	340	181	2400
	65	56	360	186	2600
	70	59	380	191	2800
	75	63	400	196	3000
	80	66	420	201	3500
	85	70	440	205	4000
	90	73	460	210	4500
	95	76	480	214	5000
	100	80	500	217	6000
	110	86	550	226	7000
	120	92	600	234	8000
	130	97	650	242	9000
	140	103	700	248	10000
	150	108	750	254	15000
	160	113	800	260	20000
	170	118	850	265	30000
	180	123	900	269	40000
	190	127	950	274	50000
	200	132	1000	278	75000
	210	136	1100	285	100000

N = Population size

S = Sample size

Extracted from Kathuri and Pals (1993). Introduction to Educational Research, Njoro. Egerton University Press

**APPENDIX IV: NACOSTI RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION**



**NATIONAL  
SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY &**

Ref **5698**

Date of **1/March 2022**

**RESEARCH**



**This is to Certify that Mr. MATHOKA KINYUA HUMPHREY of Chuka University has been  
Tharaka-Nithi on the topic: PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AND COPING  
TEACHERS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MWIMBI DIVISION, MAARA STR.  
COUNTY, KENYA for the period ending :**

License **NACOSTI/P/21**

**5698**

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