

## **An Assessment of the Extent at which High School Principals are Stressed in relation to their job Experience in Schools in Southern Nyanza region, Kenya**

<sup>1</sup>Yambo, John M. Onyango <sup>2</sup>Odhiambo Rhodah Adoyo,  
<sup>3</sup>Odera Y. Florence

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, Rongo University College, Kenya

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**ABSTRACT:** Education management is highly dynamic area of study. There are occasions, situations and experiences that upset people's equilibrium and sometimes cause serious consequences to their physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being and may require remedies. This study was an investigation of High school Principals stress in relation to their job experience in schools in Southern Nyanza Region, Kenya and to suggest possible remedies to assist them professionally to continue in their jobs. The objective of this article was; to establish the extent at which the High School Principals are stressed in relation to their job experience in schools in Southern Nyanza Region, Kenya. The study was guided by Role Performance and Demand theory by Hebb (1972). It employed descriptive survey design. Target population was 254 high school principals from six districts in Southern Nyanza Region. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 77 principals and schools categorized as district, provincial public and private; mixed day/boarding and boarding girls/ boys. Data was collected using both closed and open ended questionnaires with the principal's background information, a 29 – item instrument known as the High School Principals' Stress Index (HSPSI) together with an interview schedule. Data was analyzed using (SPSS Version 18) computer programme. The findings of the study revealed that more than half of the principals reported that most high school principals (67.4%) have quitted principalship for others assignments elsewhere which include being election commissioners, hospital administrators and education officers to mention a few. 72.0 percent of principals reported that the extent of their stress was very stressful. This study recommends that High School Principals be helped by Principals/Employee Stress Assistance Program (PSAP/ESAP). It's the researchers hope that this article will benefit both novice and experienced principals to cope and continue in service in this region and beyond.

**KEYWORDS:** Kenya, High school, Principals, Assessment, Extent, Stress, Experience

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

A considerable number of people may share the same job experience but high school principals with varied levels of job experience react in a different way to it. In support of the fact that these situations are not conducive, Selye (1984:26) who did his research in Australia has it that the term 'stress' is borrowed from the word of mechanics and physics where stress is described as the physical pressure exerted upon, and between parts of a body. Furthermore, Willies (2005:12) continue to add that, historically, Dr. William Bradford Cannon who lived between 1871 -1945, in the U.S.A was the first clinician to identify the physical characteristics of the initial phase of stress. Studies done by Yambo, Kindiki and Tuitoek (2012) explained that the word stress is used to mean, undue pressure put on someone, which is beyond his/her coping abilities, as the operational term. Generally stress is being experienced everywhere as Melgosa (2008:35) and Holmes (2001:234) posit that very few people escape from it because it is part of daily routine. This implies that stress is not respecter of level of job experience or any profession. Consequently, investigating High School Principals' Stress in relation to their job experience in school in Southern Nyanza Region was vital and necessary because a report from the Provincial Director of Education (PDE) Kisumu (Ministry of Education, Annual Report 2007:4) suggested that some principals were quitting principalship may be due to stress. Since principals work in the institutions, the researcher was therefore keen to investigate High School Principals' stress in relation to their job experience in school management. Studies done by McGrath (1976:39) and Onah (1995:141), who studied stress and behaviour in organizations hypothesized that there are six possible sources of stress in schools. These are task-based stress, role based stress, stress intrinsic to the behaviour setting, stress arising from social environment and stress within the person system. In this particular study, however, the researcher adopted and modified some of these hypotheses and looked into the principals' role-based, task-based, conflict mediating and boundary spanning stress in relation to their level of job experience in school management.

In every profession or work that has a goal to be achieved, a deadline to be met, a superior to report to and to be supervised, normally is not stress free. It is a concern to the novice and experienced employees, employers and administrators alike. Stress in work place is a world-wide issue. A report on Secondary Education by World Bank (1999:66) revealed that the education systems the world over have been ineffective and have failed to address the matter of principals' stress and burnout in secondary schools. This failure has stifled natural efforts towards building a stronger human resource base which is invaluable for development in all its spheres in schools. Studies carried out in the United Kingdom by Travers and Coopers (1991:121) found out that employees working in educational institutions especially the high school principals and their deputies reported high levels of stress and increased levels of stress related illness. In addition, Smith (2004:71), Howard and Johnson, (2004:404), Moon and Mayes(1997:83), Travers and Cooper (1994:214) and Beer and Beer (1992:91) conducted studies in USA, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and France, have indicated that in terms of levels of experience in school management, novice principals such as those with less than three years of experience face incidences of depression, neurotic disorders and stress more than experienced high school principals such as those with eight years of being principals. The study also showed that such inexperienced principals in public high schools suffer more frequent stress than experienced assistant teachers and also principals in the American public high schools were exhibiting more stress that emanates from their daily routine and tasks in the job descriptions. It is therefore likely that high level of stress among principals seems to threaten and vary in terms of levels of job experience in school.

In the developing countries in Africa, Kenya inclusive, similar sentiments of secondary school principals' exhibit stress related issues. A study in Ghana shows that teachers and educational administrators are experiencing series of stress and stressful situations (Schroeder, Akatia and Apakey,2001:92). What is happening in the United Kingdom and Ghana is not strange in Kenya because, Koome (2007:4) who carried out a study in Kenya among the principals' found out that principals' stress is on the increase such that most of them have dropped being principals due to stress and have joined other ministries and departments in the government like the Ministry of Youth Affairs, Gender and Sports among others. According to Gunyali, Mulusu, Rono and Otieno (2005:15) they contend that, today it has become common that almost everybody complains about stress at home, school, work place and even in the church! For a long time in Kenya, education has been seen as a vehicle for individual development not only for students but also for teachers and principals' (BERC, 1994b). This view is not adequately being met by education systems in the world and high school principals' end up being stressed, undeveloped and unproductive human resource. High school Principals' are also teachers who work under the government and are answerable to the Board of Governors (BOG) and the Ministry of Education. They are in the first line of management as supervisors and secretaries of the Board of Governors, where they are prone to stress irrespective of their level of experience (Yambo 2012). A research carried out by Kirsten (2003:37) and Yagil (1998:183) revealed that stress among employees working in schools and educational institutions is high and more particularly among the principals' because teaching profession and principalship is generally regarded as one of the most stressful professions in the world. Other studies done by Wambani (2006:19), Chan (1998:158) and Goldberg (1998:74) observed that principals are quite stressed a lot and the doctors seem to be advising their clients (high school principals) to quit or change jobs to help them avoid stress, hypertension and hormonal imbalance which both directly and indirectly contribute to depression and death (Yambo et al. 2012).

High schools in Kenya vary in demography such that there are mixed boarding schools, girl schools, and boy's schools, mixed day schools with male and female teachers. According to Arikewuyo, (2004:56) suggestion of having stress management strategies in schools irrespective of the principals' experience in school management is very vital in running our institutions. It is of a cardinal importance because stress problem if not properly managed may affect the level of productivity. It's on this argument that the principals' stress whether novice or experienced, if not checked may have negative effects on development goals, for instance millennium development goals (MDGs) and the vision 2030 because principals' are a well trained work force who may not be cost effective if the stress levels are not properly managed. In this regard, Otieno (2009) emphasizes that high level of stress is likely to increase as more schools come up with more principals being appointed and initiated into the phenomenon of stress, he added that "the government was in the process of registering 70 secondary schools that could be operational by the end of February" p.08. As the number of schools increase, the numbers of principals also increase and this increases the number of trained workforce and human resource who should be assisted against principalship challenges like stress. This idea is supported by Beer and Beer (1992:1332) and Travers and Cooper (1994:210) whose research found out that old and novice principals face negative challenges as they execute their duties. They further contend that the challenges which may include high rate of anxiety, mental depression and burnout may create a desire to quit the teaching profession and principalship altogether. However, Watts and Short (1990:52) have observed that principals may turn to drug use and other

forms of drug abuse if they persevere in their teaching profession and principalship. Furthermore, in this region, population density is relatively high and there are no industries which employ school drop outs except Sony Sugar Company in Awendo, (Ministry of Finance and Planning, 2002:229). Most people therefore seek non – teaching jobs in the secondary schools around and those who are employed tend to demand for high pay to meet their daily life economic challenges. Principals’ therefore experience a lot of boundary – spanning stress as non – teaching staff through their workers union, Kenya Union of Domestic, Health, Education Institutions, Hotels and Allied workers (KUDHEIHA) strongly bargain with the principal and BOG for more pay. Here collective bargaining and boundary – spanning stress is unavoidable among the high school principals.

## **II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Elsewhere in the world and in Kenya Principals are key persons in school management. Despite the training that they have, the responsibilities and expectations loaded on them leave no doubt that they can easily get stressed as they perform their tasks and roles expected of them in their capacity. Their duties have to be performed within a given time frame and are quite demanding irrespective of the principal’s level of job experience in school. In Southern Nyanza Region of Kenya, quitting principalship is not a strange phenomenon but a matter of concern. The study done by Yambo et al. (2012) found out that principals are resigning from principalship and are seeking employment elsewhere and in this region, 33.4 percent of the principals have already left principalship. This region seems to be posing stressful challenges to principals in various ways. Due to the fact that Southern Nyanza Region is predominantly occupied by the Seventh day Adventist (SDA’s) faith, as found in the census document of Ministry of Finance and planning (2002: 169) and because there are also different religious groups with different religious beliefs among students, staff, parents and board members, the principal is likely to face conflict mediating stress. Principals work very hard in order to bring understanding between the Adventists and members of other faiths who occasionally bring misunderstanding between principals, parents, students and Ministry of Education (M.O.E.) officials. This is likely to cause some undue stress to the principals. Research by National Aids Control Council, NACC (2008:8) on HIV/AIDS shows that Nyanza province is leading in death rate due to HIV/AIDS, however, the region is hard hit by the scourge such that orphaned students are more challenged. The orphaned students cannot afford most of the basic necessities despite the efforts of well-wishers and the few non-governmental organization (NGO’s) in the region. Moreover, their attention span and class attendance is very minimal, even though the principals’ role is to create a conducive atmosphere in school, they cannot provide for all their needs and principals’ are likely to get frustrated, stressed, and burnt out when they see young and promising people drop out of school due to poverty. The main source of income in this region is fishing, sand harvesting, cane cutting, stone – curving, tea and coffee picking in some areas. These readily available sources of income make students to be quite irregular in schools. The irregularity makes it hard for effective syllabus coverage and may result in poor examination performance. In trying to curb this problem, principals’ find it a difficult task and this brings undue pressure which may lead to stress. In this region, as ascertained by the researcher, the general view of the principal’s stress indicates that experienced principals are affected more than novice principals. When given duties to perform, the novice ones seem to be less stressed than their experienced counterparts. Perhaps there is a relationship between extent of stress and the principal’s level of job experience in school. The problem of the study was therefore to establish the extent at which the High School Principals are stressed in relation to their job experience in schools and threatened to quit principalship and teaching profession in Southern Nyanza Region, Kenya.

## **III. THE EXTENT OF STRESS AMONG HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS’ IN RELATION TO THEIR JOB EXPERIENCE IN SCHOOL**

Extent of stress whether high or low, varies considerably. Fiedler and Garcia (2000:234) pointed out that when stress level was low and the principal was directive (that is, when the principal was willing to tell people what to do) intelligence was more important than experience to the principal’s leadership effectiveness. Coincidentally, when in high stress situations, intelligence was of little help because the principal was experienced, too cognitive as a leader, yet stress remains a challenge. According to studies done by Dunham (1992:33), the extent to which individuals experience stress in any situation depends on the manner in which they assess both the demands and their competence in dealing with them, and their preparedness of the skills necessary for them to handle these demands with a greater sense of competence. In this study, the competency in dealing with some pertinent administrative matters is what is referred to as experience in school. Polakoff (1984:105) in his research confirmed that at least one research team has found that incidence of heart attack is greater among persons in high stress jobs than it is among workers in low stress occupations. Studies done by Robbins et al. (2010:271) and Hopkins (2000) observed that for many employees, organizational change creates stress of varied levels. Due to the uncertain and unpredictable environment characterized by time pressures, increasing workloads,

mergers and restructuring, a large number of employees are overworked and stressed. They contend that depending on which survey one looks at, the number of employees experiencing job stress in the USA ranges anywhere from 40- 80 percent. Global research indicated that some 50 percent of workers surveyed in 16 European countries reported that stress and job responsibility have risen significantly over a five-year period. Similarly, 35 percent of Canadian workers surveyed reported they were under high job stress. In the same study, more than 50 percent of Japanese principals and other employees suffered from work related stress; while some 83 percent of call-centre workers in India suffered from sleeping disorders due to work stress which was high (Fiedler and Garcia (2000:236) and Robbins et al. (2010:271). Finely (2010:18) concluded that levels of stress are high among managers who are constantly in a hurry, impatient and highly competitive hence likely to get heart attack easily. In this regard, however, high school principals are not exceptional because they work very hard and have to compete with others schools in co-curricular activities and for better KCSE performance at national examination level Yambo(2012). It is very interesting to note that while some principals suffer when their level of stress is high, some thrive at the same level. This sentiment is supported by Graham and Bennett (1998:67) when they observed that stress has both positive and negative aspects to an extent that some managers thrive on pressure; it helps them to draw on physical and emotional resources and they actually enjoy tense and challenging situations. They argue that stress triggers in these people the adrenalin needed to sustain intense effort and to be able to cope with several different problems all at the same time. In this regard, Coleman and Kerbo (2002:177);

DuBrin (2006:558) and Selye (1984:72) suggested that a certain amount of stress may even be necessary to good health but high levels of stress over long periods of time can lead to serious health problems. They continue to add that not all stress is bad for it is a necessary and important ingredient of life and people require the right amount of stress to keep them mentally and psychologically alert. Research done by Quick, Nelson and Quick (1990:10) added that stress is an inevitable characteristic of professional and personal life. Stress therefore is not bad in itself but a useful assert in giving a response to address emergencies and challenges at work. Not all stress is caused by emergencies; however, the two major sources of stress for an executive or a principal are internal and external demands. Furthermore, they postulated that poor performance, decline in morale, and loss of organizational vitality are potential organizational costs of mismanaged stress. It is still being echoed that stress is not necessarily destructive for it has a potential of providing the eleventh hour burst or creativity needed to finalize a major campaign or close a pivotal real deal. When channelled properly, stress can be energizing, stimulating and growth producing. As put forward by Finely (2010:18) and Quick et al. (1990:21) stressful events are equally inevitable, but the destructive or distressful effects of these events are not inevitable. In general stressful events or stressors can lead to one or two outcomes: individual strain and distress, or individual well-being and eustress. Eustress is regarded as the healthy, positive, constructive outcome of the stress response among principals and other workers in leadership positions. Stressors include basic feelings or urges expressed as, say hunger, thirst, and tiredness. Without these feelings we would not go looking for the food, drink and rest which help to keep our bodies alive, fit and well. On the other hand, DuBrin (2006:558) and Selye (1984:72) contended that stress is constructive only to certain point and too much stress can be destructive so high level of stress, or continued exposure to stress, however, can cause extreme tiredness and rashes, insomnia and possibly aggression towards fellow employees. The extent of stress therefore should be watched because it has both energising and devastating effects, hence a need for High School Principals Stress Assistance Programme (PSAP).

#### **IV. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The design of the study was a survey. Nkpa (1997:34), states that a survey design provides information about variables more clearly. Best and Kahn (2006:121) and Kothari (2004:149) suggest that survey methods gathers data from a relatively large number of cases at a particular time. Survey was designed to deal more directly with the nature of respondents' thought, opinions and feelings. Surveys are concerned with describing, recording, analysing and interpreting conditions that either exist or existed. The researcher does not manipulate the variable or arrange for events to happen. Surveys are only concerned with conditions or relationships that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are evident or trends that are developing. They are primarily concerned with the present but at times do consider past events and influences as they relate to current conditions. Thus, in surveys, variables that exist or have already occurred are selected and dealt with. Frankael and Wallen (1993:122) contend that surveys are intended to produce statistical information about the aspects of education that interest policy makers and educators. Due to the fact that survey as design involves asking a large group of people questions about a particular issue as in this study, stress. Any research undertaking involves lots of costs implications hence survey design was deliberately selected for the study because it allows for quick data collection at a comparatively cheaper cost (Grinnell, 1993:79). This study however, used both qualitative and quantitative methods hence, mixed methods.

The two are used because different methods and procedures have been developed to aid in acquisition of data. Each employs distinctive ways of describing and quantifying the data. Similarly, each is particularly appropriate for certain sources of data, yielding information of the kind and in the form that can be most effectively used (Best and Khan 2006:288).

## V. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in Southern Nyanza Region which covers Migori, South Kisii, Rachuonyo, Suba, Kuria and Rongo districts among others in Nyanza province. This region currently covers parts of Migori, Homabay and Kisii Counties of Kenya. This area surrounds Lake Victoria and Kisii highlands and normally experiences rainfall in the afternoon. These six districts have a provincial headquarter in Kisumu city. This region was chosen because it is an area where it is perceived that some principals have even quitted principalship due to stress problem, Ministry of Education (2007). Currently the study area is bordering Kisumu, Narok and Siaya counties as per new devolution and creation of county governments (Appendix J). This area have fertile soil, good climate, cheap agricultural land and self-employment opportunities particularly in the urban set ups. Economically, the people are fishermen, livestock keepers, subsistence farmers, commercial tea and coffee farmers in Kisii highlands. The other economic activities are soap stone mining in south Kisii, Sugarcane farming and milling of sugar; sweet potato, maize farming. Some other people get blue-colour jobs in the small industries in the surrounding towns such as Homa Bay, Kisii, Migori, Rongo, Oyugis, Kosele and Kendu Bay. Studies done by Kamau, Indire, Ombongi and Rutere, (2011:387) explains that tourism industry in this area is on the increase due to the recent expansion of Ruma national park. The existence of Sori national park, Simbi Crater Lake Game Park, Thimlich Ohinga historical site also attracts tourists considerably. Increased sport fishing and boat racing in Lake Victoria is worth noting. Their environs also provide some small scale jobs. The population is approximately 2,255,550 people, and majority in the region subscribe or belong to the Seventh-day Adventist Church (S.D.A) denomination, Ministry of Finance (2002:213). This region lies within latitude 0 and 1° South and between longitude 34° East and 35° East of the Equator. The rainfall averages at 175ml per year.

### Study Population

The study population consisted of 254 principals and of course, same number of schools in the six districts of Southern Nyanza Region. Borg, Borg and Gall (2005:78), define the study population as all members of a real or hypothetical set of people, events or objects to which a researcher wishes to generalize the results of the study. Cohen and Manion (1992:104) observe that factors of expense, time and accessibility always make it not possible to obtain information from a sample population in such a way that the knowledge gained is representative of total area.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling was used because the stratum was able to capture both rural and urban schools for instance. All the registered schools were considered both public and privately owned for a more balanced outcome. Kathuri and Pals (1993:86) and Kothari (2004) state that when a researcher is interested in a certain or specified information, only respondents with such characteristics should be selected. Tortu et al. (2004:92) reinforce this position by adding that apart from stratified random sampling, purposive sampling is necessary where a sample shows good evidence of providing the researcher with the needed information.

**Table 1.1**  
**Sample Size Distribution of Schools in Southern Nyanza Region**

DISTRICT	TARGET POPULATION	SAMPLE SIZE
Migori	54	16
South Kisii	25	8
Rachuonyo	72	22
Suba	24	7
Kuria	32	10
Rongo	47	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>77</b>

Table 1.1, indicates the number of principals/schools per district in Southern Nyanza region representing the target population however, the sample size per district is proportionally calculated based on 30 percent which is a number considered to be statistically representative enough (Krathwohl, 1997:48; Kerlinger, 1983:32;

Wiersma, 2000:19; Best and Khan 2006: 18). In this region there is a total of two hundred and fifty four schools, hence the same number of principals. Since Krathwohl (1997:48) and Best and Kahn (2006:18) suggest that a thirty percent sample is statistically significant. In this study, therefore, seventy seven principals which is 30 percent of principals in the region was considered a number representative enough. Kerlinger (1983:32) supports and adds on the same position that 30 percent is representative enough when the researcher is looking for statistically representative sample from a large target population as in the case of schools in this region. These schools were placed into the following categories: Mixed day, Mixed Day and Boarding, Boys Boarding, Boys Boarding and Day, Girls Boarding, Girls Boarding and Day. From the above category of schools, the researcher was able to find their names and identify the respective principals and their levels of job experience in school.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

This section presents the data collection instrument and procedures followed in the study. The researcher endeavoured to use two instruments as follows. A 29- item questionnaire/instrument tagged: *High School Principals' Stress Index (HSPSI)* with detailed background information and an interview schedule. The HSPSI was first developed by McGrath (1976:39) and Onah (1995:141). It had a 21-item questionnaire with a reliability of +0.78. This assisted in comparing and cross checking the consistency of information so far obtained for more meaningful and informed conclusions (Patton, 2002:77) and Nachmias and Nachmias (2005). The combination made the data collected more informative in that pertinent facts that could not be captured by HSPSI were found through the interview schedule for example, feelings and body language among others.

### **Interview Schedule**

There was unstructured interview schedule for the principals. The unstructured interview was preferred because it is flexible hence according to Nkpa (1997:21), Orodho (2004:28) and Kothari (2004:123). It enables the researcher to gather more information on the study. The interview guide was constructed in form of questions. The items were arranged in sequence to allow orderliness in providing and recording information which was in line with the study objectives. Igwe (2005:101) suggested that this approach was fitting because it checks against ambiguity and inadequacy of the main instrument. However, this tool enabled the respondents to discuss their feelings and attitudes freely and exhaustively which otherwise might not be captured by the questionnaire instrument singly.

### **Study Ethical Consideration**

Conducting a research on stress among the high school principals is intrinsically a delicate and a very sensitive matter. There may be those principals whose administration might have been affected by stress hence their service delivery is wanting. These principals may therefore be risking their jobs or disciplinary measures should the employer get details of the same. This can make some of them to misguide the researcher. The researcher therefore looked at the eminent ethical issues in this study and addressed them before hand as recommended by Gupta (2008:35) and Best and Khan (2006:56), so as to protect the rights of respondents' and the researcher. This was achieved by making the respondents to be fully informed as possible about the nature and purpose of research procedures to be used and the expected outcome that is strongly believed to be of benefit to them all (Principals' Stress Assistance Program). Moreover, Tortu et al. (2004:56) and Harper (2006:29) suggests that respondents have to be assured of confidentiality and anonymity during and after the research. In this research however, confidentiality was of paramount importance because it dealt with High School Principals' personal stress life. The researcher respected the privacy of respondents.

## **VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This study revealed that (Table 1.2) 52.0 percent of principals reported that the extent of their stress was very stressful, 18.2 percent reported stressful and 15.6 percent reported extremely stressful. 10.3 percent reported not stressful while 3.9 percent were neutral and could not ascertain the extent of stress they experienced as high school principals. The extent of stress has been found out in various ways this study. For instance, when the type of schools were considered, most principals 75.4 percent who headed mixed boarding and mixed day lamented that it was very stressful to head them. This makes principalship to be seen as challenging. This finding is related to the findings of Jaiyeoba and Jibril (2008:118) who in their research confirmed that 77.5 percent of the principal reported that their job was stressful. More contributions from the works of Yagil (1998:186) and Kirsten (2003:72) reveals that stress among employees especially those working in school and educational institutions, particularly the High School Principals is very stressful because teaching profession and principalship is generally regarded as one of the most stressful professions in the world. It is rated like this because, a principal is not a robot, has family and family matters to deal with alongside the principals' work irrespective of his/her job experience. In this study, 15.6 percent of the principals reported that they experienced extreme extent of stress.

This kind of stress was really unbearable for principals. Slobogin (2009:56), Armour (2003:1b) and Mullins (2007:266) strongly contend that most employees including high school principals, despite their job experience, often complain of extreme extent of stress at work as they try to balance work and family responsibilities. They continue to posit that stress is brought about through work intensification and conflicts between home (family) and work which is stressful and is related to risk of disease and ill health which in turn hamper service delivery in schools. It is interesting to note that 52.0 percent reported that their extent of stress was stressful yet 79.2 percent and 10.4 percent of high school principals in this region are trained and holds Bachelor of education and Master’s degree. This therefore implies that stress does not respect principals’ level of education and years of job experience in school. High qualification of high principals on the other hand, is imperative and highly recommended. The findings of Sherlekar et al. (2006:221) and Fraser and Brock (2006:4254) supports a Bachelor degree qualification was a key to recruitment and retention of principals though more regular seminars on stress management is of paramount impotence so to reduce the extreme extent of high school principals’ stress to low or no stress at all. The better the qualification, the regular the in-service on stress coping strategies the efficient and effective the principal both as a teacher and administrator in relation to job experience in school.

More research by Finely (2010:18) concluded that levels of stress are high among managers who are constantly in a hurry, impatient and highly competitive hence likely to get heart attack easily. In this regard, however, high school principals are not exceptional because they work very hard and have to compete with others schools in co-curricular activities and for better KCSE performance at national examination level. The high school principals were asked, “Kindly rate the extent of Stress you might be experiencing as a principal?” Choose one response that suits your situation most: Is it (Not stressful, stressful, very stressful, extremely stressful, or not applicable at all).

**Table 1.2**  
**Extent of High School Principals’ Stress**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not Stressful	8	10.3
Stressful	14	18.2
Very Stressful	40	52.0
Extremely Stressful	12	15.6
Not Applicable	3	3.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Most of the principals, 56.4 percent responded that principalship is very stressful. High school Principals exhibit stress differently. In this study (Table 1.2), the researcher wanted to establish their extent of stress. They were asked whether stress they were likely to be undergoing was not stressful, stressful, very stressful, extremely stressful and not applicable. 52.0 percent reported that it was very stressful, 18.2 percent said it was stressful and 15.6 percent reported it was extremely stressful. 10.3 percent said it was not stressful while 3.9 reported that not applicable.

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study was aimed at establishing the extent at which high school principals are stressed in relation to their job experience in school. The study indicated the extent at which high school principals were stressed:

- [1] The results of the study clearly indicated that more than half of the principals (52.0%) reported that their extent of stress was very stressful. This was caused possibly by a number of factors including the type of school which most of them (75.4 %) reported to be mixed boarding and mixed day. Furthermore, this study equally unveiled that heading such high schools was an uphill task for principals irrespective of their experience and gender.
- [2] It was found that most employees including high school principals, despite their job experience, often complain of extreme extent of stress at work as they try to balance work and family responsibilities. They continued to posit that stress was brought about through work intensification and conflicts between home (family) and work which is stressful and is related to risk of disease and ill health which in turn hamper service delivery in schools.
- [3] The study indicated that 52.0 percent of principals reported that their extent of stress was stressful yet 79.2 percent and 10.4 percent of high school principals in this region were trained and held Bachelor of education and Master’s degree. This therefore implied that stress does not respect principals’ level of education and years of job experience in school. High qualification of high principals on the other hand, is

imperative and highly recommended because a bachelor degree qualification, was a key to recruitment and retention of principals. The better the qualification, the regular the in-service on stress coping strategies the efficient and effective the principal both as a teacher and administrator in relation to job experience in school.

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