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**Prevalence of Psychological Distress among Secondary School Teachers in Kiambu
County, Kenya**


Grace Wanjiru Gakinya, Dr. Christine Wasanga and Dr. Robert C. Kipnusu



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Kenya**

 ^{1*}Grace Wanjiru Gakinya
Doctorate Student: Kenyatta University

 ²Dr. Christine Wasanga
Senior Lecturer, Department of Psychology,
Kenyatta University

 ³Dr. Robert C. Kipnusu
Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Kenyatta
University

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Abstract

Purpose: This study sought to “establish the prevalence of psychological distress among secondary school teachers in Kiambu County, Kenya.”

Methodology: This study used a quasi-experimental research design. This study was carried out among selected teachers in secondary schools in Kiambu County. Kiambu County has a total of 303 secondary schools with a population of 3,617 teachers (County Government of Kiambu 12 sub counties, however the target population will be the teachers in Thika town Sub County. Multistage sampling technique was used at three levels; sampling stage level one was used for selecting the schools at county level where Thika town Sub County was selected. The final overall sample size of 120. The study used the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale - 21 Items (DASS-21). Data was collected using questionnaire. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 was used to analyse the data. Data was presented in form of tables.

Findings: The results revealed that majority of the respondents (50.5%) had moderate levels of depression meaning that over half of the respondents fell into this category. For anxiety, majority of the respondents (31.8%) had moderate levels of anxiety. For stress, majority of the respondents (68.2%) had normal levels of stress.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study used the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy approach. There should be regular monitoring and evaluation of teachers' mental health and well-being within school settings. This can involve implementing surveys or assessments to gauge levels of psychological distress over time and to track the effectiveness of interventions such as cognitive restructuring.

Keywords: *Psychological Distress, Secondary School, Teachers*

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INTRODUCTION

Many people experience psychological distress at some point in their lives, and this negative mental health state can have knock-on effects on other areas of health (Sanderson, 2020). A condition of psychological pain, psychological distress is characterized by depressive symptoms including a lack of motivation, sadness, and hope, as well as anxious symptoms like irritability and apprehension (Moon, 2020). One in five individuals will experience high levels of emotional distress at some point in their lives, according to research (Lauer, 2017).

Distress is a common term used in the nursing literature to represent a variety of different types of patient discomfort, including those caused by acute or chronic sickness, anxiety prior to or during treatment, and the weakened health of a fetus or the respiratory system. Although 'distress' is commonly used, 'psychological distress' may be a better descriptor of the patient condition to which nurses respond. Rather than being a stand-alone notion, psychological distress is typically characterized within the context of strain, stress, and distress (Keenan, 2016).

Depression and anxiety are hallmarks of psychological distress, which in turn is an indicator of prevalent psychiatric diseases such as major depression and anxiety disorders (Tomitaka, Kawasaki, Ide, Akutagawa, Ono, & Furukawa, 2019). Standardized scales, such as the Kessler ten-item psychological scale (K10), have been established to evaluate emotional distress (Kessler et al., 2002). Researchers have found that over 542 million people around the world are experiencing symptoms of depression or anxiety (Baxter et al., 2014; WHO, 2017) using these kinds of assessments, demonstrating the widespread nature of psychological distress.

Titheradge et al.'s (2018) study compared psychological distress levels among primary school teachers in the South West of England to those in clinical and general population samples in order to determine the extent of psychological suffering among these educators. Up to 90 teachers were tracked at baseline, 9, 18, and 30 months in this study, which was carried out as a secondary analysis of data from the Supporting Teachers and Children in Schools experiment. Psychological distress was measured using the Everyday Feelings Questionnaire. The study's findings showed that, over the course of the 30-month follow-up period, the teacher cohort's heightened levels of psychological distress persisted when compared to equivalent professionals in the general population. However, their distress levels were lower than those observed in the clinical sample. The findings demonstrated the urgent need for intervention to assist teachers' mental health, with between 19% and 29% of teachers reporting clinically severe distress at each time point. This study by Titheradge et al. (2018) utilized secondary data to examine the levels of psychological distress among primary school teachers over time, providing valuable epidemiological insights. On the other hand, the current study involved implementing cognitive restructuring techniques as an intervention to alleviate work-related psychological distress among secondary school teachers in Kenya. By focusing on a targeted intervention approach, the current study aimed to assess the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring in improving teacher well-being.

Jerrim, Sims, Taylor and Allen (2021) sought to find out whether the mental health and wellbeing of teachers in England had changed over time, presenting novel empirical findings regarding the long-term trends in the mental health and well-being of teachers. Their study revealed that while there has been a recent increase in the reporting of mental health issues among teachers, a similar trend was observed among workers in other professions, with no significant change in levels of personal well-being concurrently. As a result, Jerrim et al. (2021)

came to the conclusion that, while there was a higher possibility of reporting such concerns than in prior years, teachers' mental health and overall well-being in England had stayed largely consistent over the past 20 years. While the study by Jerrim et al. (2021) offers a broader perspective on the general trends in teacher mental health, the current research specifically targeted the efficacy of a cognitive restructuring intervention tailored to address work-related psychological distress among teachers. Therefore, although both studies contribute to the understanding of teacher mental health, they differ in their scope and focus, with the current study providing targeted intervention strategies to address the identified psychological distress among secondary school teachers in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Tuettemann and Punch (2018) studied 574 Western Australian educators with a mean teaching experience of 9.4 years to determine the prevalence and predictors of psychological distress within this group. High levels of psychological anguish were found, along with positive correlations between the five stressors and psychological distress and negative correlations between the four destressors and psychological discomfort.

A study conducted by Li and Kou (2018) aimed to assess the stress levels among teachers in China and identify associated factors to lay the groundwork for developing strategies to mitigate teacher stress. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey approach and a composite questionnaire with the 10-item Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10), the study was carried out at a comprehensive university in northeast China, with 603 respondents. The findings revealed that teachers generally experienced high levels of stress, with over half of the participants scoring above the threshold indicating significant distress. Lack of research funding, insufficient rest during weekends or holidays, and inadequate physical exercise were identified as factors contributing to increased stress levels among teachers. Conversely, regular exercise emerged as a potential means of reducing stress. University professors' main sources of stress were found to be the lack of regular breaks and physical activity, pressure from scientific research, and promotion to academic titles. The current study was conducted among secondary school teachers, whereas the study by Li and Kou (2018) was conducted among Chinese university teachers.

In their study, Stapleton, Garby, and Sabot (2020) investigated the prevalence of psychological distress, coping mechanisms, and overall well-being among 166 Australian teachers. The participants, aged between 22 and 65 years, completed an online survey consisting of demographic questions and four standardized measures. The results revealed above-average clinical symptoms of anxiety, depression, and physical health issues among the participants, with 17% meeting criteria for probable alcohol dependence. Stapleton et al. (2020) found that the prevalence of symptoms of psychological disorders among Australian teachers exceeded those reported in the general population. Specifically, approximately 18% of the teacher sample met clinical criteria for moderately severe to severe depression, 20% for severe anxiety, and 25% for severe somatoform disorder. The results, according to the researchers, were in line with earlier studies showing significant levels of psychological discomfort in teachers. Consequently, the study emphasized the necessity for work-based programs aimed at enhancing teachers' coping mechanisms to alleviate psychological distress and enhance overall well-being. While the study by Stapleton et al. (2020) and the current study both contribute to understanding teachers' mental health challenges, they differ in their approach and geographical context, with the current study offering a targeted intervention strategy tailored to the Kenyan educational setting.

Sunga (2019) conducted a study in the Philippines aiming to explore the interplay between quality of life, stress, and mental health among teachers, with the ultimate goal of informing the development of a wellness program. An analysis of 181 full-time private school teachers in Malolos, Bulacan, was conducted using stratified random sampling. Utilizing measures such as “the World Health Organization Quality of Life, Teacher Stress Inventory, and Mental Health Inventory”, the study assessed various aspects of teachers' well-being. The results showed that teachers had significant levels of stress from their jobs and responsibilities, along with only moderate levels of satisfaction with their surroundings, psychological well-being, and physical health. While occurrences of unfavorable symptoms in anxiety were relatively low, significant negative correlations emerged between quality of life domains and mental health subscales. Conversely, stress subscales displayed significant positive correlations with mental health indicators. The study concluded that a notable relationship exists between teachers' quality of life, stress levels, and mental health status. While Sunga's study focuses on broader aspects of teachers' well-being and identifies correlations between various factors, the current research narrows its scope to investigate the impact of cognitive restructuring techniques on work-related psychological distress among teachers in Kenya.

Othman and Sivasubramaniam (2019) conducted a study in Malaysia to determine the frequency with which secondary school teachers experienced depression, anxiety, and stress. A total of 356 educators from 6 secondary institutions in the Klang zone of Malaysia were included in the study. Depressive (43.0%), anxious (68.0%), and psychologically distressing (32.3%) symptoms were found to be prevalent among the teachers. 9.9%, 23.3%, and 7.0% of respondents had severe to extremely severe depression, anxiety, and psychological discomfort. To ensure high-quality teaching, Othman and Sivasubramaniam (2019) advocated for measures to be adopted to boost the mental health of educators. While Othman and Sivasubramaniam (2019) provide insights into the prevalence of mental health issues among secondary school teachers in Malaysia, the current study in Kenya specifically examines “the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring in mitigating work-related psychological distress among secondary school teachers in Kiambu County.” Therefore, while both studies underscore the importance of addressing teachers' mental health, they differ in their approaches, with the current study offering targeted intervention strategies tailored to the context of Kiambu County, Kenya.

Research undertaken by Cezar-Vaz, Bonow, de Almeida, Rocha, and Borges (2015) sought to understand the biological and psychological effects of primary school teachers' self-reported stressful working situations. A total of 37 educators from Southern Brazil participated in the exploratory study. According to the participating educators, positive relationships with coworkers are one factor that contributes to a positive work environment. Teachers' health and well-being can be improved by taking into account the identification of stressful working conditions, their bio-psycho-social consequences, and the identification of working conditions that promote well-being in the workplace, as concluded by Cezar-Vaz et al. (2015). While the research by Cezar-Vaz et al. (2015) focused on the biological and psychological impacts of stressful working conditions among primary school teachers in Brazil, the current study in Kenya aimed to address work-related psychological distress among secondary school teachers. Additionally, Cezar-Vaz et al. addressed the review of working conditions to promote teachers' well-being, while the focus of the current study was on cognitive restructuring.

Okwaraji and Aguwu (2015) conducted a study in which they asked secondary school teachers in Enugu, Nigeria about their feelings of burnout, psychological discomfort, and job satisfaction. In Enugu, in southeastern Nigeria, 432 secondary school teachers participated in

the research. The research showed that over 40% of educators were dissatisfied with their jobs. Okwaraji and Aguwa (2015) hypothesized that the high rate of psychological distress among teachers may be due to the pressures of the job, the low pay, and the widespread belief among educators that they are not receiving the respect and appreciation they need from the government.

Peele and Wolf (2020) examined the effects of stresses in the personal and professional lives, as well as the workplace, on anxiety and depression symptoms in Ghanaian kindergarten teachers. They also looked at the efficacy of a professional development intervention in reducing these symptoms. The study involved 444 kindergarten teachers from both public and private schools. The findings revealed that a poor workplace environment was associated with increased anxiety and depressive symptoms. Furthermore, during the academic year, all teachers saw an increase in symptoms; however, the increase was less pronounced for those in the treatment groups that got professional development intervention. Anxiety problems were also connected to being new to the area and the parents' lack of social support for their children. Increased depressed symptoms were predicted by household food insufficiency. Overall, the study indicates that the personal and professional lives of teachers have a substantial impact on their mental health, and that symptoms may be mitigated by professional development interventions such as parent involvement, in-class coaching, and training. This study by Peele and Wolf (2020) focused on kindergarten teachers in Ghana, which is different from the scope of the current study, which focused on “the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring in mitigating work-related psychological distress among secondary school teachers in Kiambu County, Kenya.” In addition, Peele and Wolf (2020) assessed the impact of professional development interventions on anxiety and depressive symptoms among teachers, while the current study assessed the efficacy of a cognitive restructuring intervention in addressing work-related psychological distress.

Vazi, Ruiter, Van den Borne, Martin, Dumont, and Reddy (2018) investigated the relationship between indicators of wellbeing and stress among primary and high school teachers in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Using a cross-sectional survey design, 562 public school teachers were randomly selected. The findings revealed a high prevalence of stress among teachers, with 31% experiencing high stress levels. Positive correlations were found between stress and role problems, external locus of control, and work pressure, aligning with existing literature. Surprisingly, a positive work environment showed no correlation with stress, contrary to expectations. Subjective and psychological wellbeing factors significantly contributed to explaining stress variance, suggesting that interventions targeting psychological wellbeing and negative affect reduction could help prevent stress among teachers. In contrast to the study by Vazi et al. (2018) which examined the relationship between wellbeing indicators and stress levels among teachers in South Africa, the current study contributes to understanding how specific interventions can alleviate teacher stress.

Obimakinde, Balogun, and Adeleye et al. (2022) investigated the prevalence of psychological distress among secondary school teachers in rural and urban areas of southwest Nigeria, considering associated work-related factors. Using a cross-sectional analytical study design, they surveyed teachers from rural ($n = 578$) and urban ($n = 596$) settings, assessing psychological distress with the 12-item General Health Questionnaire. The findings indicated that a higher proportion of rural teachers experienced psychological distress (42.7%) compared to urban teachers (33.6%). Factors associated with distress included marital status, teaching in a public school, and teaching more subjects. The adjusted odds of distress were higher for

teachers in rural and public schools. Overall, the study highlighted the need to improve work conditions in rural schools to mitigate psychological distress among teachers. In contrast to the current study on “the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring in mitigating work-related psychological distress among secondary school teachers in Kiambu County”, which focuses on intervention effectiveness, Obimakinde et al.'s (2022) study examined the prevalence of psychological distress among teachers in different geographical settings in Nigeria. While both studies address the mental health challenges faced by teachers, the current study delves into the efficacy of a specific intervention strategy, whereas their study provides insights into the factors contributing to psychological distress among teachers in rural and urban areas.

Desouky and Allam (2017) conducted a cross-sectional study aiming to “assess the prevalence of occupational stress, depression, and anxiety among Egyptian teachers.” The study included 568 Egyptian teachers who completed a questionnaire on personal data, as well as Arabic versions of the Occupational Stress Index, Taylor manifest anxiety scale, and Beck Depression Inventory to measure occupational stress, anxiety, and depression, respectively. The findings revealed high prevalence rates, with 100% of teachers experiencing occupational stress, 67.5% experiencing anxiety, and 23.2% experiencing depression. Furthermore, there was a correlation found between greater scores in occupational stress, anxiety, and depression and older age, female gender, teaching in elementary schools, inadequate salary, higher teaching experience, higher degrees, and increased workload. There was a marginally favorable association found between the anxiety and depression scores and the occupational stress ratings. While Desouky and Allam's (2017) study sheds light on “the prevalence of occupational stress, depression, and anxiety among Egyptian teachers”, there remains a gap in research regarding effective intervention strategies to mitigate these issues. While they identified risk factors associated with these mental health challenges, such as age, gender, workload, and salary, there is limited exploration of interventions tailored to address these specific factors and alleviate stress and mental health symptoms among teachers. Therefore, the current study aimed to fill this gap by evaluating a targeted intervention strategy to improve teacher mental health and wellbeing.

Gelaye, Lemma and Deyassa (2022) carried out a cross-sectional study that sought to “examine the prevalence of mental distress and its correlates among working adults, including teachers, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.” The study included 2,180 individuals (1,316 men and 864 women) and employed a structured questionnaire to gather socio-demographic and lifestyle information. Mental distress was evaluated using the self-reporting questionnaire. The findings revealed a high prevalence of mental distress, with 17.7% of the study sample experiencing it (25.9% in women and 12.4% in men). Younger participants, especially those below 24 years, exhibited the highest prevalence of mental distress. Women had significantly higher odds of experiencing mental distress compared to men. While Gelaye, Lemma and Deyassa (2022) provide valuable insights into the prevalence and correlates of mental distress among working adults in Ethiopia, there remains a gap in research concerning specific occupational factors contributing to mental distress and effective workplace interventions to address it. The study primarily focused on socio-demographic and lifestyle characteristics in the general population without delving into work-related stressors and coping mechanisms among teachers in particular. Therefore, the current study aimed to fill this gap by investigating a targeted intervention strategy tailored to the unique occupational challenges faced by teachers in Kenya.

Ssenyonga and Hecker (2021) investigated the factors contributing to stress among teachers in southwestern Uganda, focusing on both school-related and personal job perceptions. A representative sample of 291 teachers from 12 public secondary schools participated in the

study, completing self-administered questionnaires. The results indicated that a majority of teachers (60.2%) experienced elevated or high levels of stress across various aspects of their work, with significant proportions reporting work-related stress (59%) and student-related stress (51%). Moreover, teachers' stress levels were found to be correlated with their use of violence. Factors such as teaching difficulties and feelings of pressure at work were identified as contributors to teachers' stress. Notably, stress levels did not vary significantly with teachers' sociodemographic variables. Ssenyonga and Hecker (2021) concluded that teachers' perceptions of their working conditions significantly influence their stress levels, emphasizing the need to enhance working conditions to alleviate stress among educators. Although the study by Ssenyonga and Hecker (2021) identified the importance of improving working conditions to reduce stress, it did not explore potential intervention approaches to address this issue effectively. Therefore, the current study addressed this gap by evaluating the efficacy of cognitive restructuring as a strategy for addressing psychological distress in Kenya's educational context.

In a study conducted in Tanzania, Masath (2022) sought to “investigate the moderating effect of mental health on the relationship between teachers' stress levels and their professional attitudes.” Using a sample of 173 teachers from 12 randomly selected public primary schools, the study found high levels of stress and mental health challenges among teachers. Specifically, 3.0% of teachers had high stress levels, 29.0% had elevated stress levels, and 68% had normal stress levels. The results of hierarchical regression moderation analysis revealed a significant negative association between teachers' professional attitudes and their stress levels, which was moderated by mental health. Although Masath's study contributes to understanding the relationship between stress, mental health, and professional attitudes among Tanzanian teachers, it primarily focused on identifying associations rather than proposing specific intervention strategies. The study highlighted the need for interventions to enhance teachers' well-being but did not provide guidance on effective intervention approaches, a gap which the current study in Kenya aimed to address.

In Kenya, researchers Muiga, Ombui and Iravo (2016) looked into how stress at work affected teachers in public high schools in the Kikuyu sub-County. Purposive sampling was used to identify 66 educators from whom to administer a questionnaire and gather data. The study found that teacher performance was significantly correlated with teacher stress levels. Researchers have tried to pin down the demographic make-up of those most at risk for experiencing psychological distress. For instance, Islam (2019) investigated “the incidence of psychological distress and its association with socio-demographic characteristics in a rural district of Bangladesh.” Sampled from a rural location in Bangladesh, the study included 242 persons (1176 male and 1249 female) aged 18-90. The Kessler 10-item scale (K-10) was used to evaluate emotional discomfort. The survey found that 52.5% of people experience some sort of psychological distress, with a range from mild (22.7%) to moderate (20.8%) to severe (9.0%).

Kimama, Onyango and Mungai (2024) conducted a study to investigate “the impact of stress and burnout on teachers in public secondary schools in Kenya.” Employing a descriptive survey design, data were collected through self-constructed questionnaires and interviews. The study sample included 240 teachers and 20 principals from 20 secondary schools. The study findings indicated that a majority (81.9%) of teachers acknowledged experiencing stress or burnout at their workplace, while 16.2% reported no such experiences. Interviews with school headteachers revealed that most of them (70%) believed stress and burnout were occasionally

experienced, 20% indicated they were more frequent, and 10% reported rare occurrences. These findings highlight the significant prevalence of stress and burnout among Kenyan teachers, with adverse effects such as decreased productivity, ineffective teaching, demotivation, lack of focus, and disorganization. The study underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions and support systems to enhance teacher well-being and the quality of education.

While Kimama et al. (2024) provide valuable insights into the prevalence and effects of stress and burnout among Kenyan teachers, the study primarily focuses on descriptive findings and lacks a comprehensive analysis of potential intervention strategies. While it calls for targeted interventions and support mechanisms, it does not propose specific approaches tailored to the Kenyan educational context. Therefore, the current study on “the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring in mitigating work-related psychological distress among secondary school teachers in Kiambu County, Kenya”, aimed to bridge this gap by evaluating a specific intervention strategy within the Kenyan educational setting.

In reviewing the various studies exploring the prevalence of psychological distress among teachers across different global contexts, it becomes evident that while there is a growing recognition of the prevalence and adverse effects of these challenges, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding effective intervention strategies. Firstly, studies like Li and Kou (2018), Titheradge et al. (2018), and Masath (2022) highlight the high prevalence of stress and psychological distress among teachers, both globally and in specific regions such as China, England, and Tanzania. These studies underscore the urgent need for interventions to support teacher well-being and enhance their ability to cope with workplace stressors. Secondly, research by Peele and Wolf (2020), Gelaye et al. (2022), and Kimama et al. (2024) emphasizes the detrimental effects of stress and burnout on teachers' professional performance, organizational effectiveness, and overall educational outcomes.

These findings underscore the importance of implementing targeted interventions to alleviate stress and enhance teacher well-being. However, despite the recognition of the problem and its consequences, there is a notable lack of intervention research specifically tailored to the needs of teachers. While studies like Desouky and Allam (2017) and Ssenyonga and Hecker (2021) begin to explore potential factors contributing to teacher stress, they primarily focus on identifying correlates rather than testing intervention strategies. Therefore, the current study sought to fill a crucial gap in the literature by evaluating the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring – an evidence-based intervention approach – in mitigating work-related psychological distress among secondary school teachers in Kiambu County, Kenya. By focusing on intervention research, the study aimed to provide practical insights into strategies that can effectively support teacher well-being and ultimately improve educational outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

The teaching profession is inherently fraught with numerous sources of stress, leaving teachers particularly susceptible to psychological distress. Research (Katula & Orodho, 2014; Gaturu, 2018) indicates that a significant proportion of Kenyan teachers grapple with psychological distress, highlighting the pervasive nature of stress within this profession. This stress can stem from various factors, such as heavy workloads, challenging classroom dynamics, administrative pressures, and inadequate resources. Moreover, the constant need to adapt to educational reforms and meet diverse student needs further compounds the psychological distress experienced by teachers. Stress among educators has been linked to substance abuse,

increased rates of teacher turnover, and subpar work performance, all of which trickle down into student achievement (Muiga, 2016).

The Kenyan government, via the Ministry of Education, has established regional counselling centers accessible to teachers and staffed them with members of the Public Service Commission (Wambu, 2015). The Teachers Service Commission created a policy on employee wellbeing in 2018 with the goal of setting up the right systems to lessen the effects of issues like HIV/AIDS, alcohol and drug abuse, disability, gender-based violence, and poor health on workers in order to improve their productivity and customer service. According to the policy, "the Commission is committed to improving the wellbeing of all its employees and helping them cope with challenges that impact negatively on their performance and general welfare" (TSC, 2018). In spite of this intervention, teachers were still under psychological distress. But despite the Ministry of Education and TSC's intervention efforts, studies by Kagwe, Ngigi and Mutisya (2018) show that a significant number of Kenyan teachers experience psychological distress and do not seek professional counseling services. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to establish the prevalence of psychological distress among secondary school teachers in Kiambu County, Kenya

Theoretical Framework

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), a type of psychotherapy that emphasizes the importance of thoughts in influencing feelings and actions, will serve as the theoretical foundation for this investigation. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy operates under the premise that dysfunctional emotions and behaviours originate in one's thoughts, which in turn stem from one's social and environmental experiences. The purpose of therapy was to help patients recognize their dysfunctional thought patterns and replace them with more helpful ones. As a result of adopting these fresh perspectives, people's actions and emotions will change for the better.

An organized, brief, and present-focused treatment for depression was created by Beck (1970). Cognitive therapy was developed by psychologist Aaron Beck when he noticed that his depressed patients had unique ways of thinking. Based on this, Beck created a model of depression that depicts a cognitive triangle defined by a pessimistic outlook on life, a lack of hope for the future, and an inability to accept positive reinforcement. Beck argued that most mental illnesses share certain characteristics, including a tendency toward systemic distortions in the way information is processed. Paranoid thinking, for instance, is a biased assumption that others are prejudiced, abusive, or critical, while anxiety disorders are defined by a persistent fear of bodily or psychological harm.

CBT is grounded in an instructional model and emphasizes teamwork and action. The goal of therapy is to provide the patient with the skills necessary to prevent future relapses. Based on the assumption that dysfunctional patterns of behavior and emotional response may be taught, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) encourages patients to replace their old ways of thinking with more healthy ones. CBT is problem-oriented and aims to help patients achieve their set goals. Cognitive therapy, an offshoot of psychoanalysis, argues that the thoughts contributing to a patient's misery are not hidden away in the subconscious. Therefore, CBT focuses on the here and now, on alleviating symptoms, rather than doing in-depth analyses of the client's developmental history.

CBT is structured and directive, which is related to the previous idea. Due of the time constraints of CBT, each session follows a predetermined structure. This uniformity of format promotes generalization by giving the client a blueprint to follow when serving as his or her

own therapist once treatment has concluded. The agenda is developed jointly by the therapist and client with the client's therapeutic objectives in mind. In addition, between therapy sessions, CBT patients are assigned homework.

Over the years, CBT has been utilized to address a wide range of mental health issues in a wide range of settings and with a wide range of people. It has been demonstrated to be helpful in treating severe depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, social anxiety, generalized anxiety disorder, substance abuse, and marital/couples problems in adults. PTSD, personality problems, chronic pain, anti-social conduct, hypochondria, and schizophrenia are only some of the conditions that have benefited from CBT's application. Albert Ellis adapted CBT to create a method he called "cognitive restructuring." In cognitive behavioral therapy, erroneous negative ideas that might lead to depression are identified and restructured through a process called cognitive restructuring. In cognitive behavioral therapy, the process of changing the patient's thought patterns is referred to as "cognitive restructuring." In spite of this intervention, very few teachers attend these counselling by the TSC. Whereas cognitive restructuring is something they can learn and do for themselves. The therapist uses this method to help the patient recognize when she is thinking irrationally and to encourage her to look for other, more reasonable interpretations of the same events. The client acquires and uses these new ways of thinking through cognitive restructuring.

In this study, CBT informed the understanding of how irrational beliefs held by teachers may exacerbate work-related stressors, leading to heightened levels of psychological distress. By identifying and challenging these irrational beliefs through cognitive restructuring techniques, the study aimed to disrupt the negative thought-emotion-behavior cycle and promote adaptive coping strategies among teachers. Additionally, CBT principles guided the development and implementation of cognitive restructuring interventions, emphasizing the importance of addressing cognitive distortions to improve mental well-being. Overall, CBT provided a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing work-related psychological distress among teachers, highlighting the interconnectedness of cognitive processes and emotional experiences within the context of the study.

In conclusion, the CBT theory formed the basis on which variables in the present study were observed. This approach also facilitated in focusing on cognitive restructuring method to help alleviate secondary school teachers' psychological distress. And therefore gave the framework upon which the key variables were measured.

Summary of Literature Review

The psychological distress among teachers, the reviewed studies highlight widespread concerns globally, emphasizing factors such as job dissatisfaction, stressors, and socio-demographic variables like age and income. However, gaps exist in understanding the underlying mechanisms driving distress and designing targeted interventions to address teachers' diverse needs effectively.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a quasi-experimental research design. This study was carried out among selected teachers in secondary schools in Kiambu County. Kiambu County has a total of 303 secondary schools with a population of 3,617 teachers (County Government of Kiambu 12 sub counties, however the target population will be the teachers in Thika town Sub County. Multistage

sampling technique was used at three levels; sampling stage level one was used for selecting the schools at county level where Thika town Sub County was selected. The final overall sample size of 120. The study used the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale - 21 Items (DASS-21). Data was collected using questionnaire. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 was used to analyse the data. Data was presented in form of tables.

FINDINGS

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The demographic findings from the study are as herein indicated. Among the demographic information sought in this study was gender, age and number of years of employment as a teacher.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

		Category		Total	Percentage
		Control	Treatment		
Gender	Female	30	30	60	56.1%
	Male	24	23	47	43.9%
	Total	54	53	107	100%
Age	18 to 35 years	3	3	6	5.6%
	36 to 45 years	19	19	38	35.5%
	46 to 55 years	25	24	49	45.8%
	Over 55 years	7	7	14	13.1%
	Total	54	53	107	100%
Years of employment	Less than 1 year	4	4	8	7.5%
	2 to 5 years	13	13	26	24.3%
	6 to 10 years	23	22	45	42.1%
	Over 10 years	14	14	28	26.2%
	Total	54	53	107	100%

From Table 1, majority of the respondents (56.1%) were females while 43.9% were males.

For age, majority of the respondents (45.8%) were aged between 46-55 years. 35.5% of the respondents were aged between 36-45 years while 13.1% were aged above 55 years. 5.6% of the respondents were aged between 18 and 35 years.

For duration of employment, majority of the respondents (42.1%) had been employed for a period of 6-10 years. 26.2% of the respondents had been employed for over 10 years while 24.3% of the respondents had been employed for a period of 2 to 5 years. 7.5% of the respondents had been employed for less than a year.

Prevalence of Psychological Distress among Secondary School Teachers

The findings in this section were guided by the first objective of the study which was to establish the prevalence of psychological distress among secondary school teachers in Kiambu County, Kenya.

The Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale - 21 Items (DASS-21) tool was used to determine the frequency with which secondary school teachers experienced depression, anxiety, and stress. The prevalence of psychological distress was categorized in five different categories which included Normal, Mild, Moderate, Severe and Extremely severe depending on the scores.

Table 2: Overall Prevalence of Psychological Distress in Teachers in Kiambu County

		Group		Total	Percentage
		Control	Treatment		
Depression	Normal	13	15	28	26.20%
	Mild	8	17	25	23.4%
	Moderate	33	21	54	50.5%
	Total	54	53	107	100.0%
Anxiety	Normal	3	12	15	14.0%
	Mild	11	15	26	24.3%
	Moderate	18	16	34	31.8%
	Severe	16	9	25	23.4%
	Extremely severe	6	1	7	6.5%
Total	54	53	107	100.0%	
Stress	Normal	22	51	73	68.2%
	Mild	16	2	18	16.8%
	Moderate	8	0	8	7.5%
	Severe	8	0	8	7.5%
	Total	54	53	107	100.0%

From the results, majority of the respondents (50.5%) had moderate levels of depression, 26.2% had normal levels of depression whereas 23.4% had mild levels of depression. Additionally, majority of the respondents (31.8%) had moderate levels of anxiety, 24.3% had mild levels of anxiety, 23.4% had severe levels of anxiety, 14% had normal levels of anxiety whereas 8.8% had extremely severe levels of anxiety. Moreover, majority of the respondents (68.2%) had normal levels of stress, 16.8% had mild levels of stress, 7.5% had moderate levels of stress whereas 7.5% had severe levels of stress.

These results showed that levels of psychological distress among secondary school teachers were moderate and hence the prevalence of psychological distress raised a concern. The prevalence of psychological distress among secondary school teachers could be attributed to uncondusive working environments, lack of guidance and counselling sessions for the teachers among other reasons. These could be solved by implementing various measures that would aim at reducing the levels of psychological distress.

These results were in agreement with findings of Othman and Sivasubramaniam (2019) who investigated the prevalence of psychological distress among secondary school teachers and found out that the teachers had a high prevalence of depressive, anxiety and psychological distress symptoms. Similarly, Islam (2019) investigated the incidence of psychological distress and its association with socio-demographic characteristics in a rural district of Bangladesh. The survey found that 52.5% of people experience some sort of psychological distress, with a range from mild (22.7%) to moderate (20.8%) to severe (9.0%).

A cross-tabulation analysis of depression levels with various demographic characteristics, including gender, age, and years of employment was carried out. Table 3 outlines the distribution of individuals across different levels of depression (Normal, Mild, Moderate, Severe, Extremely severe) based on these demographic factors.

Table 3: Cross Tabulation of Depression with Demographic Characteristics

		Normal	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Extremely severe	Total	percentage
Gender	Female	18	11	31	0	0	60	56.10%
	Male	10	14	23	0	0	47	43.90%
Total		28	25	54	0	0	107	100.00%
Age	Between 18 and 35 years	3	0	3	0	0	6	5.60%
	36 to 45 years	10	9	19	0	0	38	35.50%
	46 to 55 years	13	12	24	0	0	49	45.80%
	Over 55 years	2	4	8	0	0	14	13.10%
	Total	28	25	54	0	0	107	100.00%
Years of employment	Less than 1 year	4	0	4	0	0	8	7.50%
	2 to 5 years	5	8	13	0	0	26	24.30%
	6 to 10 years	13	11	21	0	0	45	42.10%
	Over 10 years	6	6	16	0	0	28	26.20%
	Total	28	25	54	0	0	107	100.00%

The results indicate that females have a higher prevalence of depression compared to males, with 56.10% of total cases attributed to females and 43.90% to males. Additionally, the distribution indicates that middle-aged individuals have a higher tendency to experience depression at 45.8% compared to younger or older age groups. These results could be attributed to the fact that balancing teaching responsibilities with personal life can be challenging, especially for teachers with families or caregiving responsibilities. Limited time for self-care and relaxation may exacerbate stress and contribute to depressive symptoms, particularly among females and middle-aged individuals.

The data also suggests that there is a correlation between longer years of employment and increased risk of depression. Secondary school teachers often face high workloads, administrative demands, and pressure to meet educational standards. These factors can contribute to chronic stress and burnout, increasing the risk of depression among teachers, particularly those with longer years of employment.

A cross-tabulation analysis of anxiety levels with various demographic characteristics, including gender, age, and years of employment was carried out. Table 4 outlines the distribution of individuals across different levels of anxiety (Normal, Mild, Moderate, Severe, extremely severe) based on these demographic factors.

Table 4: Cross Tabulation of Anxiety with Demographic Characteristics

		Normal	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Extremely severe	Total	percentage
Gender	Female	10	13	19	14	4	60	56.10%
	Male	5	13	15	11	3	47	43.90%
Total		15	26	34	25	7	107	100.00%
Age	Between 18 and 35 years	0	1	1	4	0	6	5.60%
	36 to 45 years	8	7	13	7	3	38	35.50%
	46 to 55 years	6	13	15	12	3	49	45.80%
	Over 55 years	1	5	5	2	1	14	13.10%
	Total	15	26	34	25	7	107	100.00%
Anxiety	Less than 1 year	0	2	1	4	1	8	7.50%
	2 to 5 years	7	6	8	4	1	26	24.30%
	6 to 10 years	6	10	17	9	3	45	42.10%
	Over 10 years	2	8	8	8	2	28	26.20%
	Total	15	26	34	25	7	107	100.00%

Similar to depression, females exhibit a higher prevalence of anxiety compared to males, with 56.10% of total cases attributed to females and 43.90% to males. The data also suggests that middle-aged teachers, particularly those in the 46 to 55 age range, experience higher levels of anxiety. In addition, the results indicates that teachers with mid-range years of employment, rather than new or long-tenured teachers, experience heightened levels of anxiety. Teachers may experience anxiety related to job security, performance evaluations, and meeting educational goals. Pressure to improve student outcomes, navigate curriculum changes, and adapt to evolving teaching methodologies can contribute to heightened anxiety levels among certain demographic groups of teachers.

A cross-tabulation analysis of stress levels with various demographic characteristics, including gender, age, and years of employment was carried out. Table 5 outlines the distribution of individuals across different levels of stress (Normal, Mild, Moderate, Severe, extremely severe) based on these demographic factors.

Table 5: Cross Tabulation of Stress with Demographic Characteristics

		Normal	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Extremely severe	Total	percentage
Gender	Female	40	10	5	5	0	60	56.10%
	Male	33	8	3	3	0	47	43.90%
	Total	73	18	8	8	0	107	100.00%
Age	Between 18 and 35 years	3	1	0	2	0	6	5.60%
	36 to 45 years	26	6	3	3	0	38	35.50%
	46 to 55 years	33	8	5	3	0	49	45.80%
	Over 55 years	11	3	0	0	0	14	13.10%
	Total	73	18	8	8	0	107	100.00%
Stress	Less than 1 year	4	1	1	2	0	8	7.50%
	2 to 5 years	20	5	1	0	0	26	24.30%
	6 to 10 years	30	7	4	4	0	45	42.10%
	Over 10 years	19	5	2	2	0	28	26.20%
	Total	73	18	8	8	0	107	100.00%

From the results, distribution of stress appears relatively similar between genders, with slightly more cases reported among females (56.10%) compared to males (43.90%). The results also show that mid-career teachers, particularly those in the 36 to 55 age range, may experience higher levels of stress. Moreover, the results indicate that teachers in the mid-range of their careers, rather than new or long-tenured teachers, may experience heightened levels of stress. Teachers may experience stress related to job security, performance evaluations, and meeting educational goals. Pressure to improve student outcomes, navigate curriculum changes, and adapt to evolving teaching methodologies can contribute to heightened stress levels, particularly among mid-career teachers.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The results are summarized in the following sections in accordance with the objectives.

Prevalence of Psychological Distress among Secondary School Teachers

The results revealed that majority of the respondents (50.5%) had moderate levels of depression meaning that over half of the respondents fell into this category. For anxiety, majority of the respondents (31.8%) had moderate levels of anxiety. For stress, majority of the respondents (68.2%) had normal levels of stress.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made from the study;

1. There should be regular monitoring and evaluation of teachers' mental health and well-being within school settings. This can involve implementing surveys or assessments to gauge levels of psychological distress over time and to track the effectiveness of interventions such as cognitive restructuring.
2. Schools and educational authorities should establish support systems for teachers experiencing psychological distress. This may include providing access to counseling services, peer support groups, or employee assistance programs aimed at addressing mental health concerns in the workplace.

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