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### ABSTRACT

*The main aim of this study was to evaluate the influence of stress management strategies on employees' performance. Various literatures and theories from different scholars regarding stress management strategies were reviewed. Descriptive research design was adopted. The target population comprised of seven hundred thousand (700,000) respondents from the Public Service with a sample size of four hundred (400). Random sampling techniques was used in selecting a sample size from 21 ministries within the Public Service. Questionnaires method was used as data collection instrument which was self-administered. The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 20 and the output presented using tables and graphs. Multiple linear regression model to study the relationship between Stress Management Strategies and employees' performance was used. Descriptive Statistics included frequencies distribution tables and percentages to present and interpret data. The study would benefit the Human Resource Personnel in Public Service in making strategic decisions relating to formulation of stress management strategies. The Government ministries would also use the results from the study to review policies to incorporate stress management measures. The study would also be of importance to academicians and scholars as it would provide reference materials for future research. From the findings of the analysis of the study, all variables studied indicated a significant effect on employees' performance of Public Service, explained by a 91.1% variation. The regression model also indicated that there was a positive relationship between employees' performance and the factor variables studies of relaxation techniques and counselling services. The study recommended that the Management of the organization under study should create awareness to the employees to enable them be aware of utilization of stress management strategies available in the organization that can result in improved performance.*

**Key Word:** *Counselling Services Strategy, Flextime Programmes, Meditation Techniques, Relaxation Techniques*

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter entails the background of the study, global perspective on stress management strategies, regional and local perspective respectively. While some workplace stress is normal, excessive stress can interfere with employees' productivity and impact negatively on their physical and emotional health. The ability to deal with it can mean the difference between success and failure (Segal, Smith, Robinson, & Segal, 2016). Stress is defined as a psychological and physical reaction to prolonged internal and/or environmental conditions in which individual's adaptive capabilities are over extended. It is an adaptive response to conscious or unconscious threat and can affect an individual emotional, physical and social wellbeing as well as pose a threat to one's health if not dealt with or managed well (Zaidi, 2015).

During the past decade, the public and private sector organizations have undergone through rapid and striking changes due to emergence of globalization, liberalization and increased competition which gave rise to high level of role stress among employees in both sectors. Although individual and organizational characteristics play a role in the development of role stress, yet the majority agree that role stress results from the interaction between the worker and the conditions of work (Mukherjee, 2015).

Stress significantly affects performance and service delivery of workers (Ngari et al., 2013). Work stress is recognized world-wide as a major challenge of workers' health and the healthiness of their organizations. Workers who are stressed are also more likely to be unhealthy, poorly motivated, less productive and less safe at work. Their organizations are less likely to be successful in a competitive market (Cox, Griffiths, & Leka, 2015). Stress at work is an ever increasing problem in contemporary societies resulting in enormous cost both for the corporate organizations involved and

the individual employees. These realities have led to Kenyan employers looking into stress management techniques that can help reduce stress levels among employees and in turn enhance corporate performance (Musyoka, Ogutu, & Awino, 2013).

Workplace stress has been increasing so rapidly that occupational stress was termed as a 'global epidemic' by the International Labor Organization. High levels of stress at the workplace make the environment and ambience extremely tense. Stress impacts the overall business performance since the business actually comprises of individuals who run the show (Vishal, 2016). The experience of work stress is a challenge to the health and safety of workers and to the healthiness of their organizations. Unhealthy organizations do not get the best from their workers and this may affect not only their performance in the increasingly competitive market but eventually even their survival. Employers should have a policy for the management of workers' health that makes reference to work stress. They should enable that policy to be implemented by putting the appropriate arrangements in place. Such arrangements should address the issues of risk assessment, timely reaction and rehabilitation. Organizational level strategies for managing existing work stress focus on combating the risk at source (Cox et al., 2015). The study outlined three perspectives of Global, Regional and Local perspectives on how stress management is being handled.

According to studies such as EU-OSHA's recent ESENER 2 Survey on Helping SMEs meet the challenges of psychosocial risks and stress at work, a big concern related to the fact that many companies lacked awareness about health and safety risks in their workplace, or, if they were aware, they often did not have the necessary expertise and resources to deal with them effectively. The study suggested that investing time

and resources in managing stress will pay for itself in the long term as healthier workplaces and environments result in long-term sustainability and improved social responsibility for the business. The impact is also economic and can be seen through improvements in key performance indicators such as meeting quality and delivery goals, lowering operating costs and reducing staff turnover (EU-OSHA, 2015).

Our country Kenya has gone through challenging times which stressed top civil servants and the entire public workforce. The inability of civil servants to execute projects related to Rapid Results Initiatives (RRI) in Kenya 2005/2012 led to poor economic growth. The introduction of performance contracting in the Public Service where employees are supposed to meet their targets has been a stressor to public servants who were accustomed to working independently and rarely shared information or coordinated across programs (Majeed, 2014).

Employees' job satisfaction is an old concept in Industrial relationships and is influenced by a number of factors. Since the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, some of the government functions which used to be under the central government have since been devolved to the county government. These functions include the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Water, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Public Works and Roads among others. Employees working in these ministries, among others, had their functions devolved to the county governments. The deployment to the counties had adverse effects among employees as exemplified by strikes of the employees of the Ministry of Health. This has been caused by adverse effect of increased stress resulting from lack of timely salary payments and differed promotions for medical staff (Nyantika, Kipchumba, Auka, & Asienyo, 2015).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The experience of work and stress is certainly not new in Kenya. Kenyans continue to experience stress as a result of poor environmental conditions, political uncertainty, poor working conditions and extreme levels of poverty (Ng'eno, 2013). Stress in the workplace reduces productivity, increases management pressures, and makes people ill in many ways, evidence of which is still increasing. Workplace stress affects the performance of the brain, including functions of work performance, memory, concentration and learning (Chapman, 2016).

The study by Ojwang (2012) noted deficit in strategies to curb stress and therefore recommended that top management in the Civil Service should give more financial support to establishing and implementing stress management techniques to eradicate stress and improve on the employees' performance. Stress has a major impact on both organizations and their employees ranging from an increase in workers' compensation claims to reduced productivity. For example, the American Institute of stress estimated that one million workers miss work each day because of stress, costing companies an approximately \$602 per employee per year.

In Kenya, companies employ a number of stress management strategies which include, paying their employees on time, role modeling, good communication channels, welfare programs, training and development among others, despite all these efforts, there are still reported stress related issues that pose challenges in service delivery Karanja (2014). This highlight ineffectiveness of the stress management strategies to curb labour turnover and therefore enhance on employees' performance. It is against this background that this study sought to establish the effects of stress management strategies on employees' performance in the Public Service.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The overall objective of this study was to establish the effect of stress management strategies on employees' performance in the Public Service. The specific objectives were:-

- To establish the effect of counselling services strategy on performance of employees in the State Department of Commerce and Tourism.
- To evaluate how flextime programmes strategy influence performance of employees in the organization under study.
- To determine the influence of meditation techniques strategy on performance of employees in the organization under study.
- To assess the relationship between relaxation techniques strategy and performance of employees in the organization under study.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Review**

#### **Psychological Job Control Theory**

Job control theory has the perceptions of job control over work hours and perceived job autonomy. A key assumption of the literature on flexible work schedules is relating positively to employee perception of job control over scheduling and increased job autonomy. Control is a concept from the demand-control model of work stress. It is defined as the decision latitude employees have over their job tasks (Kossek & Michel, 2010). The demand control model posts positive relationship between worker job demands and the ability to control how and when one performs a job, such as when and how they carry out tasks. It is assumed that a job with high demands and low control will lead to stress. However, if an individual in the same high demand job perceives high control, he/she will experience lower strain. Flexible work schedules are an intervention that could enable greater

control by providing tangible and psychological resources to enhance well-being and improve on performance (Kossek, Valcour, & Lirio, 2014).

#### **Motivation and Work-Family Perspectives Theory**

Kossek and Michel (2010), who borrowed from Vroom's expectancy theory holds that individuals are more likely to be motivated to exert effort to perform for valued goals they think they can achieve. Under a motivation theoretical perspective, flexible work schedule users are assumed to be more likely to exhibit high performance because they would have greater resources which would enable them to perceive greater expectancy that they can perform both work and family roles well. A key issue to measure is the degree to which perceptions of efforts to perform are increased because of use of flexible work schedule. The individual perceives reduced constrained to performing well and increased expectancy to stay in the labor force that means employees with access to work-family benefits are more likely to exhibit higher organization citizenship behavior (Chew, Girardi, & Entekin, 2015).

#### **Psychoanalytic Theory on Counselling**

Psychoanalytic theory typically uses methods to bring unconscious material out in the open. Its main focus is leaned towards the development of the individual in the earlier years, where experiences are discussed, reconstructed, interpreted and analyzed. With the help of transference relationship with the therapist, both client and therapist explores the past of the client, which will then, lead to character change. The primary tools of the trade of the psychoanalytic therapy are the analytic framework, free association interpretation and dream analysis, analysis of resistance and analysis of transference. This theory holds that there are inner forces outside of individual's awareness that are directing our behavior (Russell, 2013).

### **Adlerian Theory on Counselling**

Alfred Adler believed that human behavior is goal-oriented and that humans can best be understood in terms of how they go about trying to achieve their goals. A person's unique lifestyle determines how they work towards their goals throughout their life. Adler believes emotional and psychological problems which causes stress occur because of mistaken lifestyle, about how to achieve life goals and these interferes with a person's ability to function and successfully achieve his goals (Evans & John, 2013). Counselling involves forming an effective relationship and assessing a person's lifestyle, particularly regarding mistaken beliefs. A client gains insight into the mistaken beliefs during the lifestyle assessment, and the therapist encourages the clients towards reorientation and change. Encouragement is a major therapeutic technique to manage stress and therefore improve on performance (Pearson Education, 2010).

### **The Cognitive Theory of Psychological Stress and Coping**

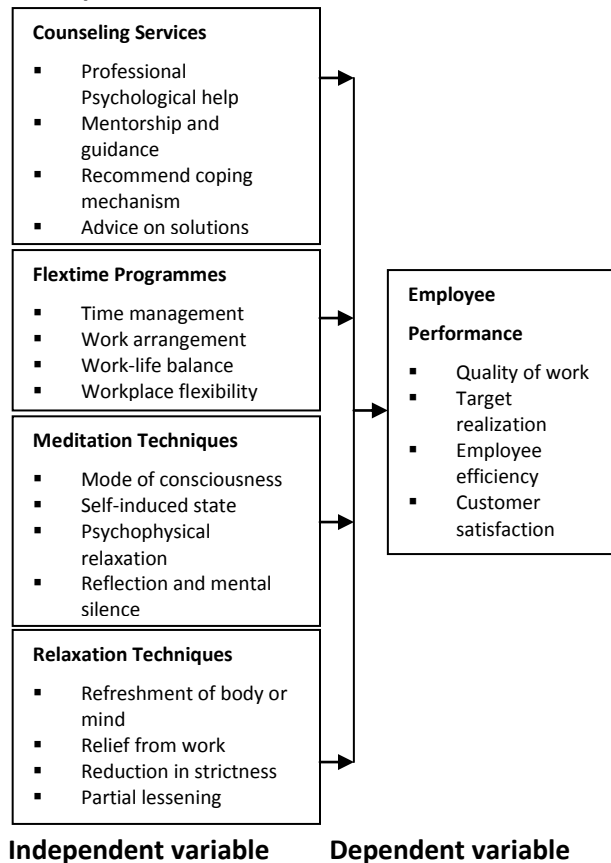
Lazarus and Folkman's theory of psychological stress and coping is perhaps the most theoretically influential transactional theory. Sometimes known as the Cognitive-Relational approach, the individual and their environment are seen as coexisting in a dynamic relationship, where stress is the psychological and emotional state that is internally represented as part of a stressful transaction (Mark & Smith, 2010). Once possible coping methods are assessed and selected, then the final stage of the mode occurs, where coping is implemented. Coping has been characterized as cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage, reduce, minimize, master or tolerate the internal and external demands of the person-environmental transaction that is appraised as taxing or exceeding the person's resources. The cognitive-relational model gives weight to the job situation, subjective perceptions, and the potential

influence or various individual differences factors and indeed Lazarus argues that many stress management interventions fail because they treat all people as if they were alike, and it is useful to view the individual, the group and the workplace as a single analytic unit, rather than separate variables which are to be manipulated independently.

### **Stress-Response Theory**

Selye (1976a) initially proposed a triadic model as the basis for the stress-response pattern. The elements included adrenal cortex hypertrophy, thymicolymphatic (e.g., the thymus, the lymph nodes and the spleen) atrophy, and gastrointestinal ulcers. These three, he reasoned were closely interdependent; they seemed to accompany most illnesses and were provoked no matter what the stimulus or illness. Selye could evoke the response in laboratory rats with agents such as formalin, enzymes, hormones, heat and cold and he observed it in patients with such diverse health problems as infections, cancer and heart disease. He noted that the syndrome probably represented an expression of a generalized call to arms of the body's defensive forces in reaction to excessive demands or provocative stimuli. Selye (1936) called this nonspecific response to damage of any kind of Ostress. Later, he used the term stressor to designate the stimulus that provoked the stress response.

## Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

### Counselling Services

According to Lee (2010) counseling aims at changing the perception of stress allowing an individual to cope with situations that were previously triggering problems. Counseling helps one to evaluate threats and then provide resources to deal with them. Being able to control the environment around is a major part in developing self-confidence which enables an individual to face the challenges ahead. Counseling can help in managing stress and get on with life. Counselors have to deal with stress on a personal level. When discussing stress and how it affects people, counselor will talk about the relationship between the causes of the stress, and the effect of stress. The causes of stress are known as stimulus and the effects are the response.

Identifying the cause and effect of stress is a key to stress management and the first step into building a coping mechanism.

### Flexitime Programmes

According to Friedman (2012), flexibility is a way to define how and when work gets done and how careers are organized. It is a critical ingredient to overall workplace effectiveness. Companies use it as a tool for improving recruitment and retention, for managing workload, and for responding to employee diversity. Studies show that flexibility can also improve employee engagement and job satisfaction and therefore reduce stress due to work-life balance. Flexitime reduces stress and burnout. All forms of stress have been found to lead to other problems that affect productivity and are potentially costly to business. Earlier study has shown that workers who use work-life balance and flexibility programs are more committed and less burned out than those who do not use any of the programs. Employees who feel burned out tend to have less commitment and focus on when to leave the organization due to stress related circumstances. Job stress and burnout reduce productivity and flexitime is a solution to managing the same (Friedman & Oprea, 2012).

### Meditation Techniques

Stress occurs when you perceive that demands placed on you such as work, school or relations exceed your ability to cope. Untreated chronic stress can result in serious health conditions including anxiety, insomnia, muscle pain, high blood pressure and a weakened immune system. Research shows that stress can contribute to the development of major illnesses such as heart disease, depression and obesity. But finding positive, healthy ways to manage stress as it occurs, many of these negative health consequences can be reduced such as meditation. Meditation and mindful prayer help the mind and body to relax and

focus. Mindfulness can help people see new perspective, develop self-compassion and forgiveness. When practicing a form of mindfulness, people can release emotions that may have been causing like exercise. Research has shown that even meditating briefly can reap immediate benefits (Pipe et al., 2010).

### **Relaxation Techniques**

Relaxation techniques are a great way to help with stress management. Relaxation is not just about peace of mind or enjoying a hobby but it is a process that decreases the effects of stress on your mind and body. Relaxation techniques can help you cope with everyday stress and with stress related to various health problems, such as cancer and pain (Mayo Clinic, 2016). Relaxation techniques can reduce stress symptoms and help an individual enjoy a better quality of life especially if one has an illness. Practicing relaxation techniques can reduce stress symptoms by slowing the heart rate, lowering blood pressure, slowing breathing rate, reducing activity of stress hormones, increasing blood flow to major muscles, reducing muscles tension and chronic pain, improving concentration and mind, lowering fatigue, reducing anger and frustration and boosting confidence to handle problems.

### **Empirical Review**

#### **Counselling Services**

There is prominent impact of stress on the lives of adolescents and therefore need for counselors to implement stress management and coping programs. Gender differences in the severity and types of stress and response to the counseling intervention indicates that group counseling does indeed reduce stress among adolescents of both genders (Corey, 2016).

In the study entitled 'The Impacts of Personal Counseling on Stress Academic Success and Retention in Community College Student' found out that there was a significant decrease in participants

perceived stress after attending six to eight sessions of personal counseling. The study found that overall participants felt that stress had a significant negative impact on academic success. Also, participants felt that personal counseling reduced stress, and had a significant positive impact on academic success (Welsh, 2010). The implications for social work are that the study provided evidence that stress is a significant obstacle for performance and that personal counseling can be effective in reducing stress and improve on performance.

### **Flexitime Programmes**

In the study on 'Flex-time as a Moderator of the Job Stress-work Motivation Relationship', it highlights that job stress has a wide-ranging, negative impact on employees performance and has also been known that providing employees with autonomy control over their work environment results to deleterious consequences of stress. The study also reveals that employees report that they are more productive and more engaged in their work when they are able to balance the demands of work with other aspects of their lives improvements in physical and mental health are also associated with workplace flexibility. Study shows that flexible work arrangements may reduce stress because employees working flexibly are more satisfied with their jobs, more satisfied with their lives, and experience better work-family balance. Employees who have a high work-life fit far much better than employees who have moderate or low level of work-life fit and they are more highly engaged and less likely to look for new jobs, they enjoy better overall health, better mental health and lower level of stress (Chet & Steven, 2010).

### **Meditation Techniques**

In the study of "Nurse Leader Mindfulness Meditation Program for Stress Management", randomized controlled trials were conducted. It was to vigorously evaluate a brief stress



management intervention for nurse leaders. Nurse leaders (n=33) were randomly assigned to brief mindfulness meditation course (MMC) or leadership course (control). Self-report measures of stress were administered at baseline and within one (1) week of course completion. The results were that, among MMC participants, change scores (from baseline to post intervention) on several subscales of the symptom checklist 90-revised showed significantly more improvement in self-reported stress symptoms relative to controls. Mindfulness meditation course participants had significantly more improvement in positive symptom distress index.

It was thus concluded the results support preliminary effectiveness of a four (4) week MMC in reducing self-reported stress symptoms among nursing leaders (Willis, 2016). Astin (2015) in the study on "Effects on Psychological Symptomatology, Sense of Control and Spiritual Experiences", the study examined the effects of an eight (8) week stress reduction program based on training in mindfulness meditation. Previous research efforts suggesting this program may be beneficial in terms of reducing stress-related symptomatology and helping patients cope with chronic pain have been limited by a lack of adequate comparison control groups. Twenty eight individuals who volunteered to participate in the present study were randomized into either an experimental group or a nonintervention control group. The study concluded that the techniques of mindfulness meditation, with their emphasis in developing detached observation and awareness of contents of consciousness may represent a powerful cognitive behavioral coping strategy for transforming the ways in which we respond to stressful life events. They may also have potential for relapse prevention in effective disorder (Astin, 2015).

### **Relaxation Techniques**

In the study on "Stress Management in Work Settings", a variety of stress management techniques was used in worksite studies, including muscle relaxation, meditation, biofeedback, cognitive-behavioral skills and combinations of these techniques. The most common techniques used were muscle relaxation, cognitive-behavioral skills and combinations of two or more techniques. The study concluded that the large number of different stress management techniques coupled with the wide range of health outcome measures used in stress intervention studies makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the efficacy of each technique and each outcome (Murphy & Schoenborn, 2016).

In a study titled "Effects of Occupational Stress Management Intervention Program" meta-analysis was conducted to determine the effectiveness of stress management interventions in occupational settings. Thirty six experimental studies were included, representing 55 interventions. Total sample size was 2,847. Of the participants, 59% were female, mean age was 35.4, and average length of intervention was 7.4 weeks. The interventions were coded as cognitive-behavioral, relaxation organizational, multimodal or alternative. Within the sample of studies, relaxation interventions were most frequently used, and organizational interventions continued to be scarce (Richardson & Rothstein, 2015).

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study used descriptive research design. This was because descriptive studies take raw data and analyze and summarize it into useable and understandable form. The main aim of descriptive research is to provide an accurate and valid representation of the factors or variables that pertain to relevance of the research questions (Wyk, 2012). The study focused on the middle level category of employees from three different

departments. These are Public Relations Department, Human Resource Management /Development Department and Central Planning and Project Management Unit. The multiple linear regression model was highlighted as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \epsilon$$

Where Y is the dependent variable (Employee Performance),

$\beta_0$  is the regression coefficient,

$\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$ ,  $\beta_3$  and  $\beta_4$  are the slopes of the regression equation,

$X_1$  is counseling

$X_2$  is flexitime

$X_3$  meditation

$X_4$  is relaxation

$\epsilon$  is an error term normally distributed about a mean of 0 and for the purposes of computation,  $\alpha$  is assumed to be 0. Kothari (2013) explains that Error term is the part of the statistical equation that indicates what remains unexplained by the independent variables. The generated data was then presented by the use of frequency tables, percentages, for easier presentation of the findings. Valid conclusions was drawn and a final report written.

## FINDINGS

### Counselling Services

70% of the respondents agreed that counseling services influenced performance of employees in an organization with 17% disagreeing with the study, 10% of the respondents were not sure of the consequences of counseling and 3% of the respondent chose not to respond on the question. The study therefore showed that counseling service positively influenced employees' performance. The study collaborated with the idea of Welsh (2010) who argued that there was a significant decrease in participants' perceived stress after attending six to eight sessions of personal counselling. The study found that personal counselling reduced stress and

had a positive impact on academic success. The implications for social work are that the study provided evidence that stress is a significant obstacle for performance and that personal counselling can be effective in reducing stress and improve on performance.

39 % of the respondents agreed that counseling services were effective stress management tools to a very great extent, 22% of respondents to a great extent, 23% agreeing to a moderate extent, 10% to a low extent, while 2% of the respondents decided not to respond. It was therefore found that most of the respondents were in agreement that counseling services were effective stress management tools. The study findings are in tandem with the previous studies that counselling intervention indicates that group counseling does indeed reduce stress among employees of both gender (Corey, 2016).

Over 70% of the respondents agreed that Professional psychological help reduces stress of employees within the organization, counseling services help in mentorship and guides on stress coping mechanism, Counselors recommend stress coping mechanism to employees which leads to improved performance in the organization, Counselling advices employees on possible solutions to curb stressors, Counseling services help in improving employees' performance within the organization under study, therefore we can agree that counseling is an effective stress management tool. This is in confirmation with Bitsika & Sharpley (2012) that increasing stress and anxiety can be damaging to the people affected and thus counseling can help an individual realize coping mechanisms in an effort to manage stress.

### Flexitime Techniques benefit employees

The study sought to find out the level of employees who benefit from flexitime techniques. From the findings, top management benefited more from flexitime programmes as indicated by 18% of the respondents, followed by lower management. 47%

of respondents had no idea if flexitime was practiced so they failed to respond. The study showed that sensitization is essential to enlighten employees on importance of flexitime programme as stress management tool.

Regarding flexitime Programme as stress management improves employees' performance, From the table below, 13% of the respondents agreed to a very great extent flexitime Programmes is a tool for stress management, 30% great extent, 20% to a moderate extent and only 15% of the respondents agreed to a low extent, 3% to a very low extent and 18% decided not to respond to the

question. It was therefore be concluded that flexitime programmes benefited employees and thus helped in managing stress. The study findings correlates to that of Chet and Steven (2010) who stated that in their study 'Flexitime as a Moderator of the Job Stress-work Motivation Relationship', the study revealed that employees reported that they were more productive and more engaged in their work when they were able to balance the demands of work with other aspects of their lives. That improved their physical and mental health hence impacting positively on their performance.

**Table 1: Flexitime program improves employees' performance**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
To a very great extent	66	23.4	13.3
Great Extent	84	30.0	43.1
Moderate Extent	56	20.0	63.3
Low Extent	42	15.0	78.3
Very Low Extent	9	3.3	3.3
No Response	23	8.3	100
	280	100.0	

Regarding flexitime programme as stress management tool, from the below table, majority of the respondents agreed that flexitime programmes enabled employees manage time at workplace and work life balance enabled employees to balance family, social life and work and therefore reduced stress. A good number of respondents on the other hand strongly agreed flexitime as stress management tool impacted on performance of

employees. Only a few of the respondents decided not to respond. The study indicated that flexitime is a stress management tool. Previous study by Moen & Kelly (2011) agreed that flexitime is a solution which can lead to less commutes, less fatigue, more days off and lower sicknesses. That can result to better motivated workers, more efficient, effective operation, less fatigued workers and fewer errors, thus ensuring high productivity.

**Table 2: Flexitime program as stress management tool**

Aspects	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Response	Mean	Std Deviation.
Flexitime Programmes enable employees manage time at workplace	3	17	13	48	12	7	3.52	1.044

Work arrangement helps employees plan their work and reduce stress	10	13	13	38	19	7	3.45	1.264
Work life balance enables employees to balance family, social life and work	2	12	3	43	32	8	4	1.036
Work place flexibility enables employees to work even at home and curb stressors	3	20	13	22	35	7	3.7	1.278
Flextime as stress management tool impact on performance of employees	2	13	3	27	47	8	4.13	1.139

**Employees benefit from meditation techniques as a mechanism to manage stress**

These are strong indication that meditation is a strong stress management tool since 70.2% of respondents agreed that when employees practiced meditation technique they were at ease and thus reduced stress which resulted to improved performance. 11.7% decided not to respond while

1.7% felt that there was barely no time to meditate. From the response it can be concluded that medication is a stress management tool. The study is in agreement with Mayo (2016) who argued that meditation originally was meant to help deepen understanding of the sacred and mystical forces of life but these days, meditation is commonly used for relaxation and stress reduction.

**Table 3: Employees benefit from meditation techniques**

	Frequency	Percent
At personal level when practiced can manage stress and improve on employees performance	78	28
Meditation techniques not practiced in the organization	47	16.7
Meditation helps employees to be more peaceful, more focused and less worried when practiced	51	18.3
Enables employees to have reflection time that bring peace thus reducing stress	32	11.7
It helps employees become focused in planning work	5	1.7
It reduces work pressure and increases concentration	5	1.7
Meditation helps employees to cool their nerves in disturbing occurrence	5	1.7
Meditation improves employees attitude towards work, organization and life in general	5	1.7
No response	32	11.7
Meditation help to review and analyses situation which brings stress and avoid them	5	1.7
Meditate and work when they feel they can work and do it well	5	1.7
Meditation allows employees time to reflect without being forced	5	1.7
Barely have time to meditate on anything except for the stress at work	5	1.7
Total	280	100.0

23% of the respondents strongly agreed with the study that meditation techniques reduced stress and enhanced on performance of employees in the organization under study, 33% Agreed, 15% of the respondents disagreed with the study, 15% of them not sure, 12% of the respondents did not respond to the study. From the response it was clear that more respondents, 56% agreed that mediation technique reduces stress but more sensitization need to be put in place to because 44% disagreeing and not being sure of the effect of meditation as stress management technique is high. The study collaborates with research on Transcendental Meditation which indicates that regular meditation within the workplace significantly improves job satisfaction and productivity (Willis, 2016).

12% of the respondents agreed to a very great extent that meditation techniques is stress management strategy that impact on performance of employees, 36% to great extent, 32% of them agreed to a moderate extent, 15% agreed to a low extent with 5% of the respondents choosing not to

respondent to the study. The study found that meditation techniques impacted on performance of employees. Willis (2016) emphasizes that during meditation one focuses the attention and eliminates the stress of jumbled thoughts that may be crowding mind and causing stress, which may result to enhanced physical and emotional well-being thus improving performance.

The study sought to find out whether medication techniques were a stress management tool as per the respondents reactions. From the table below most of the respondents strongly agreed with a mean of 3.7 the meditation through reflection and mental silence controls burnout while a mean of 3.48 and 3.39 respectively agreed that mediation calms the nerves and manage stress, while state of psychophysical relaxation tackle stressful situation. It can thus be concluded that mediation techniques is an effective stress management tool. Mayo (2016) concurs with the study that meditation can restore calm and inner peace thus being commonly used for relaxation and stress reduction.

**Table 4: Meditation techniques as stress management tool**

Aspects	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Response	Mean	Std Deviation.
Mode of consciousness reduce stress	2	15	32	40	7	5	3.37	0.899
Meditation calms the nerves and manage stress	8	8	27	42	10	5	3.39	1.082
State of psychophysical relaxation tackle stressful situation	10	7	22	43	15	3	3.48	1.158
Reflection and mental silence controls burnout	8	7	10	50	20	5	3.7	1.149
Meditation techniques improve employees performance	10	7	10	50	18	5	3.63	1.19

**Relaxation techniques**

The study sought to find out whether relaxation was allowed in the organization under study as a means

of curbing stress. 65% of the respondents agreed that employees were allowed to relax or engage in non-formal activities like team building yearly, with

9% saying half yearly, 3.% agreeing quarterly, 20% indicating not at all and 3.% of them choosing not to respond. The study thus showed that relaxation as stress management mechanism was allowed mostly yearly in the organization under study.

On Employees benefit from relaxation techniques as stress management strategy, 61.8% agreed that relaxation was an effective stress management strategy and that the management in the organization under study did encourage employees to relax or engage in informal activities. 18.3% of the respondents spoke of not having heard about

relaxation from the management, 16.7% decided not to respond while 3.3.% felt that the management did not care whether they relaxed or not they only wanted work done. From the opinion of the majority respondents, it was clear that management did encourage relaxation as stress management tool in the organization under study. The study findings are in line with Mayo Clinic (2016) views that relaxation techniques can help one cope with everyday stress and with stress related to various health problems, such as cancer and pain.

**Table 5: Employees benefit from relaxation techniques**

	Frequency	Percent
Not heard the management talk to the employees about relaxation techniques	50	18.3
HR manager reminds employees to take leave days to reduce stress at work	56	20.0
It creates changes in employees' attitude	5	1.7
Management inform employees on the obligation to rest and encourage team building	14	5.0
Management organizes for team building and arranged for facilitations who trains staff on team work	5	1.7
No response	47	16.7
Taking people to seminars about stress management	14	5.0
This is done only once per year	5	1.7
The management does not care whether we relax or not they just want to see work done	9	3.3
The management recognizes relaxation as a technique to reduce stress and encourages the staff to build a culture of stress free	28	10.0
Management create awareness that relaxation refreshes the body and mind hence improving performance	47	16.7
Total	280	100.0

On whether relaxation techniques improve employees performance, from the study carried out over 78% of the respondents agreed that relaxation techniques refreshes the body and mind, relief from routine work can reenergize employees and increase productivity in organization under study, reduction in strictness in effort to reduce stress can create high performance employees, partial lessening of rules and regulations and allowing employees time to relax managed stress. There was

an indication of a positive relationship between relaxation techniques and performance of employees in the organization under study. Mansoor et.al. (2015) concurs with the study that progressive muscle relaxation is a technique for reducing stress and anxiety by alternatively tensing and relaxing the muscle. That means that the ability to relax is important in effectively managing stress and anxiety which can lead to improved output.

**Table 6: Relaxation techniques improve employees performance**

Aspects	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Response	Mean	Std Deviation.
Relaxation techniques refreshes the body, mind	3	2	3	42	48	2	4.32	0.899
Relief from routine work can reenergize employees and increase productivity	5	0	7	33	53	2	4.32	0.99
Reduction in strictness in effort to reduce stress can create high performance employees	5	6	7	45	35	2	4	1.083
Partial lessening of rules and regulations and allowing employees time to relax reduces stress	5	3	12	45	33	2	4	1.034
There is a positive relationship between relaxation techniques and performance of employees	5	0	8	38	47	2	4.24	0.989

### Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the relationships between dependent and independent variables. This table provides the *R* and *R*<sup>2</sup> values. The *R* value represents the simple correlation and is 0.946 (the "R" Column), which indicates a high degree of correlation. The *R*<sup>2</sup> value (the "R Square" column) indicates how much of the total variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variable.

The study conducted a multiple regression analysis to show a relationship between predict/dependent variable (Employee performance) on the effect of Stress Management Strategies in the Public Service. The factors on table, *R*=0.0946 is the correlation coefficient which shows the relationship between the variables and *R* square represents the four variables studied; 94.6% represented employee performance in the public service percent of the total variance. This, therefore means other factors not studied in this research contribute to only 5.4% while and adjusted *R* squared 0.910 is coefficient of

determination which tells us the variation in the dependent variable due to changes in the independent variable while standard error of 1.1235 of estimates represents the effect of the factors outside the study. It also means that the relationships between independent and dependent variable had a strong relationship.

From the ANOVA statistics in the above table, the processed data, which is the population parameters, had a significance level of 0.000 which shows that the data is ideal and that the model is acceptable for making conclusion on the population's parameter as the value of significance (*p*-value) is less than 5%, (0.05). The calculated value is greater than the critical value (114.345>0.000) an indication that counselling services, Flextime programmes, Meditation technique, relaxation technique influenced employees' performance of Public Service.

From Regression Coefficient Results, the established regression equation:

$Y = .652 + 0.447X_1 - .028X_2 - .010X_3 + .166X_4$ , provides the constant value and the beta values for each factor variable studied. This explained to what extent stress management strategies influences employees' performance. From the data analysis, it was found that Counselling services, Flextime programmes, Meditation techniques and Relaxation technique collectively and meaningfully explained a significant amount of the variance in the employees' performance in the Public Service,  $(4,52) = 114.345$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $R^2 = 0.919$ ,  $R^2$  Adjusted is 0.911 where adjusted square takes into account the number of predictor and the sample size. The value of adjusted R squared is 0.911 an indication that there was variation of 91.1% on Employees' performance within the Public Service due to changes in counselling services, flextime

programmes, meditation techniques and relaxation techniques at 89% confidence interval, there was also a strong positive relationship between the study variables as shown by 0.652 by a factor of - 0.028 Flextime programmes, - 0.010 Meditation Techniques decrease would lead to increase in Employees' performance, a unit increase by a 0.166 of relaxation techniques will lead increase in employees' performance.

Also the regression equation indicated a negative relationship between the Public Service flextime programmes and meditation techniques, where if one variable decrease the other increases and vice versa. It also shows a positive relationship between employees' performance and relaxation techniques and counselling services, i.e. if one variable increases the other also increases.

**Factor variables under study with employees' performance as the dependent variable.**

**Table 7: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.946 <sup>a</sup>	.901	.910	1.1235

**Table 8: Analysis of ANOVA Variance**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	590.320	4	147.527	114.345	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	53.231	52	1.243		
	Total	640.804	56			

**Table 9: Regression Coefficients Results**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.652	.777		.980	.333



Counselling	.447	.106	.816	6.104	.000
Flexitime	-.028	.111	-.045	-.347	.731
Meditation	-.010	.072	-.014	-.135	.893
Relaxation	.166	.087	.217	2.027	.049

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

Based on the objectives and the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made that stress management strategies were found to have greater influence on the performance of employees in the Public Service and specifically in the twenty one (21) government ministries. The study revealed that management of work related stress was being pursued by the Public Service through counseling services, flexitime programmes, meditation techniques and relaxation techniques strategies, which had effect on employees' performance explaining a variation of 91.1% and that there was a strong relationship between employees performance and the independent variables captured in the study.

The Public Service ensured that stress levels were minimized through stress management programmes like team building which enabled employees to relax, have fun and improve on their performance. The study revealed that unit increase in relaxation techniques and counseling services would lead to increase in employees' performance within the Public Service. This is an indication that there was a positive relationship between the strategies used and the employees' performance.

The 2016/2017 performance evaluation by Public Service Commission were classified into three categories namely "High Achiever", "Medium Achievers" and "Low Achievers". "High Achievers" classification covered scores for individual Ministry/Public Institution with aggregate scores of 81 percent and above, "Medium Achievers"

classification covered scores within the range of 57 percent to scores below 81 percent. Institution which scored below 57 percent were rated as "Low Achievers".

The overall performance index for all the Public Institutions evaluated under the nine thematic areas was 70 percent. This was an increase of 2 percent from the 2015/16 index of 68 percent. The top five institutions were all from State Corporations. The overall best performing institution was Capital Markets Authority with 91.2 percent followed by KICC at 90.7 percent and Ewaso Ng'iro South Development Authority at 90 percent. Other high achievers included KENTTEC at 88.3 percent, Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) at 87.8 percent, Kenya Electricity Generating Company 87.4 percent and Water Sector Trust Fund 81.5 percent.

In the Ministries category, the best three performing state departments were Fisheries at 81.8 percent followed by Energy at 80.5 percent and Irrigation Services at 78.7 while the best institution in the Statutory Commissions and Authorities was Council of Governors at 84 percent followed by the Energy Regulatory Commission at 81.7 percent. The Performance Management on staff through Staff Performance Appraisal System had an average of 70% in the Public Service in the year 2016/2017 financial year. That was performance increase of 2% from 68% performance index of 2015/2016 evaluation. That was a sharp increase of performance improvement from the previous evaluation of 2014/2015 financial year of

53.6%. That performance evaluation also indicated a rapid increase in performance improvement of employees by 10.6% since in 2014/2014 the performance evaluation report from the Public Service Commission on performance of the Public Service was at 43%.

From the above performance evaluation it is clear that stress management strategies has yield fruits which has continually improved over the years. Introduction of counseling services in all the Public Service has been of greater help. Encouragement of relaxation through team building and taking of annual leave which is mandatory has helped employees curb burn out and manage stress thus reenergizing themselves for better performance. State Corporations on the other hand do utilize highly flextime programmes as a strategy to manage stress that has given them an upper hand in their performance over the Civil Service since the employees can be able to deliver even from their home without stress.

### **Recommendations**

Based on results, findings and conclusions, the following recommendations have been deciphered. The study recommended that the management of the organization under study should create awareness to the employees to enable them be aware of utilization of stress management strategies available in the organization that can result in improved performance.

The management should undertake sensitization campaigns to enlighten employees since some were not aware that counseling services were offered within the organization neither did they know that flextime existed as stress management strategy. Employees should be made aware of meditation as the easiest way of handling stress and also relaxation by encouraging team building which refreshes the body and mind hence improving performance.

### **Areas of Further Studies**

The study confined itself to the Public Service Government Ministries headquarters which are stationed in the Capital City of Nairobi. The researcher therefore recommends that studies covering the entire Public Service which should include County government employees should be undertaken to establish the strategies used by other institutions within the Public Service to manage stress among employees and how they affect their performance. This can enable policies be formulated in the Public Service regarding stress management strategies which are most appropriate to improve on employees' performance.

Additional attention in further study is of the flexible work arrangements, one of the reasons companies have been willing to permit employees to work from home is not so much out of concern for the employees but out of company's need for local person to be able to curb stressors. Glazer, Kozusznik, and Shargo (2012) presented several areas for future research on this topic, noting that by participating on global virtual teams, workers face additional stressors, even while given flexibility of workplace and work time. More research needs to be done on the extent to which people who take advantage of flexible work arrangements are advantaged in terms of detachment from work.

This study has some limitations because it is confined its focus to the Public Service only. Hence, future research should examine the effects of stress management strategies on employees' performance in most of the Private Sectors. Therefore, this study and its findings should be a starting point for more extensive related research. Other variables apart from Counselling services, flextime programmes, meditations techniques and relaxation techniques, presumed to be related either directly or indirectly to employees' performance should be researched on.

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