

# Effect of Job Design as Stress Management Strategies on Middle-level Employees Workplace Performance of Muranga County Government

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**Abstract:** The primary purpose of this study was to find out the extent to which job design influences employees' quality of work output. The population of the study is 6254 comprising of departments of Murang'a County Government Headquarters and a sample size of 188 was identified in accordance to Gays 10 percent rule. The researcher collected the primary data by use of questionnaires from the respondents. Pilot study was carried out before actual data was collected to determined reliability of research instruments. Descriptive statistics with the help of SPSS helped the study findings to be analyzed. The researcher used a multivariate regression model to compare the relationship between job design as stress management strategies and employees work performance. The findings indicate that Job design as stress management strategies have positive significant effect on middle-level employees' workplace performance of Murang'a County Government with a 0.00 null hypothesis significance level. It is therefore recommended that some jobs should be broken into small component parts in order to improve employee workplace performance and also to assign specialists to do each part.

**Keywords:** Stress Management, Job Design, Employees Workplace Performance, employee's commitment.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, employees experience stress at the workplace. It has become a real exertion in most organizations especially in the developing countries where the significance of stress at the work place may have an influence on employees' workplace performance (Becker, 2013). Work-related stress is an indication that occupational differences play a significant role in stress-related problems at work. According to (Amayi & G.M, 2016), stress is brought about by either external demands made on individuals or reasonable orders being made by which individuals are ill-equipped to cope. Stress makes people not to be able to respond the external stimuli without having psychological or physical damage, such as one's health. According to World Health Organization report, (2018) Organizational stress is the psychosocial manifestations people have when faced with workloads and pressures beyond their knowledge and capabilities, thereby challenging their ability to cope.

Organizations need employees to get the job done because employee's workplace performance is important to the success of the organization (Ahmad, 2014). When employees do not perform effectively, the organization feels that the organizational goals will not be achieved and therefore it will seek aid elsewhere. In the county government, (Ringa, 2016) outlines that some aspects responsible for work-related stress among county employees are such as undefined job description, poor communication, work overload, long hours of duty especially those that require standing, lack of employee participation during decision making and a hostile working environment. According to (Kamau, 2014) stress contributes to 10% work time off by the employed population, with an average of 36 working days lost. Based on survey data, Higginbottom (2014) reported that employees suffering from high stress levels have lower engagement, are less

productive, and have higher absenteeism levels than those not working under excessive pressure. Stress is a complex phenomenon that is dynamic and evolving over time. The traditional study designs for occupational stress have been statistical tests

Stress management strategies are designed to help employees reduce stress at the workplace (Imran, 2015). The coping strategies available that are used to address the symptoms of stress include; taking regular breaks from work, having enough sleep to avoid a state of jetlag, and relaxation classes. However, some of the job design as stress management strategies have a negative effect. This may include; excessive alcohol consumption, procrastinating work, angry outbursts, withdrawal and zoning out for hours in front of the television or computer (Corin, 2016).

Studies have been done on stress management but very little done on the effect of stress management strategies at the workplace. A research was done by the World Health Organization about stress at the workplace (WHO, 2013). Scientific literature reviews on the stress management strategies that show the dominance of prevention programs, which only focuses on the individual at the workplace (Cheng, 2017). In Kenya, studies done on stress management strategies include; a study done by (Nzuve, 2012) was on stress management strategies influencing employees' commitment at the workplace, a study done by (Kamau, 2014) on the strategies that adopted to manage work-related stress among its employees. But none has considered the effect of stress management strategies has on middle-level employees workplace performance at the workplace.

In the year 2010, Kenya became devolved leading to the formation of 47 County Governments, Murang'a County Government being one of them. The county is among other counties of Kenya's former Central Province. Murang'a is the largest town. To the North, it is bordered by Nyeri County, Kiambu County to the South, Nyandarua County to the West and to the East it is bordered by Kirinyaga, Embu and Machakos Counties. Murang'a County Government Headquarters is located in Murang'a town (County annual progress, 2017).

The overall contribution of the organization is the stress management strategies that Murang'a County Government will adopt to improve employees work performance. To effectively prevent stress, it is necessary to identify the appropriate stress management strategies suitable to be adopted at the workplace. The strategies to be adopted in this case will include training and development, job design, employee welfare programs and incentives. These strategies will enable Murang'a County Government to manage the stress issues that are likely to be experienced by middle-level employees. Adopting these stress management strategies will ensure that there will be productivity in the employees hence improved workplace performance in the organization.

### Statement of the Problem

The deployment of employees to the sub-counties has led to severe effects such as unclear job descriptions, differed job promotions, delay of salary payments, and subpar performance from other employees, and limited resources such as office equipment. According to county annual report (2017) this has led to absenteeism and high employee turnover, a decrease in job performance, and job insecurity has been witnessed (County Annual Progress, 2017). Despite having stress management programs in the organizations and a growing number from research studies has given us an insight into the potential remedies for stress, stress at the workplace has not gone away, thus affecting employee workplace performance (Bjork, 2016). The problem is that stress tends to accumulate with what goes on in the workplace, which deteriorates the workplace performance of an employee. It makes it necessary for stress management strategies to be adopted to help the affected employee at the workplace. Organizations need to address the issues that cause stress at the workplace and their imparting factors. The stress levels at the workplace need to reduce to improve employee workplace performance and increase work productivity to the organization (Ringa, 2016).

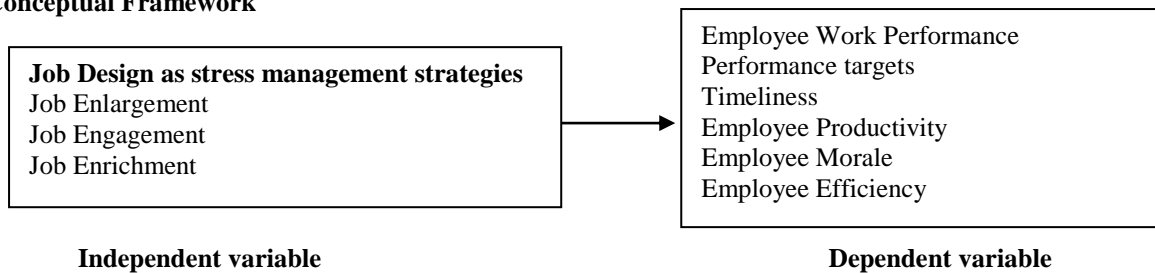
### Objective of the Study

To assess effect of job design on middle-level employees workplace performance of Murang'a County Government.

### Research Hypothesis

*H<sub>01</sub>. Job design as stress management strategies has no positive significant effect on middle-level employees' workplace performance of Murang'a County Government*

*H<sub>a1</sub>. Job design as stress management has positive significant effect on middle-level employees' workplace performance of Murang'a County Government.*

**Conceptual Framework****Figure 1****2. LITERATURE REVIEW****Theoretical Literature****Job Demand Research Theory**

The JD-R theory suggests that employees who experience high demands at the workplace are likely to have psychological strain which leads to poor physical and mental state of the health (Bakker, 2014). Job demands experienced at the workplace are; job insecurity, unclear role descriptions, work overload and role conflict. The theory assumes that when the job demands are high, a vigorous action must be exerted by the employee to achieve the organizational goals so as to prevent the decline of workplace performance (Schaufeli, 2014).

Employees who experience this extra energy should recover by performing less demanding activities and taking a relaxation break. However, if the employee's recovery is insufficient, it will lead to exhaustion (Tahir, 2014). Job resources are those social organizational aspects of the job that function to achieve goals at the workplace and reduce job demands. Examples of job resources are social support, feedback and job control (Demerouti *et al.*, 2014).

The model suggests that job demands leads to burnout hence employees' turnover and health complications problems. According to (Bakker *et al.*, 2014), a revised version of the JD-R theory gave a positive psychological twist. The theory not only explains the negative state which is burnout, but also its positive state which is work engagement. Work engagement is fulfilling, dedication and absorption to the job that is characterized by the vigor in the work-related state of mind. The revised theory assumes that burnout results from inadequate job resources and excessive job demands, except that now burnout will be identified and treated.

Burnout is assumed that it will lead to work pressure from the employees and result to health problems such as depression. Following the effort-recovery theory, it is assumed that if resources are offered by the work environment, then the employees will be willing to dedicate their abilities and efforts to the job task. Thus, job resources play a motivational role to reduce job demands and achieve goals attainment. They, job resources, also satisfy basic human need for competence and autonomy (Tahir, 2014). For instance, social support satisfies need for autonomy and feedback which will increase job competence. In turn, the affective motivational states with the foster positive outcomes in the organization are such as workplace performance among the employees.

In summary, JD-R has two categories, job resources and job demands, which influence each other in every job working features occupation. Job burnout develops when the job demands are high and the job resources are limited. Hence, different types of job resources and high job demands may lead to employee burnout and workplace performance will be greatly affected.

**Empirical Literature**

Job design refers to designing tasks for employees to complete the job. This is through combining the employees' needs and aspirations (Frey, 2017). Some jobs require the employee to follow certain procedures, and if not, it may lead to role ambiguity among the employees, yet other jobs give freedom to the employee on how to do their work (Kiruja, 2018). It is significant that when there is job control, among the employees, then stress reduces. Some intercessions aim to redefine the employee's role, to reduce work overload and reduces the cases of role ambiguity. To a large extent, employees' involvement in job design is necessary to improve performance (Kamau, 2014). The approach towards achieving job effectiveness and satisfaction at the workplace are job enrichment and autonomous work groups. Job enrichment implies taking job tasks to enable the employee have more responsibility at the workplace.

According to (Sushil, 2014) job enrichment builds motivation into a job. The difficulty associated with job enrichment is the job hierarchy. Employees such as supervisors may find that their work responsibility has been shifted to other members (Ahmad, 2014). Opportunities such as motivation, recognition and accountability are the key focus in a person's career. Organizations benefit if the employees are aware of their job roles, hence cases such as absenteeism, negative morale and unstandardized work are reduced.

The autonomous work groups, jobs can be enhanced to effectiveness if the employees have morale to work together as a group to achieve their goals (Kiruja, 2018). The idea of work design results from the efforts of the employees with different skills and abilities to design jobs with their preferences to have a form of job satisfaction.

Organizations such as the county governments should adopt an approach to motivate employees by giving clear contents and job specifications to improve the nature of the job. There will be better and improved performance when the jobs are well designed, hence stressful situations will be avoided and the tasks will be performed with enthusiasm (Kamau, 2014)

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive case study and correlational research design to justify the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables. The target population of this study comprised of the 6,254 middle-level employees of Murang'a County Government. The respondents was employees from 10 departments which were education & technical training, Agriculture, Livestock & Irrigation, public service, Finance, Information and Economy Planning, Commerce, Trade, Industry & Investment, Youth, Culture and Social Services, Land Planning & Housing, Environment, Natural Resources & Climate Change, Health, Water & Sanitation, Energy, Transport and Infrastructure Development. The study adopted Snowball sampling technique. Sample size determination was by application of Curry (1984) rule of thumb that for a population of between 5,001 to 10,000 sample sizes of 3% is sufficient. Hence 3% of 6,254 was 187.62 equivalent to 188 middle level employees. Primary data was collected directly from the respondents and used to analyze the relationships that were being examined in this study. Secondary data was used to acquire information on middle-level employee's workplace performance of Muranga county government. Multivariate regression model helped to compare the relationship between job design as stress management strategies and employees work performance.

### 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### Response Rate

The total number of questionnaires distributed were 188 and a total of 136 questionnaires were returned properly completed (Table 4.1). This represented an overall response rate of 72.34%. The response rate achieved in this study was excellent for subsequent data analysis.

**Table 4.1: Response Rate**

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Returned	136	72.34
Not Returned	52	27.66
Total Distributed	188	100.00

#### Reliability Results

As evidenced in Table 4.2, the study variables had alpha coefficients higher than 0.7. This meant that the collected data were reliable as they had a relatively high internal consistency and could be generalized to reflect opinions of all respondents in the target population. The Cronbach alpha test showed values ranging from as low as 0.705 to as high as 0.911. Although most researchers generally consider an alpha value of 0.70 as the acceptable level of reliability coefficient, lower coefficient is also acceptable. Therefore, it can be concluded that data collected from the pilot study were reliable and obtained the acceptable level of internal consistency. Therefore, all items were included in the survey instrument.

**Table 4.2: Reliability test of the study**

Reliability Aspects	Cronbach's Alpha
Job Design	0.821
Employee work performance	0.882

### Validity Results

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measures of sampling adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity were applied to test whether the correlation between the study variables exist as shown in Table 4.3. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measures of sampling adequacy show the value of test statistic as 0.409 and p-value <0.05. Bartlett's test of sphericity had a chi-square value of 83.561 p-value of 0.000. Since the p value is less than 0.05 then it implies that there exist a relationship among the study variables therefore providing a ground for further statistical analysis to be conducted

**Table 4.3: KMO and Bartlett's Test**

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>	
<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.</b>	.409
<b>Approx. Chi-Square</b>	83.561
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Df</b>	10
<b>Sig.</b>	.000

### Descriptive Analysis of the effect of job design on middle-level employee's workplace performance of County Government of Murang'a

The study sought to determine the effect of job design on middle-level employees' workplace performance of County Government of Murang'a. This objective was measured using the following indicators: Job Enlargement, Job Engagement and Job Enrichment in the opinion statements given. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the effect of job design in term of stress management practices on middle-level employee's workplace performance of County Government of Murang'a. This was on a likert scale of not at all, small extent, moderate, large extent and very large extent. Thus, in this study the scale of not all and small extent meant disagree while large and very large extent meant agreed.

68.4% of the respondents agreed that they are familiar with their respective job design according job description of Muranga county, 22.5% strongly agreed. With a mean score of 1.9 and standard deviation of 0.6, it can be concluded that the majority of the employees in Muranga County are familiar with their respective job design according job description

A value, 27.2% of the respondents agreed that Job should be designed so that the employees performs work with enthusiasm and avoid stressful situations and 13% of the respondents strongly agreed on the same. This makes 40% of the respondents cumulatively in an agreement that Job should be designed so that the employees performs work with enthusiasm and avoid stressful situations. With a mean score of 3.2 and standard deviation of 1.4, the study concluded that the majority of the respondents agreed that Job should be designed so that the employees performs work with enthusiasm and avoid stressful situations.

Thirdly, 47.8% disagreed that Job should be enrichment to involve a wider range of more interesting and challenging tasks surrounding a complete unit of work to give a greater sense of achievement for the employees. This has also been confirmed by a value of 3.2 and 1.2 for both the mean score and standard deviation respectively.

A fraction of 41.1% agreed that Job enrichment provides the employee with variety, decision-making, responsibility and control in carrying out the work, 26.9% strongly agreed on the same. The study therefore concluded that the majority of the respondents are in an agreement that Job enrichment provides the employee with variety, decision-making, responsibility and control in carrying out the work. This has been corroborated by the mean score of 2.3 and 1.1 standard deviation.

56% agreed that Job design facilitating the interest of employees towards the job and enhancing their satisfaction, 22.2% strongly agreed. This cumulatively translates to 78% of the respondents. This result indicates that the majority of the respondents were in an agreement that Job design facilitating the interest of employees towards the job and enhancing their satisfaction. 59.8% agreed that Muranga County allows an appropriate provision for the autonomy of doing a work in the job design, 19.3% strong agreed. This result point out that the majority of the respondents were in an agreement that Muranga County allows an appropriate provision for the autonomy of doing a work in the job design. The Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient for these six items that were used to measure the effect of job design on middle-level employee's workplace performance of County Government of Murang'a was 0.821. That the reliability coefficient for

these items was 0.821 indicates internal consistencies of the items that were used to indicate the direction of this variable in respect to the research objectives. The descriptive statistics are shown below

**Table 4.4: Effect of job design on middle-level employee's workplace performance of county government of Murang'a**

Statement	SA%	A%	N%	D%	SD%	MEAN	STD DEV
Am familiar with my job design practices according job description of Muranga County	22.2	68.4	7	2.5	0.0	1.9	0.6
Job should be designed so that the employees performs work with enthusiasm and avoid stressful situations	13	27.2	9.5	24.1	26.3	3.2	1.4
Job should be enrichment to involve a wider range of more interesting and challenging tasks surrounding a complete unit of work to give a greater sense of achievement for the employees	11.4	18	14.2	47.8	8.5	3.2	1.2
Job enrichment provides the employee with variety, decision-making, responsibility and control in carrying out the work	26.9	41.1	11.1	18	2.8	2.3	1.1
Job design facilitating the interest of employees towards the job and enhancing their satisfaction	22.2	68.4	7	2.5	0.0	1.9	0.6
Muranga County allows an appropriate provision for the autonomy of doing a work in the job design	13	27.2	9.5	24.1	26.3	3.2	1.4

#### Inferential Analysis of the effect of Job Design on Employees Work Performance

The model summary in Table demonstrates the coefficient of determination as indicated by R squared to be 0. 653 implying that 65.3% of the Workplace performance in County is explained by Job Design while the other factors explains the remaining proportion.

**Table 4.5: Model summary for job design and employee workplace performance in county**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.653a	0.426	0.396	0.117	2.298

a Predictors: (Constant), job design

b Dependent Variable: employee work performance

In Table the ANOVA was used to show the overall model significance. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05, then job design had a significant explanatory power on employee workplace performance in county (F = 16.466 and p value <0.05).

**Table 4.6: ANOVA for job design and employee workplace performance in county**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	372.007	1	372.007	16.466	.000b
Residual	3050.003	135	22.593		
<b>Total</b>	<b>3422.009</b>	<b>136</b>			

From Table regression equation can be written as:

**Employee workplace performance = 4.851 + 1.087 Job Design .....Equation (i)**

The regression equation (i) shows that when Job Design is held at a constant zero, employee workplace performance would be 1.087 units. There is a positive and significant effect on job design on employee workplace performance in county government. A unit increase in job design increases employee workplace performance in county government by 1.087 units. Since the P-value was less than 0.05 then there is enough evidence to warrant rejection of the null hypothesis and conclusion that Job design as stress management has positive significant effect on middle-level employees' workplace performance of Murang'a County Government

**Table 4.7: Regression Coefficients for job design on employee workplace performance in county government**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1 (Constant)	4.851	0.175		27.67	0.00
job design	1.087	0.176	0.33	6.189	0.00

a. Dependent Variable: employee workplace performance in county government

## 5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### Summary of Major Findings

The current study stemmed from the realization of the research problem in literature effect of Job design as stress management strategies on middle-level employee's workplace performance of Muranga county government. Empirically most of the studies on the effect of Job design as stress management strategies on middle-level employee's workplace performance have been skewed towards use of primary data. Among the several studies which had been done in the Kenyan perspective majority have not examined the causal joint effect of stress management strategies on middle-level employees workplace performance

Consequently, the researcher's primary purpose was to examine the effect of Job design as stress management strategies on middle-level employee's workplace performance. Further, the study sought to test one hypothesis; there is no significant effect of Job Design on middle-level employees' workplace performance.

In order to meet the overall objective and test the study hypothesis the study adopted descriptive research design. Snowball sampling technique was used to select a sample of 188 middle-level employees in Muranga County. Primary data was collected from middle-level employees in Muranga County and out of 188 questionnaires which were issued only 136 were completely filled and returned which yielded a response rate of 72.34%. Descriptive analysis such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data which was summarized using figures and tables. The study hypothesized that there was no effect of job design on middle-level employee's workplace performance of County Government of Murang'a. The study showed that there was a positive and significant effect of job design on middle-level employee's workplace performance of County Government of Murang'a. This implies that both Job Enlargement, Job Engagement Job Enrichment has positive significant effect on middle-level employee's workplace performance of County Government of Murang'a as strategies of stress management. This implies that a unit change in job design increases middle-level employee's workplace performance of County Government of Murang'a by 1.06 units. This implies that a unit change in job design increases middle-level employee's workplace performance of County Government of Murang'a by 65.3%. Descriptively, 68.4% of the respondents agreed that they are familiar with job design strategy in their workplace, 22.5% strongly agreed. It can be concluded that the majority of the County Government of Murang'a do practice Job design as stress management strategy. The null hypothesis was rejected and the study found out that there is positive and significant effect of job design on middle-level employee's workplace performance of County Government of Murang'a.

### Conclusions

This section presents the conclusions made in the current study. Research objective one in this study was to assess the effect of job design on middle-level employees' workplace performance of County Government of Murang'a. The indicators of job design were Job Enlargement, Job Engagement Job Enrichment. The indicators for middle-level employees' workplace performance of County Government of Murang'a in this case were Performance targets, Timeliness, Employee Productivity, Employee Morale and Employee Efficiency. Job Enlargement, Job Engagement and Job Enrichment had a positive significant effect on middle-level employees' workplace performance of County Government of Murang'a. It was therefore concluded that there was a positive and significant effect of job design on middle-level employees' workplace performance of County Government of Murang'a. To improve on the middle-level employees' workplace performance of County Government of Murang'a, it was therefore concluded that to some extent, some section in job design were not favorable in job enrichment and job engagement which to stressful work environment to county government works which need to be changed to create good working condition. In addition, it was concluded that the job design as major stress management strategy chosen must impact on the number of Performance targets, Timeliness, Employee Productivity, Employee Morale and Employee Efficiency.

### Recommendations of the study

With reference to the objectives of the study, the following recommendations were arrived at: Findings from the study depicted that job design as stress management strategy is necessary for employee workplace performance in Murang'a county government. To improve on the employee workplace performance in Murang'a county government, it was therefore recommended that to some extent, some job should be broken into small component parts in order to improve employee workplace performance and also to assign specialists to do each part. Further, job design process should linking specific tasks to specific jobs and deciding what techniques, equipment, and procedures should be used to perform those tasks. In addition, it was concluded that in Job enlargement should Increase the number of tasks a worker performs but keeping all of the tasks at the same level of difficulty and responsibility and Job enrichment, should increasing a worker's responsibility and control over his or her work. Finally, there's the managerial option of job redesign to help with stress management. Redesigning jobs to make them richer for the employees can alleviate stress and add new motivation. A job redesign that gives the team member more responsibility, more say in decisions that involve them, and more meaningful work can give an employee more control over work activities and lessen his reliance on others.

### Suggestion for further research

From the findings, the  $R^2$  was 65.3% which means that the independent variable (Job Design) explained employee workplace performance in Murang'a county government to an extent of 65.3%. There are other factors which are not captured by the proposed model in this study at 34.7% which is not explained. Another study can be carried out to determine other factors explaining 34.7% of employee workplace performance in Murang'a county government in view of the study context and scope.

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