

KAMPALA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

TITLE:

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Re

**THE CHALLENGES OF STRESS MANAGEMENT IN
EDUCATION CENTERS-CASE STUDY OF FIVE ECDE
CENTERS IN TIGONI ZONE, LIMURU DIVISION, KIAMBU
WEST DISTRICT-KENYA**

BY

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A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE OF OPEN AND
DISTANCE LEARNING IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE AWARD OF
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DECLARATION

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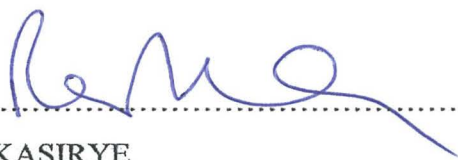
do declare that the information given in this research report is made by myself and has never been presented by any other person, for the award of Bachelor's Degree of Education

Signature:.....

Date:.....

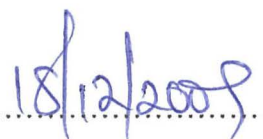
APPROVAL

This is to certify that ETAKWA LEONORA GLORIAH-BED/15096/62/DF has successfully completed her / his research report and now is ready for submission with my approval.

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DEDICATION

To my Parents, Esau W. Etakwa and Rebby V. Etakwa for giving me the humble time and resources to study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank the good Lord for giving me strength and courage to compile this research report. Without God, this research would not have seen the light of the day!

Special thanks go to my supervisor, Rev. Erich Kasirye who was a good mentor and advisor during the compilation of this work. My appreciation also go out to the Administration of Kampala International University for their support during this exercise.

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May the Good Lord reward you abundantly.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------|
| DECLARATION | i |
| APPROVAL | ii |
| DEDICATION | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | iv |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | v |
| LIST OF TABLES | viii |
| ABSTRACT | ix |
| | |
| CHAPTER ONE | 1 |
| 1.0 Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Background of the study | 1 |
| 1.2 Statement of the problem..... | 2 |
| 1.3 Purpose | 2 |
| 1.4 Specific objectives | 2 |
| 1.5 Research questions | 3 |
| 1.6 Scope..... | 3 |
| 1.7 Significance of the study | 4 |
| | |
| CHAPTER TWO | 5 |
| LITERATURE REVIEW | 5 |
| | |
| CHAPTER THREE | 13 |
| RESEARCH METHODOLOGY | 13 |
| 3.0 Introduction..... | 13 |
| 3.1 Research design | 13 |
| 3.2 Study area | 13 |
| 3.3 Study population | 13 |
| 3.4 Sample size and sampling techniques | 14 |

| | | |
|--|---|-----------|
| 3.5 | Types of data collected | 14 |
| 3.6 | Instrumentation..... | 14 |
| 3.7 | Procedure of data collection | 14 |
| 3.8 | Data processing and analysis | 15 |
| 3.9 | Limitation of the study..... | 15 |
| CHAPTER FOUR..... | | 16 |
| DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION..... | | 16 |
| 4.0 | Introduction..... | 16 |
| 4.1 | Characteristics of respondents which have a bearing on their | 16 |
| 4.1.1 | Teachers qualification..... | 16 |
| 4.1.2 | Professionalism of teachers | 17 |
| 4.2 | The prevalence of stress in young children in Kenya..... | 18 |
| 4.2.1 | Children who have been directly affected by stressors..... | 18 |
| 4.2.2 | Severity of stress in children | 19 |
| 4.3 | Teachers knowledge and ability to identify and help the stressed children cope..... | 20 |
| 4.3.1 | Teachers awareness of symptoms and signs of stress in children.. | 20 |
| 4.3.2 | Teachers efforts to offer support to stressed children..... | 21 |
| 4.3.3 | Teacher knowledge of bibliotherapy | 22 |
| 4.3.4 | Observation on any evidence of Bibliotherapy books | 23 |
| 4.3.5 | Teachers ability to communicate with stressed children to help them cope..... | 23 |
| 4.3.6 | The teacher's awareness of the role of play in controlling stress in children | 24 |
| 4.3.7 | Types of play useful in reducing stress..... | 25 |
| 4.3.8 | Teachers awareness of their role in helping the parents of stressed children copes..... | 26 |
| 4.4 | Government intervention for the stressed children in school | 27 |
| CHAPTER FIVE..... | | 29 |

| | |
|--|----------------------------|
| SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND | |
| RECOMMENDATION | |
| | 29 |
| 5.0 | Introduction.....29 |
| 5.1 | Summary of findings.....29 |
| 5.2 | Conclusion30 |
| 5.3 | Recommendations.....30 |
| REFERENCES..... | |
| | 32 |
| APPENDICES | |
| | 34 |
| Appendix A: | Questionnaires34 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1: Showing the study population | 13 |
| Table 2: Showing teachers qualification | 16 |
| Table 3: Showing the professional qualification | 17 |
| Table 4: showing the number of children experiencing by different stressors | 18 |
| Table 5: Showing the signs and symptoms of stress in young children..... | 19 |
| Table 6: Shows the teachers responses about signs of stress in children..... | 20 |
| Table 7: Shows what teachers do to help the stressed children | 21 |
| Table 8: shows the teacher's mode of communication with young children who stressed..... | 23 |
| Table 9: Shows the teachers opinion on how government in intervening for the protection of children in ECDE centers | 27 |

ABSTRACT

This study assessed the problem of stress in early childhood education centers with a focus on the following; establishing the prevalence of stress, identifying the common stressors of children in early childhood education centers, assessing the teachers knowledge to deal with stressed children and the intervention measures adopted by schools to help stressed children.

This study was undertaken in Tigoni zone which is in Kiambu West district Kenya. The population used for this study included 22 ECDE teachers. A questionnaire was designed to help collect relevant data on stressors of children. The following were discovered during the study; children had displayed symptoms of stress and therefore the problem existed in ECDE centers; the teachers however did not have adequate knowledge and skills to help the children cope with stress and schools had tried to put intervention measures in place to help children cope with stress although they were not being utilized by the teachers. The following were recommended;

Train teachers on how to handle learners with stress

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Experts have come to a consensus that stress is part of life, and recognizing its role in providing challenges and the motivation to improve growth and maturity, by imposing demand on the people's ability to adapt, it is also viewed to have a negative impact on the lives of people. The "negative force of stress" as Essa (2003) described it, not only affects the physical aspect of human beings but also influences their emotional reactions such as anger, fear, frustration and anxiety.

Researchers have also established that all human beings experience stress but children are the most affected and the reason being what Honig (1986) explained that children do not have the ability to cope with stress since they are totally dependent on adults to relieve the cause of their stress. Yet according to research, families have changed, presently single parents are raising children on their own and secondly most mothers have to leave their children at home to attend work. Besides, there are quite a number of stressors in children's lives. Single parents have left children with fewer sources of adult support and affirmation and more than in recent years. As child educators there has developed a profound need to try and find means of identifying children who are victims of stress and help them to cope.

Background of the study

Stress in children has not received much attention by educationists in Kenya although it is one of the important issues in the Western World. Very few researchers have come up to conduct a study in this area, as evident from lack of statistics of stressed children and the intervention measures.

ambu West District, the population has been hit by poverty, cases of child
e exist although they go unnoticed, quite a number of fathers and mothers
o work leaving their children under the care of nannys. We can not rule out
ases such as HIV/AIDS and its related ailments such as chronic asthma. In
an environment it was important to carry out a research to establish if the
ren are being stressed.

Statement of the problem

Kenya has undergone changes of recently, family life and relationships have
changed a lot greatly with families breaking up from time to time, leaving the
children under the care of a single parent. Those living with mothers have had to
adjust to living with little and this has been worsened when mothers live these
children alone with caretakers to go and work. In addition to that, there was the
election violence which led to the killing of some parents of children and
a number of families have been infected or affected by HIV/AIDS epidemic.
Therefore children are therefore being faced by a number of stressors. With no
support from parents to help them cope, the children will continue to suffer both
psychologically and physiologically and hence their inability to learn effectively.
A study was carried out to examine the situation of child stress in Kenya and
specifically in Tigoni Educational Zone.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to assess the problem of stress in early children in
selected Early Childhood Education Centers of Tigoni Zone and the intervention
provided by the education system.

Specific objectives

The following objectives guided the study:

o establish the prevalence of stress among young children in ECDE centers

o identify the dominant stressors of children in Tigoni.

o assess the teachers' knowledge and ability to help the children to cope with stress.

o establish the role of the education system in intervening against stress in children

Research questions

Following research questions were adopted to help maintain the direction of research.

What is the prevalence of stress among young children in ECDE centers?

What are the dominant child stressors in Tigoni Educational Zone?

Do the teachers have that knowledge and ability to help stressed children cope?

What intervention measures have government put in place ECDE centers for victims of stress?

Scope

This study examined the prevalence of stress in ECDE centers, with focus on the intensity, of stress, the dominant child stressors in Tigoni Educational Zone, the teachers' knowledge and ability to help the stressed children and the intervention measures put in place by the ministry to combat stress in young children. The research exercise started in January 2008 and ended in February 2009.

Significance of the study

researcher felt that this research would benefit the following categories of people:

The ministry of education in this study would act as an eye opener about how serious the problem of stress was among children in ECDE centers and how it was negatively affecting these children who are the future citizens of Kenya.

The information could also be useful to the teachers in early childhood education centers since they handle these children. It would help them to identify the stressed children and it would also equip them with means and knowledge of helping these children cope.

The research enriched the researcher's knowledge about handling children with stress. After this study the researcher would emerge as an expert in the area of stress in children, and could speak with confidence about stress and could help children with stress to cope.

Child counselors could benefit from this body of knowledge as it could give them guidelines on how to help them guide not only children but even adults to cope with their situation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter examined different researchers' views on the meaning of stress; its causes and symptoms and the different interventions to combat it.

theoretical/ Framework of stress

It has proven difficult to define because of the researchers who study it in different ways.

(2003) described stress as that force which provides challenges and motivation to people in order to improve, grow and mature.

Experts have urged that stress is part of life and demand on our ability to adapt. It is not intended to cause disequilibrium to which we have to make some kind of adjustment, and therefore we all experience stress (Selye, 1980; Honig, 1986; Koff and Phillip, 2000; Essa, 2003). Stress, according to Essa (2003) is caused by a threat to physical or psychological well being and as a result, it causes changes which in turn interfere with the normal functioning of the body. Most researchers agree that stress is part of life and rather a demand on our ability to adapt by providing challenges and motivation to improve, grow and mature. However, there are other stressful experiences which have been observed to be negative. To children this negative stress has required them to deal with an emotional or physical situation that is unsettling, frustrating, painful or harmful.

According to Essa (2003) stress causes emotional reactions such as anxiety, fear, anger and frustration. Experts have highlighted that children tend to suffer negative consequences due to stress, because it requires them to deal with an emotional or physical situation that is unsettling, frustrating, painful or harmful. It

also been observed that children have limited resources to cope with this of situation.

g (1986) a child specialists, carrying out research on stress in children, as that stress continues to mark the achievement of developmental stones. She cited examples of toddlers who learn to walk usually stumble, and crash but recommence bravely. Stress in the first place should be not be viewed as negative force but rather a challenge which impels a child to strive for maturity.

ever some researchers warn of negative stress which requires children to cope with emotional or physical situations that are frustrating painful or harmful.

(2003) in the case of our country Kenya, there are quite a number of situations that have contributed to this negative form of stress. For example orphan families where children have had to live with only a single parent. Its severity has been when these children loose their parents to diseases such as AIDS and most recently the post election violence. Children have had also to undergo stress when they contract diseases such as HIV/AIDS from their parents.

According to Brener (1984), more often young children depend on their parents to relieve the stress, parents who are no longer there. They without the love, support and affirmation from adult children cannot cope with stress and the consequences are worse.

Woods and Shonkoff (2000) described the effects of stress as ranging from emotional to physical. Among the emotional reactions noted by the two included; anxiety, fear, guilt, anger, and frustration. Behind these emotional responses are physiological, neurochemical reactions which involve bodily changes such as hormones, heart rate, blood flow, skin and muscles. These two further explain

stress produces a shift in the body's priorities because the body's resources are diverted to managing or dealing with stress. According to Le Doux and others (2000) many functions of the body are put on hold and she gave an example of the capacity to learn. Child education specialists and other scholars have in the end observed that stress in children is as much physical as an emotional phenomenon and that children tend to often respond to it in physical ways. This has therefore become a major concern for child educators.

Stages of stress

According to child specialist Honig (1986) there are four stages of stress which are described as follows:

The first stage is **alarm** which involves physical changes. At this moment Adrenaline is released into the blood stream or acid being produced by the stomach. In case it persists it may result into a psychometric illness.

The second stage is **appraisal the cognitive process** evaluates the stressful situation and gives it meaning. The child's age and the psychological makeup will affect this process.

The third stage is **searching for coping** strategy which includes both adaptive and maladaptive responses. In children some cry some throw tantrums, some ignore the situation or find a compromise or substitute.

The fourth stage involves **implementing coping** responses where an individual reacts in different ways depending on their personal experiences and resources. A child responding defensively may distort, deny or respond with rigid compulsive behavior. Those who respond through externalization will blame others rather than looking at using the child's own resources in coping. In

fast, those who respond through internalization tend to accept responsibility deal with the stressors.

ources of stress

earchers have identified various sources of stress but Essa (2003) gave a iled explanation that children of today grow up in a complex world which ains a host of potential and actual stressors. In Bronfein Brenner (1979) eloped an approach of viewing sources of tension in children. This approach s into consideration the interconnected ecological contexts within which ren live.

ording to Essa (2003), the sources of stress and the potential moderating ences within the social system may come from any interacting and lapping systems which include homes, school, and extended families. raction within these systems may affect the child.

/ family contributes to the stress of children?

ren's security is anchored in the families ideally this security is created when family is caring. This in turn provides a protected, predictable, consistent onment in which challenges and new experiences will occur as the child is to handle them. But sometimes families do not have such control over the onment and are sometimes caught as victims of forces that produce mous stress. We observe that families of today are faced with enormous gles such as divorce, family violence, custody battles, homelessness, mployment, hunger, slum environments, neighborhood gang wars, AIDS, and alcohol abuse. All the above shatter the family's ability to gain control o provide security.

he above stress struggle are not new in Limuru Division, with many families in slummy conditions at the outcasts of the city, many cases of HIV/AIDS

rted and most recent the tribal violence which was ignited by rigged
ions. There is there no reason to rule out that some of our children most
cially in ECDE centers are suffering stress and therefore require us to come
eir rescue.

orce and stress

erstein, Lewis and Blakeslee (2000) recently carried out research on the
ts of divorce on children and concluded that the effects of divorce are long
g and profound, and will continue to have an impact well into adulthood.

arty, homelessness and stress

archers have identified poverty and homelessness as another area of stress,
h is now the plight of children. Some parents lack adequate resources to
: their basic needs. Chronic poverty can interfere with effective parenting
may lead to insecure mother-child attachment (Honig, 1986).

above was quoted from an American text but as we observe what is
ening in Kenya and in particular Kiambu district which is almost no
ence. Because almost 60% of the population live under poverty and
efore children could be stressed as a result.

(2003) also highlighted that homelessness presented another serious
sor for children and families in the United States. Boxhull (1989) added that
less children tend to suffer health and emotional problems, developmental
s nutritional defects and irregular school attendance. He added that such
en are robbed of their basic and essential element of childhood.

I abuse, neglect and stress

s has been noted to be an issue for children who are victims of abuse or
ct, although the more pervasive danger is that serious harm can be fall

W. Gellesman (2001) noted that child abuse happens more during their first years and because young children are inexperienced and because they depend on adults for their needs, they are particularly vulnerable to abuse.

Lin and Rossen (1986) explained that physical marks or unusual behavior tell you that a child has been or is at risk of being abused. It is therefore important to stress that it is a responsibility of child educators to study the children's behavior because it could be a reflection of stress in their lives. It is particularly important to maintain close contact with each child's family so you as a teacher, have a better understanding of unexpected or uncharacteristic behaviors.

Techniques to help children cope with stress

As an early childhood educator you must have the power to help the children cope with some of the stresses. You may not reconcile the divorced parents, change the economic status, but you can help children to develop some of the skills that could enable them to handle stress effectively (Essa, 2003).

Lin (1986) suggested some strategies for teachers to help children cope with stress as follows;

1. A good early childhood program should provide a consistent, supportive environment. It should be one that supports children's development. It must be consistent and predictable and should provide experiences that are not boring. It should afford appropriately paced challenge and has to be staffed by knowledgeable and nurturing teachers. Establishing such a program allows you to provide direct help to stressed children.

Another strategy is for the teacher to help mitigate stress by how and what she communicates. The process as well as content of communication are important. It is advised that teachers share the children's concerns, acknowledge

by they feel and provide re-assurance, by hugging holding or rocking the
ng children. It is important that they listen carefully to what the children say
encourage them to ask questions express feelings and discuss their
ceptions. This will greatly help the children to deal with their stress. It also
sed that teachers give accurate and developmentally appropriate explanation
information to children old enough to understand.

yer (2000) also advised that teachers use bibliotherapy which involves the
of books that deal with emotionally sensitive topics in developmentally
opriate way that helps children gain accurate information and learn coping
egies. In Kenya a number of books are available that deal with such issues
eath, divorce, new siblings, separation, sexuality.

researcher believes such books could be a means by which stressed children
identify with character who experience problems similar to theirs and
aby release some of their emotions that are part of confronting the problem,
gain insight by understanding the characters and their own motives and
ions better.

archers have discovered the play provides a natural outlet for children to
with and work out stressors in their lives, and play furnishes a safe setting
hich children can confront fears and anxieties, express anger and finds
ons to problems. According to these researchers, socio dramatic or role
ng allows children to reenact frightening experiences, feel what is like to
on the perspective or roles of others and make reality more acceptable
, 1988; Henkens Matzke and Abbot, 1990; Gurnberg, 1989).

ll (1987) quoted that a stressed child most likely comes from a stressed
. Although all families experience stress, the circumstances and their
ble resources for coping with stress tend to differ. And yet from an

ological perspective, the child can not be separated from the family Weiss (1987). Early childhood centers must therefore function as an important family-support system for parents of young children. A good early childhood program in Kenya must include a family support components we teachers in early childhood centers can help a family cope with life stressors.

One challenge is that are ECDE teachers aware of this role? What about the curriculum itself, does it put into consideration the family as a component of the early childhood program? Do the teachers have time to interact with and work with stressed parents?

Stress is real in our environment and can have adverse effects which are long lasting. It is not desirable at all to have psycho-pathetic cases as the future citizens of tomorrow Kenya. Stress can be stopped at an early age in children. These children suffering from stress can live a better life in the society if helped to cope. But the questions remain whether indeed the society is helped to cope. But the questions remain whether indeed the society is aware of the problem of stress and has put in place.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

chapter explains the method, procedures and techniques that were used to carry out this study about stress in child.

Research design

study followed a descriptive form of design to examine stress in children, its causes and how it can be controlled. At a later phase of the research, some quantitative techniques had to be employed to help in the analysis of data that was gathered.

Study area

research was carried out in an educational zone namely Tigoni which is located in Limuru division of Kiambu Western district. The ECDE centres used in the study included the following; Tigoni day care centre, Limuru Mission, Limuru Town, Flower Garden and Uwioja.

Study population

target population was young children in early childhood centers and the teachers who were teaching them. Five ECDE centers were used and were as follows;

Table 1: Showing the study population

| Center | Number of pupils |
|----------------|------------------|
| Tigoni Day | 110 |
| Limuru Mission | 80 |
| Limuru Town | 60 |
| Flower Garden | 12 |
| Uwioja | 50 |

Source: Field data 2009

Sample size and sampling techniques

study used twenty two teachers used who in turn helped to identify some
ls who were victims of stress.

Types of data collected

primary and secondary data were gathered for the purpose helping to
stigate stress in children. Secondary data were obtained from different
ces of literature and specifically from experts in early childhood development
ell as from the government annual reports. Primary data on the other hand
a from the field where this research was conducted.

Instrumentation

umentation refers to the construction of an instrument which is used in the
ction of relevant data. In this study, the appropriate instrument constructed
a questionnaire since it were the teachers responding and were literate. In
r to get accurate information both open ended and close ended items about
s had to be included.

Procedure of data collection

itroductory letter had to be provided by the institute of open and distance
ing of Kampala International University, in order to be allowed to carryout
rch in Tigoni. This was the letter which was presented to the Administrator
a five ECDE center seeking for permission.

researcher then went onto distribute the questionnaires to the twenty two
ers, who filled them immediately and were returned that day.

Data processing and analysis

Data collected were edited for mistakes to ensure consistency. Responses were assigned codes and the researcher used excel program to analyze it. The common techniques used were frequency tabulation, and bar graphs.

Limitation of the study

The following problems were encountered by the researcher:

1. A small number of respondents who were hesitant to disclose information about stress because it was a sensitive topic.

2. The researcher was short to exhaustively carry out this research

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

research assessed stress in young children; its prevalence, effects and how it can be controlled. Teachers were used in this as the respondents. In this chapter data collected were presented, analyzed and the findings interpreted.

Characteristics of respondents which have a bearing on their ability to identify and help children to cope

1. Teachers qualification

Figure 2: Showing teachers qualification

| Qualification | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Postgraduate degree | - | - |
| Bachelors degree | - | - |
| Diploma | 1 | 4.5 |
| Certificate | 19 | 86.3 |
| Unqualified | 2 | 9 |
| Total | 22 | 99.9 |

Table 2: Field data 2009

Table 2, only one ECDE teacher had the highest qualification of a Diploma, nineteen of them having certificate and two of them had no qualification.

Interpretation

Table 2 clearly shows that with the majority of teachers with a certificate, they just have basic, if not no knowledge about stress in children, how to identify them

how to help them cope. This may have affected the findings of this research as they were the key contributors to the study.

What was more worrying is that even there were some teachers who were not qualified. One wonders how those ones help the children to develop.

2 Professionalism of teachers

By professionalism the researcher meant those teachers who had been trained specifically for early childhood education, to handle and nurture their development.

Table 3: Showing the professional qualification

| Area of specialization | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Early childhood | 11 | 50 |
| General education | 9 | 41 |
| Special needs education | 2 | 9.09 |
| Management/counseling | - | - |
| Total | 22 | 100.09 |

Source: Field data 2009

The findings showed that 50% of the teachers were specialized in infant teachers, whereas 41% of them were general education teachers. 9% of the teachers however were special needs teachers.

Interpretation

From the above analysis, majority of the teachers had specialized in teaching young children and therefore could effectively identify and help the stressed children. Therefore the information obtained from them could be fairly reliable enough to make inferences about stress in young children.

The prevalence of stress in young children in Kenya

Koff and Philip (2000) had highlighted an increased number of stress children in society. Due to the changes in parenting and family relationship. As we observe now in Kenya there are quite a number of child stressors that exist in the country such as post election violence, HIV/AIDS, broken families. In this study it was important to establish if children in ECDE centers were stressed.

1 Children who have been directly affected by stressors

Teachers were asked to indicate if the children were somehow affected by the following stressors.

Table 4: showing the number of children experiencing by different stressors

| Stressors | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| Divorce | 12 | 55 |
| Death of parents | 20 | 91 |
| Orphaned or affected by HIV/AIDS | 17 | 77 |
| Loss of relatives | 19 | 86 |
| Physical abuse and neglect | 06 | 27 |
| Homelessness | 20 | 91 |
| Total | 94/132 | 71% |

Source: Field data 2009

The above responses were general and so each of them had to be scored out of twenty two teachers and then the percentage got. 55% of the teachers reported that some children have experienced divorce of parents. 91% of them reported that some children are orphans or have experienced loss of relatives. Meanwhile 77% of them reported that some children have either been affected or infected with

AIDS, and 91 of them said that some of the children were coming from poverty stricken families. Only 27% of the teachers contributed that some children had been abused and neglected and 86% of them contributed that the children had disabilities.

Interpretation from the table 4, children are indeed experiencing problems within their environment and these could contribute to their stress. This however could not be depended onto conclude that children were being stressed, since stressors in stages as cited by Honig (1986) could be these children are experiencing stress at different levels and secondly individual children respond either internally or externally to stress.

2 Severity of stress in children

(2003) had highlighted that stress causes emotional reactions such as anxiety, fear, guilt, anger and frustration.

Table 5: Showing the signs and symptoms of stress in young children

| Signs/symptoms of stress | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Anger | 15 | 68 |
| Frustration | 15 | 68 |
| Withdrawal from peers | 07 | 31 |
| Aggressiveness | 21 | 95 |
| Anxiety/fear | 18 | 81 |
| Blame | 11 | 50 |
| Total | 97/132 | 73.4 |

Source: Field data 2009

In this table, every response had to be scored out of the twenty two teachers and then computed to percentages. 68% of the teachers contributed that the children showed signs of anger and frustration. 31% of them contributed that

the children had a tendency of withdrawing from the rest of the children. 95% of them also agreed that these children were aggressive to others. 81 of the teachers said these children had a problem of fear and 50% of the teachers had a tendency of self blame.

Interpretation

Most of the teachers had accepted that the children who had experienced stressors had behavioral problems. This agrees with Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) who cited earlier on that effects of stress range from emotional and behavioral.

Teachers knowledge and ability to identify and help the stressed children cope

Essa (2000) had advised that as child educators, one must have that power to help children cope with stress in their lives. What Essa suggest does not just happen accidentally, but requires the teacher to have knowledge to study and identify those signs and symptoms of stress. They should also be able to provide a consistent and supportive atmosphere. They are the type that effectively communicate with the children to help mitigate stress and also apply other techniques such as bibliotherapy and relaxation techniques as well as play.

1. Teachers awareness of symptoms and signs of stress in children

Teachers were asked to list some signs of child stress?

Table 6: Shows the teachers responses about signs of stress in children

| Signs of stress in irritable | Frequency (22/) | Percentage (100%) |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Thumb sucking | 05 | 22.7 |
| Biting | - | - |
| Stomach complaints | - | - |
| Aggression | 20 | 90.9 |
| Withdrawn | 17 | 77.2 |
| Fearful | 11 | 50.0 |
| Withdrawn | 09 | 40.9 |
| Wetting | 13 | 59.0 |
| Total | 97/198 | 48.9 |

Source: Field data 2009

above responses had to be scored out of twenty two and then computed to percentage. What the teachers contributed had to be classified under the universally accepted signs and symptoms of stress. Findings showed that all teachers were aware that irritated children who cry easily could be suffering from stress. 90% of them also knew that sometimes aggression was due to child stress and that those timid children could have suffered stress. However only 10% of the teachers attributed child self blame to stress, and 40% of them attributed child withdrawal to stress. 59% of them connected stress to bed wetting and 22% realized that child stress could lead to thumbsuck. None of the teachers however attributed nail biting, stomach complaints to stress in children. The overall percentage of teachers' knowledge and ability to identify stressed children stood at 48.9. This is below average.

This finding raises an awareness that just half of the teachers can effectively identify child victims of stress and therefore they can help. It exposes a weakness of early childhood teachers not being able to support fully children's development. Government must take this into consideration.

2. Teachers efforts to offer support to stressed children.

It is essential to establish if indeed there were any efforts by teachers to support victims of stress.

Figure 7: Shows what teachers do to help the stressed children

| Response given | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Refer them | 05 | 23.8 |
| Refer to counselors | 07 | 33.3 |
| Refer them to parents | 01 | 4.7 |
| Refer to parents | 02 | 9.5 |
| Do not do anything | 04 | 19.0 |
| Never identify any | 02 | 9.5 |
| Total | 21 | 99.8 |

Source: Field data 2009

ings showed that five teachers could counsel the stressed children, two
ners talked to stressed children, parents and seven of them had to refer
to counselors. However the four teachers could not do anything and the
had not had any experience with any stressed child.

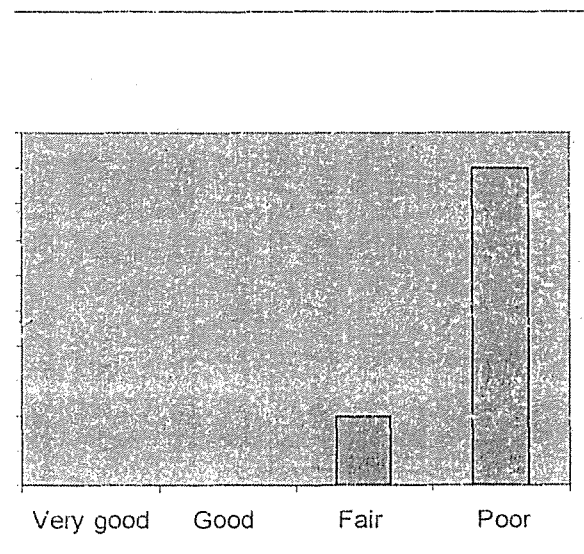
Interpretation

The above finding clearly shows some teachers inability to identify stressed
children. It also shows that the teachers lack the appropriate means of helping
children cope or overcome stress. This is reflected in the absence of responses
concerning how to create a stress free school environment, there is also lack of
awareness of the value of play and bibliotherapy in overcoming stress in
children. This however was not enough to confirm the above finding.

3 Teacher knowledge of bibliotherapy

Teachers were asked to explain what bibliotherapy was as related to stress and
anxiety. Their explanations had to be rated.

Figure 1: Shows the teachers rating of knowledge of Bibliotherapy



Source: Field data 2009

findings revealed the teachers ignorance about bibliotherapy.

It also showed that much as some teachers knowledge about stress and its symptoms and could offer some support to stressed children they lacked this important technique of bibliotherapy they were therefore not adequately supporting children.

4.4 Observation on any evidence of Bibliotherapy books

According to what was observed some groups in Tigoni had some story books. The school library also had as well Limuru mission. The books contained some characters that could otherwise help these children identify with and gain accurate information about what they were going through. This could also expose the children to some coping strategies.

5 Teachers ability to communicate with stressed children to help them cope

It had suggested that teachers share the children's listen carefully to what children have to say and should encourage them to ask questions and express their feelings.

Figure 8: shows the teacher's mode of communication with young children who are stressed.

| Communication strategies | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Share children's concern | 06 | 27.2 |
| Explain how they feel | 06 | 27.2 |
| Reassure the children | 20 | 90.9 |
| Listen carefully to what children say | 07 | 31.8 |
| Encourage children to ask questions | 04 | 18.1 |
| Encourage children to express feeling | 05 | 22.7 |
| Share their perception to children | 04 | 18.1 |
| Give accurate explanation to children | 07 | 31.8 |
| Use a calm voice | 22 | 100 |
| Control their aggressiveness | 15 | 68.1 |
| | 96/220 | 43.6 |

Source: Field data 2009

of the above responses was rated out of 22 teachers. The responses given teachers had to be classified under each Universal category.

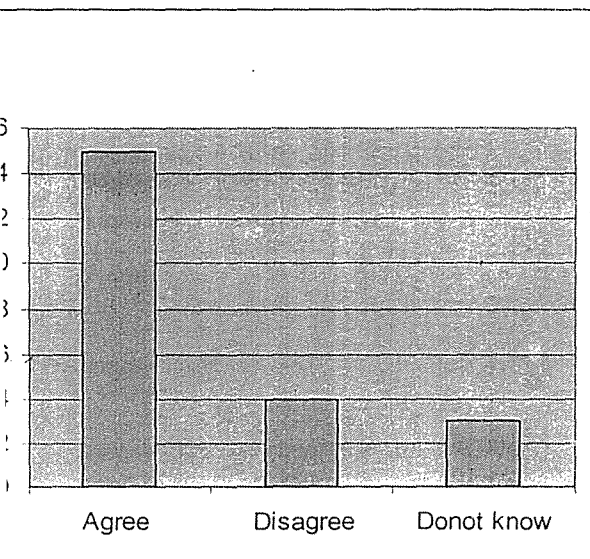
In the above analysis all teachers could use a calm voice when communicating with the children, and almost all of them re-assured children by hugging, rocking them and 68% of them said they could bear those aggressive children in order not to worsen their situation. However over 20% of teachers shared children's concern, acknowledged how they felt, allow them express their feelings. Below 20% discussed children's perceptions and encouraged them to ask questions. And just over 30% gave accurate explanation to children.

This finding shows that a few teachers in ECDE centers can adequately communicate with learners in order to help mitigate stress. This finding could be linked with the few who could counsel stressed children. There is therefore a lack of communication between most of teachers and children who suffer stress is still high.

The teacher's awareness of the role of play in controlling stress in children

Levine and Abott (1990) had observed the role of play in providing a natural outlet for children to cope and workout stressors in their lives. A question was therefore asked whether teachers carried out play knowing the value it had to control stress.

Figure 2: Showing teacher's awareness of importance of play in controlling stress



Source: Field data 2009

The foregoing section of analysis revealed that teachers attached value to play and believe that its use reduces stress in children. Four, however, of the teachers disagreed and three of them did not know.

The findings above show that majority of the teachers are aware of the role of play in reducing stress. The remaining seven of the teachers represent those who lack sufficient knowledge on early childhood development.

' Types of play useful in reducing stress

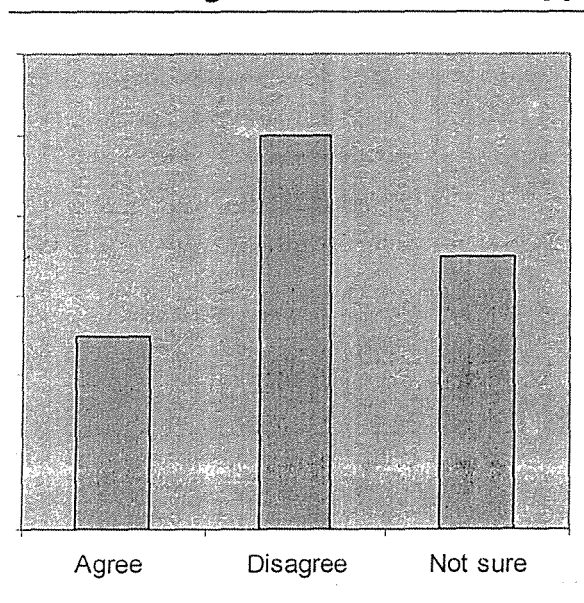
(1988) had recommended socio-dramatic play because it allows children to act out frightening experiences, feel what it is like to take on the perspective of others and make a reality more acceptable.

sbery (1989) had suggested a format for contingent play a very effective
nod for working with abused and neglected children. This analysis showed
a few teachers were using the accurate type of play to control stress while
rest were not aware of what type of play was useful to relieve the children of
and aggressive behavior that they had developed as a result of stress.

8 Teachers awareness of their role in helping the parents of stressed children copes

ell (1987) had clearly stated that a stressed child most likely comes from a
stressed family. It is also a responsibility of teachers to help families to cope.

re3: Showing whether teacher support stressed parents



ce: Field Data 2009

ings showed that five teachers accepted their role in supporting stressed
es. Ten teachers however refused and many gave reasons that it was none
e school responsibility. Seven teachers were not sure of this responsibility
ave a reason that it was not indicated anywhere in the terms of service.

finding highlights another problem in controlling stress in children. For as long as the stressors remain in place, the teachers efforts to help children cope in vain. As a matter of fact Weiss (1987) had argued that a child can not be separated from the family and thus a good early childhood program must include family as a component. And this is lacking.

Government intervention for the stressed children in school

Increased stressors in the children's environment has come a proliferation of programs aimed at teaching children some self-protection techniques. This should be a government task. Government also has a responsibility of availing community resources. Services such as family and children's agencies must be established. Yet the ECDE program in Kenya receives only 0.1% of government funding and the rest is left to parents association, local government authorities, religious organization religious and private entrepreneurs (Ngaroga, 2006).

Figure 9: Shows the teachers opinion on how government is intervening in the provision of children in ECDE centers

| Government intervention | Agree | Disagree | Not sure |
|---|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Balance of curriculum (balanced) | - | 17 | 5 |
| Provision of government employment for teachers and offering training | 03 | 17 | 2 |
| Existing mechanism of assisting families | 11 | 05 | 6 |
| Formulating policy which guides | - | 19 | 3 |
| Improving a teaching-learning environment | 03 | 15 | 4 |
| Sensitization of the parents about child abuse | 02 | 17 | 3 |
| Total | 19/132 | 90/132 | 21/132 |
| Percentage | 14.3 | 68.1 | 17.4 |

Source: Field data 2009

researcher could not find means of establishing directly how the government helping to reduce or control stress. Aspects in early childhood education as the curriculum, the learning environment, the guiding policy and funding government and community involvement had to be examined. Findings show curriculum that had been adopted in ECDE center was irrelevant according to teachers. Five of the teachers were not sure. Seventeen teachers also attributed that the government was not adequately providing for the teachers was doing little to control them. However some teachers agreed that government was trying to assist poor families. Nineteen of the teachers attributed that government had failed to fund ECDE centers so that they move on their teaching/learning environment. Still seventeen teachers attributed that little was being done by government in sensitization of people to child abuse and neglect. 68% the teachers disagreed that government not doing much to help in reducing stress in children.

As long as the curriculum is not developmentally appropriate, learning experience in ECDE centers will continue to further stress the children. And as long as government fails to formulate policies to guide ECDE program, to encourage support services in communities, stress is most likely to dominate the lives of children and all its efforts in providing education for all right from the beginning will be in vain.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND
RECOMMENDATION**

Introduction

This chapter summarized all the findings generated after analyzing the data. Where possible they were discussed, a conclusion made and recommendations made.

Summary of findings

Question one: what is the prevalence of stress in young children in ECDE centers?

As established that stress was indeed a reality in ECDE centers of Tigoni Sub-county, since 73% of the teachers had reported cases of children with behavioral and symptoms related to stress, many of these were aggressive to other children and frustrated.

Wong (2006) warned that when children are frustrated and aggressive the quality of learning can never be achieved. Findings also showed that children displaying the above behavioral problems possibly because they were experiencing a number of stressors.

Question two: Do the teachers have knowledge to identify and help stressed children?

According to the findings in Chapter four only 48.9% of the teachers gave appropriate signs and symptoms of stressed children. None of the teachers realized that nail biting and stomach complaints were also signs of stress, and just five of them knew that thumb sucking could be due to stress. It is therefore evident that there are some important skills which the teachers did not acquire while

ergoing training. This is the reason as to why some victims of stress are not g identified. And secondly it becomes impossible to assess and ascertain the rity of the problem. What therefore teachers know about stress is not uate to help them identify the cases and to help them knowledge.

Question three: what intervention measures have government put in place to combat stress among ECDE children?

Professional early childhood educators had advised that teachers be equipped with poor knowledge on how to communicate effectively with the stressed children. More to that, government also advises that teachers should create a calming environment for children who are victims of stress (Ngaroga, 2006).

From the observations made in most of the ECDE centers there were relevant therapy materials, but surprisingly, just a handful of teachers could utilize them to help the children cope. For as long as children are not helped to identify those other characters that have faced similar suffering they will never cope and could end up growing up bitter people. This holds consequences for their future adult life because they may end up being abusers themselves.

Conclusion

Stress among children is a reality but it remains a myth to the people of Kenya for a number of reasons. The fact that they can not identify the victims of stress due to their limited knowledge, the problem might in future cause other problems. It should be remembered that when this children are not helped to cope they could be the future abusers of their children. The time is now for the government to know and learn in details about stress.

Recommendations

The following had to be recommended:

Teachers must receive full training on early childhood education and early childhood stressors, how to identify victims and to help them cope.

government has a task finding means of providing social support to families where the stressed children originate from. This will help to ease parental stress which is the root of child stress. This will partly reduce child maltreatment.

Government must use the media to educate the public about child maltreatment and the consequences and to tell them where to seek help. Many experts believe that child stress can not be eliminated as long as violence is wide spread in the country and corporal punishment is regarded as an acceptable child rearing practice.

In addition government must work hard to combat poverty and its diverse correlates such as disorganizations in the family, inadequate food and medical services and parental hopelessness. In other words government must invent and implement the social programs that have as their goal full employment and better economic conditions for low social economic families.

Workshops must be organized for the teachers already in the field to try and fill gaps in their knowledge and skills of early childhood education. Bibliotherapy must be re-taught to the teachers to try and equip them to help the stressed children to cope.

Government must emphasize the teaching in ECDE to be done only by professional early childhood teachers. And must train more and deploy them. It is also important to review and enrich the ECDE curriculum in teacher training institutes.

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Appendix A: Questionnaires

Do you have some children who;

- have stomach ulcers
- become easily frustrated for no reason
- are normally quiet
- do not suffer from guilt?
- are not short tempered?
- do not suffer from phobia/fear?
- are not abnormally Joyous
- do not have tantrums

Have you ever taken time to ask why they behave so?

If so what did you find out?

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Do you have any children who are experiencing the following problems?

- Abuse
- Death of parents
- Parental illness or affected by HIV/AIDS
- Parental mental health problems
- Parental substance abuse and neglect
- Parental poverty and homelessness

Are those children experiencing the following problems?

- Aggression
- Isolation
- Withdrawal from others
- Aggressiveness
- Hyperactivity
- Depression

Do you think those reactions may have resulted from the problems experienced?

- Yes
- No

What are some signs of stress in children?

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Do you agree that stress can be controlled if children are allowed to play?

-
-

What type of play can help to reduce stress?

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.....

Do you think it is important to help parents of stressed children?

- Yes
- No
- Sure

Is the government through the ministry intervened in this problem of children's stress?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If yes, please indicate measures taken.

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What form of support have you given to children who are victims of stress?

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What do you understand by the term bibliotherapy?

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Have you ever practiced bibliotherapy in your school?

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How can you establish proper communication with young children who are stressed?

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