

**OCCUPATIONAL STRESS ON TEACHERS' JOB PERFORMANCE: AN  
INTERDISCIPLINARY REFLECTION**

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<http://doi.org/10.35409/IJBMER.2021.3324>

**ABSTRACT**

This paper aims at linking employee perceptions on occupational stress to job performance in organizations. It adopted documentary review methodology by visiting peer reviewed literatures about the trend of global and Tanzanian issues on occupational stress. This review grounded from Job Demand Control Model (JDCM) to explain the association between employees' feeling of occupational stress and its possible consequences on job performance. It is assumed in this paper that work force experiencing stress in the working endeavors cannot perform well the job. This paper proposes empirical investigation on information related with types of stress, the causes of occupational stress, consequences of occupational stress on teachers' job performance and managing stress for teachers' job performance. The results showed that: Acute stress, episodic acute stress and chronic stress are the types of stress among teachers. Role of conflict, excessive workloads and lack career development were some of the observed causes of occupational stress among secondary school teachers. Physiological and psychological were also reported by literatures as some of the consequences of occupational stress among secondary school teachers. Lastly, the paper provides conclusion and recommendations

**Keyword:** Stress, Occupational stress, Job performance.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Stress is any action or situation that places special physical or psychological demands upon a person or anything that can unbalance his individual's equilibrium. It is a general term used for pressure that people are exposed to in life (Nwimo & Onwunaka, 2015). It is the experience of negative or unpleasant emotions resulting from aspects of the work (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). In work organizations, stress comes from different sources that include: Job insecurity, long working hours without breaks, work overload, role of conflict, organizational environment, lack of autonomy and participation, high work pressure and adjustment to changes (Vaidya et al., 2015 & Giriraj, 2018). The other sources of stress in work organizations include: unrealistic demands, lack of support, unfair treatment, low decision latitude, lack of appreciation, effort-reward imbalance, lack of transparency and poor communication (Bhui et al., 2016). All of these sources of stress can affect employee's job performance in one way or another. Studies on occupational stress (e.g. Mensah, 2021; Shen & Slater, 2021) posit that, stresses affect employees in various ways that include; engaging in alcoholism, turnover, risk of physical injuries, cardiovascular

disease, high blood pressure, depression and the increase in negative personal behaviours such as anger, anxiety including irritability (Mosadeghrad, 2016). This paper addresses the effect of occupational stress on teachers' job performance. The assumption under this review is that work force experiencing a lot of stress results into low job performance (Yahaya et al., 2019).

### **Types of Stress**

Stress is categorized into different types namely: Acute, episodic acute and chronic stress (Tran et., 2020). Acute stress (short term stress) is very common type of stress that is harmless in small amounts. However, too much short-term stress can cause feelings of exhaustion, worry and tension. Examples of short-term stress includes; being stuck in deep feelings, speaking in front of a group of people, interviewing for a job, arguing with a friend or loved one, getting married, short term health issues, such as a need for more medical testing and having a baby. It happens in a very short-term and always does not have a negative impact among the employees. Acute stress normally helps employees to think critically so as to cope with stressful situations and different challenges in future.

The other type of stress is episodic acute stress that occurs when employee faces stress several times. It occurs among people who feel pressure of being overloaded and having a lot of responsibilities at the working places. It also occurs among people with unrealistic demands and unreasonable goals that exceed their ability to perform it on time (Vrshek-Schallhorn et al., 2015).

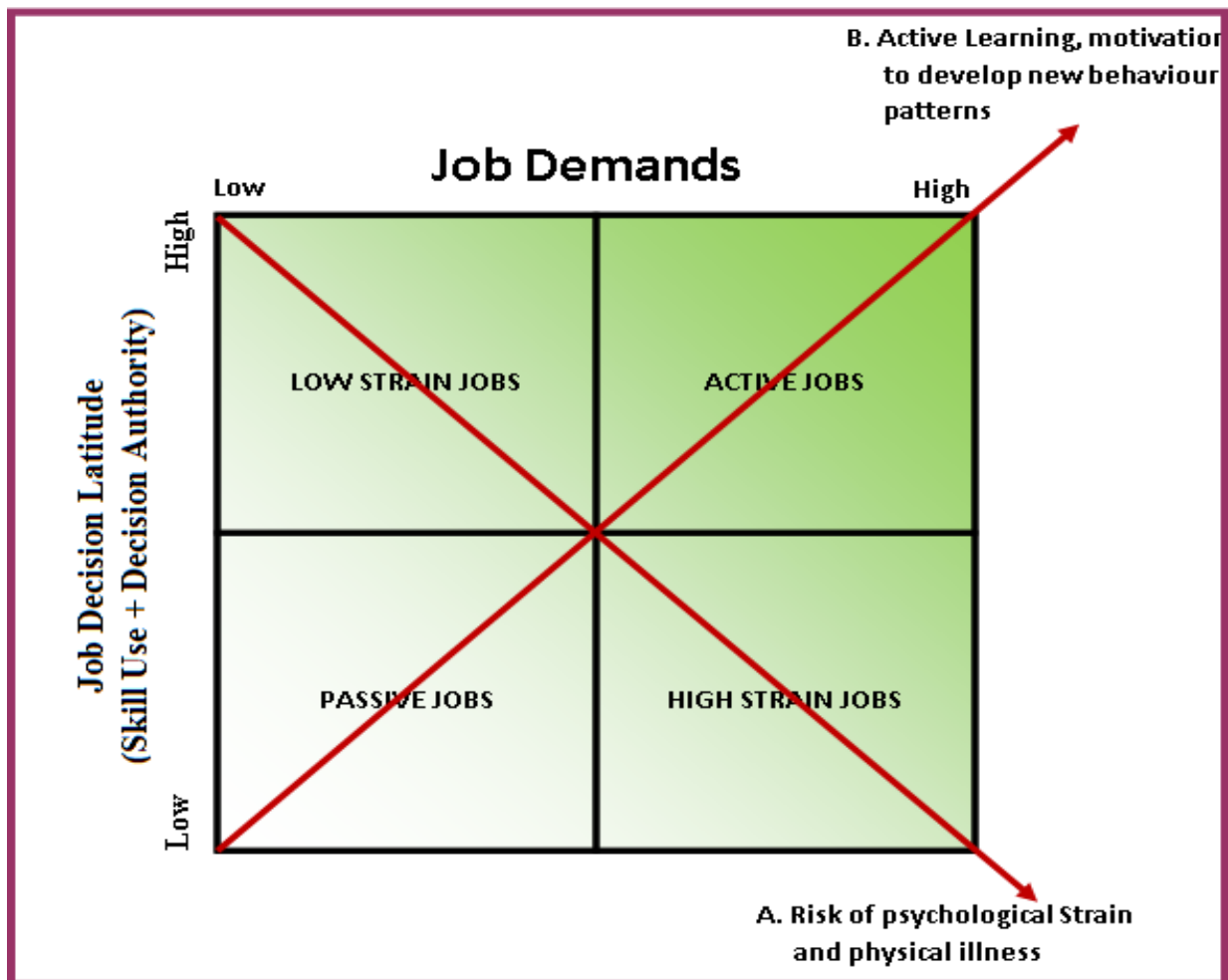
Chronic stress (long term stress) is regarded to be the most harmful type of stress. Most people are experiencing chronic stress (long term stress) in their lives. It happens when people have serious and long-term problems and give up looking for solutions. Chronic stress is the most dangerous. It causes both physical health and mental health (Khan & Khan, 2017). Examples of chronic stress (long term stress) include; financial difficulty, loss of job or unemployment including unhappy relationship. According to Singh (2018), the types of stress include: Distress which is a negative stress. It occurs when a person is exposed continuously to pressure or uncontrollable situation such as death of one's loved one, crises, illness and misfortune. Eu-stress which is a positive stress. It occurs for short period and it generally improves the efficiency of the employee. Symptoms of positive stress are being excited, or motivated to do something. For instance, the stress experienced during examinations generally increases the efficiency of the student to study and learn more (Kumari & Jain, 2014).

### **Occupational Stress**

Occupational stress is the harmful emotional and physical reactions that occur when the worker cannot qualify the requirements. In other words it is the physiological and physical effects of negative activity in the workplace as a result many factors including external events, internal events, job demands and colleague behaviour (Loo, Amin & Sa, 2015). Occupational stress is commonly viewed as having two dimensions, namely physiological occupational stress and psychological occupational stress. Physiological occupational stress involves bodily reactions such as headache, migraine, abdominal pain, body exhaustion, fatigue including heart problems; The psychological stress involves; emotional reactions to a situation and may manifest itself in different forms such as anxiety, depression, job alienation, isolation, hostility, tension, anger, aggression, nervousness, inability to concentrate and frustration (Mkumbo, 2013).

In work organizations, occupational stress is grounded from working conditions that include; workload, physical environment/noise, lack of structure in working hours, unrealistic demands, pressure, conflicting role, effort-reward imbalance, lack of support, lack of appreciation, unfair treatment and absence of participation in decision-making. Employees experiencing a lot of stress can perform their job poorly. Job Demand Control Model (JDCM) as shown in figure 1 explains the motives of occupational stress in work organizations.

Figure 1. Karasek’s Job Demand Control Model of Occupational Stress on Job Performance



The focus of JDCM is to assess stress among employees, stress factors in working environment of employees and health promotion in working environment among employees. JDCM is divided into two parts namely: job demands and job decision latitude or control. **Job demands** include: The amount of work, time, efforts and job difficulties that are being experienced by employees. These are the requirements that are being experienced by secondary school teachers during performing their day-to-day activities at their working places.

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**Job Decision Latitude (control)** involve the of use competencies and given freedom to organize their work. In a school context, secondary school teachers use competencies in performing their daily duties. The four (4) important aspects that have been emphasized by JDCM include: **Low-strain jobs** which are the daily routine jobs. In a school context, if secondary school teachers are working in environment with many stresses, they reduce morale to work, the motivation towards job performance becomes low and feel uncomfortable due to surrounding occupational stress at their working environment.

**High-strain jobs** refer to a very demanding or complex jobs with very little control. In a school context most of secondary school management do not like to cooperate with their subordinates in decision making. If secondary teachers are being ignored in decision making may develop stress to them. **Passive jobs** are simple jobs with little decision latitude The risk of stress for these types of jobs is low. In relation to school environment, most secondary school teachers do not show any kind of initiatives for personal and organisational growth because they look very passive due to occupational stress. **Active jobs** provide sufficient intrinsic motivation among secondary school teachers. The school management that recognizes the subordinates, job performance is also performed effectively and the subordinates feel motivated and comfortable.

### **Causes of Occupational Stress**

Research shows that, some of the causes of occupational stress among secondary school teachers include: work overload, role of conflict, management ineffectiveness and lack of career development opportunities (Faisal, Noor & Khair, 2019). The causes of of occupational stress are divided into two groups namely; external causes and internal causes of occupational stress at the working places. The external causes of occupational stress at the working places are caused by working conditions that include; absence of stability and clarity, left alone to resolve problems, excessive workload, lack of inter-institutional cooperation and the absence of change.

Another external causes of occupational stress at working places is due to negative behaviour of a service receiver that include: threat of physical violence, psychological violence and pressure from clients in order to obtain something. The other one is due to relations with management that include: lack of encouragement from the management and lack of kindness. Another external cause of occupational stress at work place is due to the condition of employment that include: Fixed-term contracts and uncertainty about the future and too little salary.

The second group of causes of occupational stress at working places is internal causes that include: Excessively high requirements among employees themselves, the fear to failure and excessive responsibility (Raudeliunaite & Volff, 2020). On the other hand, Panigrahi (2016) conducted a study on managing stress at workplace in India comments that, the causes of occupational stress can be grouped into two groups namely; internal and external causes. The internal causes involve the mind set of an individual and the way of thinking. These causes are coming from within an individual and later on lead to stress (Bhargava & Trivedi, 2018).

The external causes of occupational stress include many external factors within an organization which affect an individual's performance in organization. Among the external causes of occupational stress include; Job insecurity whereby an employee works in an organization, fear of losing his or her job and later on leads to chronic stress which results into low quality of work

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(Sajid et al., 2021). Another external cause of stress is abnormal working hours whereby an teachers face a lot of physiological problems which later on lead to stress during performing their work. Control at work is another external cause of stress whereby a teacher has an ability to control his or her work. If a teacher has no or very little control over the work then he or she may lose interest in the work and feels stressed to meet expectations of superiors. Managerial style of the managers such as autocratic style also may cause stress among teachers due to its strictness of not involving them in decision making (Mui Fong et al., 2015).

Job performance in any secondary schools depends much on the ability teachers and the school management. Secondary school teachers can perform their work effectively in a free stress environment. The findings from Panigrahi (2016) on managing stress at workplace in India show that, secondary school teachers have been performing poorly their work due to different stresses at their working places. It has also been observed that, high workloads, short breaks, long shifts, tasks that do not use employee skills and lack of control, lack of teachers to be involved in decision making and poor communication are some of the causes of occupational stress among secondary school teachers (Amiri, 2019).

It has also been observed that, occupational stress is a great challenge among the United Kingdom teachers. For example, the findings from Brady and Wilson (2021) on comparing sources of stress for state and private school teachers in England indicate that, teaching is understood to be a highly stressful profession. Research shows that; workload, high-stakes accountability, policies and pupil behaviour are often cited as stressors that contribute to teachers' decisions to leave state teaching and take jobs in private schools in England (Imran et al., 2020).

The findings from Singh (2018) on occupational stress in India indicate that, some of the causes of occupational stress include; toxic working environment, negative or overwork load, isolation, types of hours worked, conflict, role of ambiguity, lack of autonomy, carrier development, barriers and difficult relationship with co-worker or administrators or seniors. The other causes of occupational stress include; managerial bullying, harassment, job insecurity, low level of support from supervisors, dissatisfaction of employees, targets or unrealistic deadlines, environmental factors and personal factors (Kadtong et al., 2018). The indication of such occupational stress among secondary school teachers shows that, teachers cannot perform their work effectively.

Occupational stress also has been reported in African countries as a great challenge among secondary school teachers. The findings from Mohamed (2018), on causes of occupational stress among teachers who are working in Libyan Schools reveal that, the sources of the occupational stress among teachers include; teaching pupils who lack motivation, maintaining discipline, time pressures and workload, dealings with colleagues, being evaluated by others, inefficient management, ineffective organizations, conflict between individuals, poor physical environment and working conditions.

The findings from Kitole, Idua and Matata (2019) on effect of work stress on employee performance in the public sector in Kenya indicate that, work place conflicts is one of the sources of occupational stress affect employee performance in the public sector. On the other hand, workload, work conflicts, work ambiguity and job security have also been reported as some of the

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causes of occupational stress among teachers (Ingusci et al., 2021). The findings from Mkumbo (2013) on prevalence of and factors associated with work stress in academia in Tanzania indicate that; lack of staff involvement in institutional reform processes and lack of necessary support systems related to their work are some of the sources of occupational stress among of employees in university context in Tanzania.

### **Consequences of Occupational Stress on Teachers' Job Performance**

Stress can affect teachers' job performance if not well handled. Among the effect of stress on job performance to the teachers include; the increase of absenteeism, turnover and decrease of production (Daniel, 2020). It is estimated that there are about 100 million workdays being lost due to stress and nearly 50% to 75% diseases are related to stress (Kitole et al., 2019). Stress does not only affect individual employees but also organizations at large since organizational performance depends on individual performance (Mwakasangula & Mwita, 2020).

The findings from Appiah and Fynn (2017) indicate that, occupational stress has a negative impact on the individual physiological, physical health, behaviour and the economy of a nation. The consequences of occupational stress on job performance are divided into three categories namely; Physiological consequences which include high blood pressure, heart burns, headaches, nervousness, unhappiness and bad temperedness. All these emotions lead to lack of concentration and absenteeism (Mosadeghrad, 2014).

The physical health consequences include: cardiovascular diseases, high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, the increase risk of morbidity and mortality; weakened immune system, headaches, sleep disturbances, dizziness, fatigue, appetite loss and gastrointestinal problems (Mahiri & Orwa, 2016). Behavioural consequences include; individuals get themselves exposed to alcoholism, disrespectful behaviours, restlessness; increased absenteeism and turnover, the reduce of quality and quantity of work, the reduce of job satisfaction and moral, poor communication, the increase of conflict, lack of job satisfaction and lack of organizational commitment (Pajovic, 2017).

Lastly, there is consequences to the organisation and the economy. Occupational stress can affect the economy of the country, the increase of absenteeism, health expenses as well as the reduce of job motivation and productivity. Occupational stress may also cause loss of talent and an increase of training cost due to high turnover, medical costs, erosion of goodwill, decrease of quality, decrease of customer satisfaction, decrease of productivity, decrease of profitability and efficiency, the increase of recruitment and training cost (Velnampy & Aravinthan, 2013).

### **Managing Stress for Teachers' Job Performance**

In order teachers to perform their work efficiently, they should be taught some necessary skills in coping with stressors. The most coping strategies on managing stress among teachers are the positive ones that include; attending enjoyable activities, creating a positive organizational climate and communicate results of evaluation process (CLIPA, 2018). The findings from Sharma and Shakir (2017) on stress management among teachers also indicate that, stress cannot be eliminated; however a bit can be managed effectively by some ways such as; financial stability that reduces worries and stress, happy and content life, avoiding over thinking, positive emotions, balanced life, proper sleep and proper exercise. Iyore (2018) argues that; strategies of coping with

stress are many and therefore, managers should use more than one strategy for effective coping with stress, getting emotional support from others such as more experience teachers who can give them directives on how to manage the current challenges they are facing at the working places.

### **Job Performance**

Job performance is defined as the property of the behaviour of employees and is understood as the expected organizational value of what people do. Moreover, job performance concerns both behavioural and outcome aspects. Therefore, job performance is considered as the combination of five aspects that include; task proficiency, task care, work discipline, work improvement and readiness for innovation (Bieńkowska & Tworek, 2020). In other words, job performance means the performance of daily activities among secondary school teachers at their working places. It is all daily activities that are being done by secondary school teachers at the working places. Job performance in any secondary school depends much on the ability teachers and the school management. Secondary school teachers can perform their work effectively in a free stress environment. of the student to study and learn more (Kumari & Jain, 2014).

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This paper adopted documentary review methodology by visiting peer reviewed literatures about the trend of global and local issues on occupational stress. Information on occupational stress from different documents and reports were analysed to get a clear understanding of the up-to-date concepts. Those literature provided an understanding of occupational stress, efforts and observed challenges in different countries, continents and globally. The experience-based design was also used by the authors to analyse the documents for effective recommendations for education stakeholders and policy makers.

## **3. RESULTS**

This part describes the results based on questions focusing on types of stress, causes of occupational stress and consequences of occupational stress on job performance among secondary school teachers.

### **Based on Types of Stress**

After reviewing different empirical research papers, the types of stress include; acute stress or short-term stress that is harmless in small amounts. The other type of stress is episodic acute stress occurs when employee faces stress several times Episodic acute stress is found among the people who feel the pressure of being overloaded and having a lot of responsibilities at the working places. Chronic stress (long term stress) is regarded to be the most harmful type of stress, and it is the opposite of acute stress.

### **Based on Causes of Occupational Stress**

The causes of occupational stress among secondary school teachers include: work overload, role of conflict, management ineffectiveness and lack of career development opportunities (Faisal, Noor & Khair, 2019). Another causes of occupational stress at working places is due to negative behaviour of a service receiver that include: threat of physical violence, psychological violence and pressure from clients in order to obtain something (Raudeliunaite & Volff, 2020). The other

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causes of occupational stress include; managerial bullying, harassment, job insecurity, low level of support from supervisors, dissatisfaction of employees, targets or unrealistic deadlines, environmental factors and personal factors (Kadtong et al., 2018).

Occupational stress also has been reported in African countries as a great challenge among secondary school teachers. The findings from Mohamed (2018), on causes of occupational stress among teachers who are working in Libyan Schools reveal that, the sources of the occupational stress among teachers include; teaching pupils who lack motivation, maintaining discipline, time pressures and workload, dealings with colleagues, being evaluated by others, inefficient management, ineffective organizations, conflict between individuals, poor physical environment and working conditions. It has been observed that teachers' working morale and commitment may be low due to occupational stress (Shaban et al., 2017). The findings from Mkumbo (2013) on prevalence of and factors associated with work stress in academia in Tanzania indicate that; lack of staff involvement in institutional reform processes and lack of necessary support systems related to their work are some of the sources of occupational stress among teachers in Tanzania.

#### **Based on Consequences of Occupational Stress**

Occupational stress is commonly viewed as having two dimensions, namely physiological occupational stress and psychological occupational stress. The consequences of physiological occupational stress include; bodily reactions, such as headache, migraine, abdominal pain, body exhaustion, fatigue including heart problems. On the other hand, the consequences of psychological occupational stress include; emotional reactions to a situation and may manifest itself in different forms, including, for example, anxiety, depression, job alienation, isolation, hostility, tension, anger, aggression, nervousness, inability to concentrate and frustration (Mkumbo, 2013).

To avoid the consequences of occupational stress, various issues need to be taken into account including improvement of working environment, improving motivation among teachers, improvement of salaries, promotion among teachers, job training and recognition (Ajayi et al., 2019). Occupational stress on job performance also leads to absenteeism, turnover, deaths, committing suicide, losing morale and commitment have been reported as some of the effects of occupational stress on job performance among secondary school teachers (Nyamubi, 2017). In Tanzania, teaching profession is the post that hires many teachers and thus brings an attention to analyse the effect of occupation stress to their job performance. For example, in schools, teachers need conducive environment to perform their job without stress (Mbonea et al., 2021).

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

This paper aimed at adding new knowledge and identifying the perceptions about occupational stress on job performance among secondary school teachers in Tanzania. The paper also reviewed different literatures on the types, causes and consequences of occupational stress among secondary school teachers. After the review of different literatures by the authors, it was found that, the types of stress among secondary school teachers include; acute, episodic and chronic (Tran et., 2020). The acute stress causes feelings of exhaustion, worry and tension. Examples of acute stress is when an individual is being in deep feelings, speaking in front of a group of people, interviewing for a job and arguing with a friend or a loved one. Acute stress helps an individual to think critically so



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as to cope with stressful situations and different challenges in the future.

Episodic acute stress occurs when an individual faces stress several times. Episodic acute stress is found among the people who feel the pressure of being overloaded and having a lot of responsibilities at the working places. It also occurs among people with unrealistic demands and unreasonable goals that exceed their ability to perform it on time (Vrshek-Schallhorn et al., 2015). Chronic stress occurs when people have serious and long-term problems such as their life being out of control and give up looking for solutions. Chronic stress is the most dangerous. It can cause both physical health and mental health (Khan & Khan, 2017). Chronic stress includes: Financial problems, loss of a job or unemployment, unhappy relationship or marriage, personal health issues that require lifestyle change and work-life balance challenges.

On the other hand, the role of conflict, excessive workloads, management ineffectiveness, lack of career development, physical violence, lack of encouragement from the management and an individual to be left alone to resolve problems were some of the observed causes of occupational stress among secondary school teachers (Singh, 2018). It was also found that, the consequences of occupational stress include: Physiological consequences such as; head ache, abdominal pain, body exhaustion and heart problems. The other consequences of occupational stress include: Psychological consequences such as; anxiety, depression, job alienation, isolation, hostility, tension, anger, aggression, nervousness, inability to concentrate and frustration (Appiah & Fynn, 2017).

**Table 1: Types, Causes and Consequences of Occupational Stress among secondary school Teachers**

Types of stress	Causes of occupational stress	Consequences of occupational stress
Acute stress	Role of conflict	Physiological consequences such as; head ache, abdominal pain, body exhaustion and heart problems
	Excessive workloads	
	Management ineffectiveness	
Episodic acute stress	Lack of career development	Psychological consequences such as; anxiety, depression, job alienation, isolation, hostility, tension, anger, aggression, nervousness, inability to concentrate and frustration
	Physical violence	
Chronic stress	Lack of encouragement from the management	
	Left alone to resolve problems	

**Source:** Authors' elaboration

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Teaching professional should be valued like other professions since it is the core producer of majority of other professionals. Basing on the reviewed literatures, it can be concluded that, acute, episodic acute and chronic are the main types of stress that facing secondary school teachers on job performance. It should be also noted that, work overload, role of conflict, management

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ineffectiveness and lack of career development opportunities are some of the causes of occupational stress among secondary school teachers. Basing on the findings from the reviewed literatures on the types, causes, consequences of occupational stress including the relationship between occupational stress on job performance among secondary school teachers, the following recommendations are made:

- The government and other education stakeholders should design different managerial interventions to reduce occupational stress so as to improve job performance in secondary schools.
- Working conditions among secondary school teachers should be improved through the provision of necessary resources, formulating and implementing policies intending to offer supportive working environment.
- Motivating teachers through recognition, improving salaries, rewards, professional development, on job training, promotion, reducing the workloads and improvement of superior-subordinate relationship will help to reduce occupational stress among secondary school teachers. This will help to increase secondary school teachers' morale, commitment, loyalty and job performance.
- The secondary school administration should involve teachers in decision making in all matters pertaining to school development and welfare purposely to reduce occupational stress among them.

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