

INFLUENCE OF THE SCHOOLS’ PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT IN MANAGING MENOPAUSE CRISES AMONG FEMALE TEACHERS

¹Wangui Ndung’u M., ²Ngumi Owen, ³Kay James

Department of Education Psychology, Kabarak University

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Abstract: Menopause is not a medical condition or an illness but a natural component of the life cycle, yet this topic remains unspoken, especially in the workplace. The study aimed at establishing the influence of physical environment on menopause crisis. The study was carried out among the female teachers in public primary schools in Laikipia County, Kenya. Female teachers were selected because they had experience on issues of menopause. The study adopted *ex post facto* research design. The study was based on the Person-Environment-Occupation Theory of Occupational Performance. A sample of 234 female teachers was selected through stratified random sampling and cluster sampling while a sample of fifty (50) teacher counselors and five (5) sub directors of education from five sub counties were selected through purposive sampling. Data collection instruments were questionnaire, interview schedules and focus group discussions. The results revealed that physical environment have a statistically significant influence on menopause crisis where ($r^2=0.683$; p -value of 0.0398) which is significant at 0.05 confidence level. The findings indicated that physical environment influences menopause crisis among female teachers in public primary schools. The study recommends that employers should give better consideration to female teachers undergoing menopause as an issue that affect their job.

Keywords: Physical working Environment, Menopause, Crisis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Although men and women face various health challenges as they grow older, menopause is a peculiar health issue to women but which is not given attention (Altmann, 2014). Kopen Hager, (2015) reported that peri-menopausal symptoms have been reported to cause a range of physical and emotional symptoms for women in place of work. Things that make hot flushes more difficult to cope with are hot working areas and poor aerated environments Kopen Hager, (2015), Thorogood, 2015). In accordance with Salah (2010) work place design directly affects employees’ performance by determining job satisfaction, employee motivation and citizenship. This in return determines a flow in the systems of work in an organization as well as employee coordination and efficiency in communication. As a result, it will lead to reduced absenteeism and employee commitment resulting in higher performance. A study by Nanzushi (2015) revealed that a spacious office with enough lighting and devoid of noise would facilitate increased employees’ performance. These corroborated with the findings of Kopen Hager, (2015) that a conducive physical environment would save the employees from work-related stress and enhance their performance to the expected standards.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study utilized *ex post facto* correlational research design. *Ex- post facto* research can be viewed as experimental research in reverse. *Ex post facto* research is ideal for conducting social research when is not possible or acceptable to manipulate the characteristics of human participants. It is an alternative for true experimental research and can be used to test hypotheses

about cause and effect or correlational relationships, where it is not practical or ethical to apply a true experimental or even a quasi-experimental design (Simon & Goes, 2013). The research design was appropriate for this study since the independent variables were not be manipulated to establish their effects on the dependent variables. The research design was adopted in order to determine the influence of the independent variables under study that include environment, personality related factors and psychological interventions on female teacher's menopause crises (the dependent variable).

This study used stratified sampling to obtain the sample. Stratified sampling is a probability sampling method that is implemented in sample surveys. The target population elements are divided into distinct groups or strata where within each stratum the components are similar to each other with respect to select characteristics of importance to the survey (Parsons, 2017). Under stratified sampling, each sub-population is sampled independently. The target population has three sub-populations; the female teachers (FT), the teacher counselors (TC) and Sub County Directors of Education (SDE). Each of the sub-population was stratified independently. Total of 600 female teachers between 44 and 55 years were sampled after obtaining their total number from Laikipia County TSC Office.

In systematic random sampling, the researcher first randomly picked the first item or subject from the population. Then, the researcher selected each n^{th} subject from the list. The procedure involved in systematic random sampling is very easy and can be done manually. The results are representative of the population unless certain characteristics of the population are repeated for every n^{th} individual, which is highly unlikely. The 'n' was arrived at by dividing the number of samples under each sub-county with the population of primary schools. The list provided by the Ministry of Education was used as the sampling frame for public primary schools in the sub-counties.

Purposive sampling was also used to select five Sub County Directors of Education and fifty teacher counselors. Ten teacher counselors from each of the five Sub Counties were included in the Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Nyumba et al (2018) intimates that FGD method is used to obtain statistics from a purposely selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of a wider population. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which decisions concerning the respondents is taken by the researcher based upon various criteria such as specialist knowledge of the research issue, capacity and willingness to participate in the research as well as participants' likelihood to contribute appropriate data both in terms of relevance and depth. Ames, Glenton and Lewin (2019) posits that purposive sampling of primary studies in the synthesis is one way of accomplish a manageable amount of data. On the other hand, Guarte and Barrios (2006) opines that purposive sampling is expressed as a random selection of sampling units within the portion of the population with the most information on the characteristics of intense.

3. STUDY RESULTS

The respondents were guided by a Linkert scale in which 1 represented Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 was Disagree (D), 3 was Neutral (N), 4 was Agree (A) and 5 was Strongly Agree (SA). The data obtained from the study was analysed then presented in the Table 1

Table 1: Distribution of Responses on Physical Environment on Menopause Crises

ITEM	SD	D	NS	A	SA
There are enough physical facilities in this school for all the teachers	18.6% 29	38.5% 60	10.3% 16	25% 39	7.7% 12
We have adequate toilets to meet the needs of female teachers undergoing menopause	17.9% 28	37.2% 58	14.7% 23	7.7% 12	22.4% 35
The distance from the office to the classrooms is favourable to female teachers going through menopause	26.3% 32	30.1% 23	8.3% 13	20.5% 47	14.7% 41
The staff room is spacious enough for the women undergoing menopause to feel comfortable	32.1% 22	28.2% 44	14.7% 23	12.2% 50	26.3% 17
There is adequate clean water supply in our school.	26.9% 22	26.9% 42	10.3% 16	14.1% 34	26.9% 42
The classrooms in this school are spacious enough	20.5% 32	44.9% 22	6.4% 10	14.1% 70	14.1% 22

The classes in this school are highly ventilated which is favourable for female teachers going through menopause.	26.9% 16	30.7% 37	10.9% 28	26.9% 42	10.3% 33
The offices in this school are well ventilated	21.2% 13	21.2% 13	13.5% 21	22.4% 35	21.8% 34
The classrooms are crowded which is not favourable for female teachers in this school.	22% 34	26% 56	10% 23	27% 0	32% 42

An examination of the results posted in table 1 reveal that the respondents disagreed on all the items. All the items except one had more than half of the respondents disagreeing with the items. This is an indication that schools' physical facilities influence the female teachers' menopause crisis. The item 'the offices in the school are well ventilated' 67.6% disagreed while 17.9% were not sure. This means that enough ventilation is important to allow women who are menopausal get enough air and overcome hot flashes. This concurs with Biró (2007) who pointed out that enhancing the supply of fresh air through improved ventilation is tantamount to increased attentiveness, reduced fatigue as well as emotional stability. Additional to this, improved ventilation boosts the arithmetic potential of pupils and hence their performance. In a post on the urban green periodical, about the effect of poor ventilation on the performance of employees, Scheib (2017) postulates that good ventilation puts a check on absenteeism and infectious airborne diseases, hence ensuring that workers' health and their entire welfare is assured.

Heldari et al (2017) posits that every manager must conduct risk assessment to identify potential health and safety threats. Brewis (2020) in his study on the health and socioeconomic impact on menopausal women working from home case reports in women's health pointed that during the global COVID-19 pandemic, huge number of women who usually work on their employer's premises have been working from home with many others made redundant. For menopausal women, who make-up even greater proportion of working women, working from home may have positive and negative health and socio-economic impacts. This is because a woman's experience of menopause is unique to her, working from home means individual women can take the steps necessary to ameliorate her specific symptoms.

Majority of the respondents (70.0%) disagreed that the classrooms in the school are spacious enough while 6.4% were not sure. Findings by Nanzushi (2015) showed that a spacious office with enough lighting and devoid of noise would ease increased employees' performance. These corroborated with the findings of Riach et al (2016) that a conducive physical surroundings would save the employees from work-related stress and enhance their performance to the expected standards. While many women undergo menopausal transition while they are in paid employment, the effect of poor working conditions on women's experience of the menopause has received scant empirical attention. A study by Riach et al (2016) in a forced entry multivariate regression analysis reported that high supervisor assistance, ($\beta=0.10$; $p=0.04$), being employed on full-time basis ($\beta=-0.11$; $p=0.02$) and having control over workplace temperature ($\beta=-0.11$; $p=0.02$) were independently associated with lower menopausal symptoms reporting. These findings may help inform the development of tailored occupational health policies and programs that cater for the needs of older women as they transit through menopause in the workplace. On the other hand, Salimo et al (2020) in their study on fostering work ability among menopausal women suggested that to improve women's job retention across their entire work-life plan, it may be crucial to develop organizational policies, training and activities specifically dedicated to sustaining menopausal women's well-being.

It was revealed further that 60% of the respondents disagreed that the staffrooms are spacious enough for the women undergoing menopause while 14.7% were not sure. A study by Fang (2007) on the effects of poor office environment on the secretary's job performance showed that small floor space and congested nature of offices does not give the secretaries adequate comfort and balance to discharge their duties effectively and efficiently. Similarly, a study by Nanzushi (2015) revealed that a spacious office with enough lighting and devoid of noise would ease increased employees' performance. These corroborated with the findings of Tang et al (2019) that a conducive physical environment would save the employees from work-related strain and increase their performance to the expected standards.

Further findings revealed that 57.1% of the respondents disagreed that there are enough physical facilities for all teachers in the school while 10.3% were not sure. Another 58% of the respondents disagreed that the classrooms are not crowded while 15% were not sure. This implies that with inadequate facilities female teachers' menopausal symptoms tend to exuberate making it difficult for them uncomfortable as they work.

Majority (55.1%) of the respondents disagreed that there are adequate toilets in the schools to meet the needs of female teachers undergoing menopause while 14.7% were not sure. This implies that there were inadequate toilets to meet the needs of female teachers undergoing menopause in Laikipia County. Aidara (2016) asserts that availability of WASH facilities in the workplace will help grant women their right to health and raise their standards of living and lead to higher productivity and greater participation. To the society in general, it will increase equal and equitable access to WASH facilities especially in vulnerable situations. The findings further revealed that 53.9% of the respondents disagreed that there is adequate clean water supply in the schools while 10.3% were not sure. This means that women who are in menopausal lack enough water to cool themselves once hot flashes occur. This corroborates with the findings of a report by Aidara (2016) on the effect of drinking water on work capacity and productivity; that drinking water increases alertness and attention while decreasing water intake leads to confusion and a drop in overall cognitive performance in adults. This collaborates with Hunter (2015) who postulates that provision of adequate and clean drinking water directly influences the rate of absenteeism and this may be due to improved hydration hence improved academic commitment and passion for the students.

The distance from the office to the classrooms posted 56.4% of the respondents disagreeing that it is favourable to female teachers going through menopause while 8.3% were not sure. This implies that the female teachers find moving from their offices to classrooms tiring as they cover long distances to the classrooms. In accordance with Salah (2010), work place design directly affects employees' performance, by determining job satisfaction, employee morale and citizenship. This in return determines the seamless flow of events in an organization as well as employee coordination and efficiency in communication. As a result, it will lead to reduced absenteeism and employee commitment resulting in higher performance.

Further analysis was done to determine whether the female teachers' menopause crisis was influenced by physical environment. The means of responses to items were computed and then transformed into influence of physical environment in managing menopause crisis as presented in Table 2

Table 2: Female Teachers' Means on Influence of Physical Environment on Menopause Crisis

ITEM	MEAN	SD
There are enough physical facilities in this school for all the teachers	1.65	1.254
We have adequate toilets to meet the needs of female teachers undergoing menopause	1.79	1.427
The distance from the office to the classrooms is favourable to female teachers going through menopause	2.27	1.504
The staff room is spacious enough for the women undergoing menopause to feel comfortable	2.97	1.270
There is adequate clean water supply in our school.	2.21	1.449
The classrooms in this school are spacious enough	2.18	1.398
The classes in this school are highly ventilated which is favourable for female teachers going through menopause.	2.25	1.308
The offices in this school are well ventilated	2.81	1.349
The classrooms are crowded which is not favourable for female teachers in this school.	2.03	1.472

The means of the items in table 2 ranged from 1.65 (SD=1.254) to 2.97(SD=1.270). Most of the means were below 2.5 implying that majority of female teachers disagreed with the statements. The SD ranged from 1.270 to 1.504 which was very high. This indicates that there was reasonable variation in the items. The high mean is an indication that physical environment influence menopause crisis among female teachers.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Results indicated that the physical environment has a statistically significant influence on the psychological interventions of menopause crises. Most schools have inadequate physical facilities to support menopausal female teachers especially toilets and that a significant number of schools do not have adequate access to clean water.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings the study recommends the following:

The study recommends that school administrators should always ensure that schools have clean and comfortable toilets that are neither too close nor too far from the staffrooms. They should also ensure that there is enough ventilation in classrooms and work areas. School administrators should also ensure that schools have access to clean tap water.

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