

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**CAUSES AND MANAGEMENT OF STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE: A CASE
STUDY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND
TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS IN KWAZULU-NATAL**

by

Nonhlanhla Prisca Msimango

214582445

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School of Management, IT and Governance

College of Law and Management Studies

Supervisor: Prof JD Taylor

Co-supervisor: Prof TI Nzimakwe

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DECLARATION

I, **Prisca MSIMANGO**, declare that:

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- (ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
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Signed:



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ABSTRACT

The main aim of the study is to examine the causes and management of stress in the workplace using COGTA-KZN as a case study. The intention is to explore and discover the causes and the effects of work-related stress and to add these findings to the existing body of knowledge. A qualitative research design was used to conduct this study. The target population is of levels 2-10, levels 11-12, and levels 13-15 as well as a selection of employees in the office of COGTA-KZN MEC. The researcher scheduled four focus group interviews with the selected study participants, a sample of 20 in total with 5 respondents from each selected category and an in-depth discussion based on the predetermined questions was designed. The respondents included 5 senior managers, 5 middle managers, 5 supervisors in the levels below this category and the other 5 participants were officials in the office of COGTA-KZN MEC. The respondents were purposively selected by the researcher based on their relevance in terms of the study.

The results indicated that employee relationships between COGTA-KZN need serious overhauling to improve relations. Therefore, the study recommends that political cadre deployment should further be explored as there seems to be blurred lines that often border on nepotism and favouritism; often undermining existing staff who have been mentored and coached, for years specifically when new career opportunities present themselves.

Additionally, the study recommends that further research be conducted to establish strategies that government can employ to re-skill the current cohort of employees in order to implement knowledge management effectively from within the current staff. Currently the high staff turnover from within provincial government seems to affect both the employee and the employer, particularly at a senior level.

Key words: Human Resource Management and Development, causes of stress, stress management, stress in the workplace, COGTA-KZN.

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TABLE OF RESPONDENT CODES

Focus Group 1 Levels 2-10	Focus Group 2 Levels 11-12	Focus Group 3 Levels 13-15	Focus Group 4 Office of COGTA- KZN MEC
LB-1	MMS-1	SMS-1	MIN-1
LB-2	MMS-2	SMS-2	MIN-2
LB-3	MMS-3	SMS-3	MIN-3
LB-4	MMS-4	SMS-4	MIN-4
LB-5	MMS-5	SMS-5	MIN-5

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AGSA	Auditor-General of South Africa
APA	American Psychological Association
APP	Annual Performance Plan
BCEA	Basic Conditions of Employment Act
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
COGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
COG	Cooperative Governance
DPLG	Department of Provincial and Local Government
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and valuation
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
EA	Executive Authority
EAP	Employee Assistance Programme
EPMDS	Employee Performance Management System
HCD	Human Capital Development
HOD	Head of Department
HSC	Health and Safety Commission
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IT	Information Technology
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KRA	Key Result Area
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
MEC	Member of Executive Council
MPAT	Management Performance Assessment Tool
MMS	Middle Management Services
MTSF	Medium Term Strategic Framework
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHS	National Health Service
OHSA	Occupational Health and Safety Act
PEC	Provincial Executive Council
PDP	Personal Development Plan
PGDP	Provincial Growth and Development Plan
RET	Radical Economic Transformation
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SARS	South African Revenue Services
SITA	State Information Technology Agency
S&T	Subsistence and Travelling
SMS	Senior Management Services

UK	United Kingdom
USA	United State of America
WHO	World Health Organization
WOW	Working on Wellness

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the intentions of the researcher which are to investigate the causes and management of stress in the workplace: a case study of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The Department has 10 district offices dispersed all around the province and, as at December 2017, the Department had a staff complement of 1900 employees. For the purposes of this study, COGTA-KZN has been selected as a case study.

This chapter unpacks the research cognitive interest, the research type, the research aims, and research paradigms. This chapter discusses the methodology that has been applied in conducting the study which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three of the study. Habermas' (1972), cited in Scott (2004, p. 408-414) in his theory of 'Cognitive Interests', states that cognitive interests are determined by what people produce after they have been motivated by certain interests. Following this line of thought, du Plooy et al., (2014, p. 21) explain that cognitive interest relates to aspirations of research and justification for conducting research. According to du Plooy (2014), there are three distinct categories, viz: the "empirical-analytical sciences, the historical-hermeneutic or phenomenological and the critical-oriented sciences".

To give a reader a holistic overview, the three cognitive research interests are:

- The empirical-analytical research is a science that is empirical and technical and is aimed at drawing out causes and effects of relationships. This science is closely aligned to positivism;
- The historical-hermeneutic phenomenological is yet another science which is practical and is aimed at in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, it is closely aligned to interpretivism; and
- The critical oriented sciences which are emancipatory and are related to critical realism.

The main aim of these sciences is to empower people through knowledge.

For this empirical research, the historical-hermeneutic phenomenological approach was selected to guide the study as it aimed at in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. Most importantly, it is important to state that cognitive interests determine the aims of research and the reasoning for its application to problem statements (Thomas, and Brubaker, 2000). Moreover, they assist the researcher to determine worthy phenomena to be investigated, which would guide its research

methods (du Plooy et al., 2014, p. 24). According to Palys (2008), cited in bsapp Online, (2017) there are two different types of research: - 'Applied research' and 'Basic research'. The purpose of applied research is to address current problems, as opposed to basic research which augments the already existing body of knowledge. The research being undertaken may be either obtrusive or non-obtrusive (Groenewald, 2004, p. 45). The former is where the researcher highlights circumstances that can act as a stimulus for participants to respond in a particular predetermined manner. The latter is where the researcher evades the influence of subjects (bsapp Online, December 2017). This is a basic/ applied study which aims to explore the theoretical frameworks of interpretivism and transformative paradigms which are known to contribute to the in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being explored (Guba, and Lincoln, 2005).

In social science, 'exploratory research' is characterised as a brief, fleeting, and preliminary stage in the research process that gives way to the real thing (Stebbins, 2001, p. 5). In concurrence with this view, Saunders et al., (2012) suggests that exploratory research design does not necessarily intend to provide final and conclusive answers to research questions, but it will explore the research topic. It has been noticed that "exploratory research is the initial research, which forms the basis of more conclusive research (Rofianto, 2011). It delves into new problems on which little or no previous research has been conducted. Unstructured interviews are popular primary data collection methods with this research (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2012). The research aims to explore the causes and management of stress in the workplace using COGTA-KZN as a study site. The research has both elements of primary and secondary objectives. The primary objectives reveal the causes and the effects of work-related stress within COGTA-KZN. The secondary objectives aim to determine how COGTA-KZN employees, across various levels, experience and manage workplace stress; describe the factors that invoke or minimise stress, explore the role of organisational structure and assess the climate for reducing or increasing stress.

Exploratory research intends to explore the research questions and does not intend to offer final and conclusive solutions to existing problems. According Saunders et al., (2012) exploratory research is conducted in order to gain clarity and to establish priorities and finally arrive at an improved, final research design (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2012, p. 2). This research applies both interpretivist and transformativism paradigms. The term paradigm is understood differently by various scholars. MacNaughton et al., (2001), cited in Thanh1 and Thanh2 (2015, p. 24-27), defines a research paradigm as comprising three core elements, viz: a belief about the nature of knowledge, a methodology and criteria for validity. In support, Neuman (2000) and Cresswell (2003) equally cited in Thanh1 and Thanh2 (2015, p. 24-27) define paradigms as: "epistemology or ontology, or even research methodology". According to Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) in Thanh1 and Thanh2 (2015, p.

24-27) theoretical paradigms are explained as positivist (post-positivist), constructivist, interpretivist, transformative, emancipatory, critical, pragmatism and deconstructivist. Cohen and Manion, Creswell (2003) and Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2011), cited in Thanh1 and Thanh2 (2015, p. 24-27) further claim that interpretivist researchers find reality through the participant's views.

For the purpose of this study, the two paradigms used are described as follows:

- Interpretivist paradigm:

This paradigm allows space for the world's view to be through the eyes and perceptions of participants. In looking for empirical 'truths' the investigator follows the interpretive paradigm using the participant's perspective to construct a particular view (Thanh1 and Thanh2, 2015, p. 24).

Leitch, et al., (2010, p. 538) define interpretivism as "life-world ontology that argues observations of theory and value-laden which seeks to investigate the social world that it is not, and cannot be the pursuit of a detached objective truth".

This study seeks to explore the causes and management of stress in the workplace through the case study of the Department of COGTA-KZN. This is for the purpose of exploring and interpreting the factors that contribute to the causes and effects of work-related stress. As stated, the cognitive interest of the study is grounded upon empirical and historical hermeneutic sciences and the study seeks to analyse the causes and the effects of stress at COGTA-KZN.

- Transformativism paradigm

Mertens (2009) explains that the 'transformative' paradigm provides a very timely and provocative addition to research by applying theoretical insight and a practical hands-on approach. It explores a socially meaningful way of understanding this paradigm (Mertens, (2009), cited in Chouinard, (2010, p. 265).

Mertens (2010) in Cresswell (2014) further argues that a 'transformative' worldview needs to be interlocked with the political change agenda to break the chains of social oppression through an action agenda for reform. Moreover, precise and relevant issues must to be addressed in order to deal with social issues (Mertens, (2010), cited in Creswell, 2014, p. 9).

1.2 Stress in the workplace: overview

As many have said, work-related stress is associated with a number of variables that have been explored and investigated by many other writers, including the researcher. The definition of stress varies from scholar to scholar. The term 'stress' in general is used in everyday speech in a loose and

non-specific way to refer broadly to the process of coping with life's pressures and problems and the negative feelings this can generate (Bano and Jha, 2012, p. 1). Stress is a word which is rarely clearly understood by many and there is no single definition of the term as it means different things to different people (Selye, 1983). In some instances, this could be as a result of something pleasant or unpleasant, such as getting married, being made redundant, growing older, securing or losing a job, too much or too little work and excessive working hours (Leka, Griffiths and Cox, 2004, p. 4). Similarly, Lin et al., (2013) in Nekzada and Tekeste (2013) perceive stress "as a representation of a situation where a person is under pressure and does not have sufficient ability to cope with it, moreover this may indicate a direct negative reaction both, for individual and organisation by undermining the original of goals attainment" (Lin, Kain and First, (2013) as cited in Nekzada and Tekeste 2013, p. 14).

Fletcher (2006) in Rumbold et al., (2012) sees stress as a "continuous process that involves individual transacting with their environments, making appraisals of the situations they find themselves in, and endeavouring to cope with any issues that may arise" (Fletcher (2006), cited in Rumbold et al., 2012, p. 173).

Similarly, Parker and Ettinger (2007), cited in Nekzada and Tekeste (2013, p. 1), perceive this phenomenon as a "demand on energy". Equally, Ross and Altmaier (1994, p. 1) describe occupational stress as an "accumulation of stressors associated with job-related situations that are considered stressful". These writers maintain that these situations include a stressful work environment that has many demands placed upon the employee with little time in which to meet these demands and at some point this will produce increasing criticism from supervisors (Ross and Altmaier, 1994, p. 1).

Likewise, Blaug, Kenyon and Lekhi (2007, p. 5) distinguish work-related stress as "pressure and extreme demands placed on a person beyond his or her ability to cope". Concurrently, Stranks (2005, p. 386) outlines stress as "a psychological state which can cause an individual to behave dysfunctionally at work and results from people's response to an imbalance between job demands and their abilities to cope".

To explain this phenomenon, workplace stress arises when employees try to cope with tasks, responsibilities or other forms of pressures connected with their jobs, but encounter difficulty, strain, anxiety and worry in endeavouring to cope (Stranks, 2005, p. 2). According to Stranks, (2005), stressful events and circumstances at work could be a result of inefficient management, lack of decision-making by management, excessive working hours, and uncertainty as to future employment prospects and the pressure of the job. All these are causes of stress described by employees in different studies Stranks, (2005), cited in Aquino and Thau, 2009, p. 3).

Poor staffing resources, career dissatisfaction and ill-health are some of the factors that also contribute to stress, according to Leka, Griffiths and Cox, 2004, p. 5). A satisfactory job is likely to be one where the pressures on employees are appropriate in relation to their abilities and resources made available, to the amount of control they have over their work and to the support they receive from people who matter to them.

Health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, but a positive state of complete physical, mental and social well-being (World Health Organisation Online, November 2015). A healthy working environment is argued to be one in which there is not only an absence of harmful conditions, but an abundance of health-promoting ones. These may include continuous assessment of risks to health, the provision of appropriate information and training on health issues and the availability of health-promoting organisational support practices and structures. A healthy work environment is one in which staff have made health and health promotions a priority as part of their working lives (World Health Organisation Online, November 2015).

1.3 The Research problem of stress in the workplace

The study focuses on a whole range of factors that relate to reducing the effects of stress in the workplace. The researcher intends to explore stress causes in the workplace and to explore management interventions, health promotions, proposed and existing health programmes, and the effectiveness of the existing programmes. The financial cost implications of job stress and/ or health programmes will be explored and, lastly, an outline will be proposed for possible strategies to mitigate these factors which affect both the employers and employees in the workplace.

"Work and health are such important components of our lives and cannot be separated," Chosewood, MD, senior medical officer at NIOSH, session on Total Worker Health™ (Weir, 2013, p. 40). "What happens at work doesn't stay at work, and what happens at home doesn't stay at home", Chosewood emphasised (Kirsten Weir Online, 2013, p. 40).

This explains how stress has become a common phenomenon among employers and employees. Increasingly, it appears that stress levels are changing rapidly among employees for various reasons. Employees experience and often feel stressed continuously and, therefore, the reactions of stress in the workplace are not a separate aspect (Nekzada and Tekeste, 2013, p. 1). The writers explain that stress at work is also increasing due to external factors such as technological advancement and changes in the economy of a country. Moreover, stress is also bound to occur in multinational companies where operations are global and employees have different cultural backgrounds. Besides

stress that could be caused by family or personal problems, stress at work has become an even greater problem because of job restructuring, globalisation and more demand on the tasks at hand (Nekzada and Tekeste, 2013, p. 1-2).

Primarily, these factors may lead to higher job insecurity, which would make employees feel stressed and distressed (Tennant, 2001, p. 697). Consequently, work-related stress is a major cause of occupational ill-health, poor productivity and human error (Rajgopal, 2010, p. 63–65). Consequently, increased sickness, absence, high staff turnover, poor performance in an organisation and a possible increase in accidents due to human error occur (Health and Safety Executive, 2007, p. 2).

In support of this, studies have established that there are several factors that contribute to episodes of stress in the workplace (some of these are discussed in figure 1 below by Bloisi et al., (2007, p. 313), they provide a clear overview of the causes of stress from personal, organisational and environmental points of view, illustrating that the likelihood of being affected by stress is as a result of personality types.

Model of the stress process

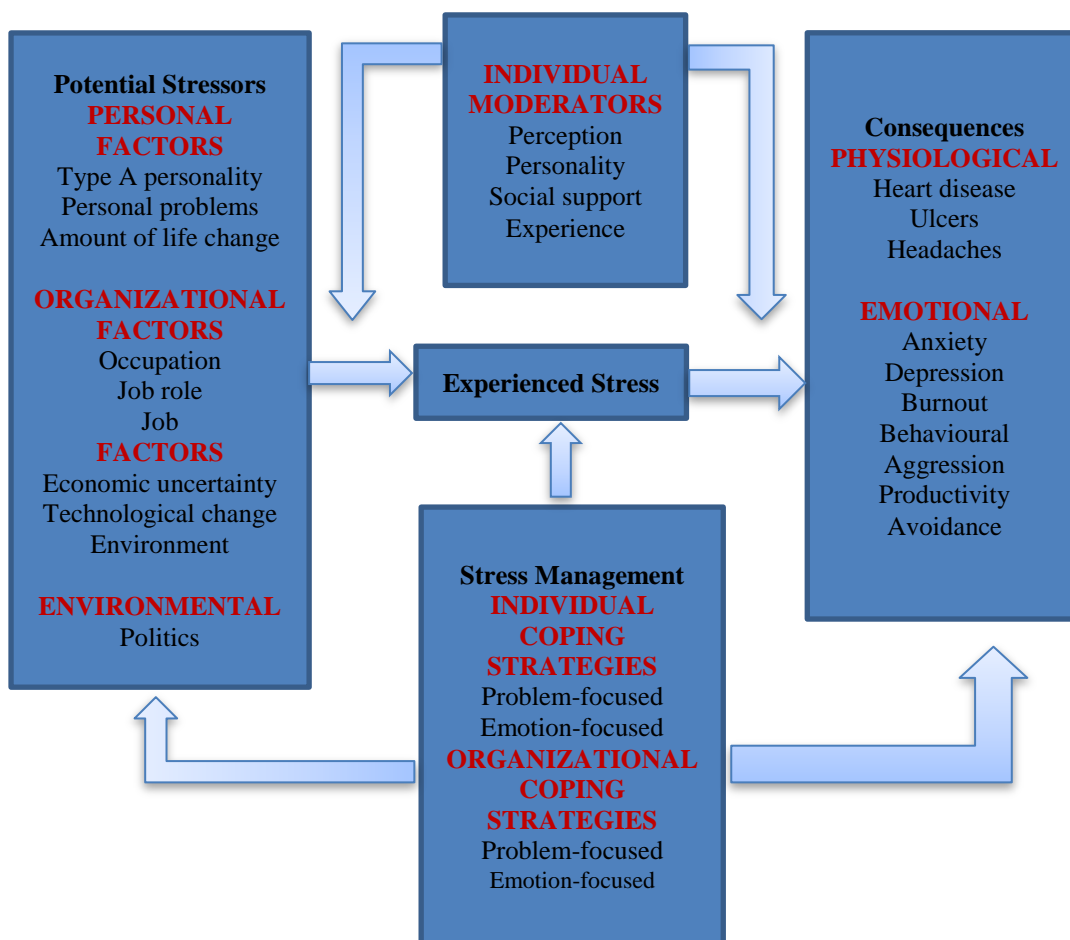


Figure 1. Source: (Bloisi et al., (2007), cited in Nekzada and Tekeste, 2013, p. 24).

In explaining the model, Nekzada and Tekeste, (2013, p. 24) show the arrows in the model that indicate the relationships and the linkage of ideas. Figure 1 as illustrated, demonstrates that type 'A' personalities are more affected by stress. The changes that could occur in one's life are also considered as one of the causes of stress besides the number of personal problems faced by employees. The organisational factors are explained as factors that take place in the workplace and these are related inter alia, to the type of job, workplace environment and the duties to be performed by employees (Bloisi et al., 2007, p. 313).

While the environmental factors that cause workplace stress are stated as changes that are uncontrollable such as redundancy, and downsizing, for example, some of the technological factors change rapidly i.e. softwares and computerised systems change all the time. Figure 1 further emphasises the coping strategies of both employees and organisations as far as problem-focused and emotional-focused mechanisms are concerned. It also describes the physiological, emotional and behavioral consequences that can arise when stress is experienced (Bloisi et al., 2007, p. 313 cited in Nekzada and Tekeste, 2013, p. 24).

The workplace factors that have been found to be associated with stress and health risks can be categorised as those related to the content of work, those related to the social and organisational context of work, as well as those that are intrinsic to the job including long hours, work overload, time pressure, difficult or complex tasks, lack of breaks, lack of variety, and poor physical work conditions, for example, space, temperature, and lights (Bloisi, Cook and Hunsaker, (2007), cited in Nekzada and Tekeste, 2013, p. 25).

The literature review broadly discusses the purpose of this study, including the effects of stress on employees and the organisation and, additionally, applies the possibilities of stress affecting ill-health as this has become a topical subject with many organisations. This research at COGTA-KZN specifically focuses on how employee stress impacts negatively on services rendered by the Department, and on what measures the Department has put in place to remedy the situation in terms of management interventions such as existing health promotions and programmes; what financial implications workplace stress has on the Department in comparison with health services being currently provided and what communication strategies are being utilised by both managers and employees in relation to this phenomenon and what furthers their effectiveness.

1.4 Research problem and the significance of the study

The research problem is to find a management intervention and strategies to eliminate causes of workplace stress at COGTA-KZN. The Department is service-delivery driven and its mission is to

“co-ordinate and foster co-operation amongst governance institutions and build capacity to accelerate delivery of high quality services to communities” (Strategic Planning report, November, 2017). The demand to deliver equitable services to communities’ places high stress levels on all responsible officials of the Department.

As previously explained, workplace stress has several serious positive and negative, emotional, physical and financial implications for both the organisation and employees if not attended to. This has been highlighted in the study of Nekzada and Tekeste (2013), where they indicate that an individual’s health can be affected by both positive and negative stress influenced by different events. Implications of a significant incident such as the absence of adequate leadership can cause conflict between employers and employees and this can be a source of stress within an organisation. Often, this will include lack of control over a situation or an event, uncertainty, ambiguity or a poor performance related to expectation levels (Parker and Ettinger, 2007, p. 350).

Typically, the activities include the organising of teamwork, which is marked as a usual process and not related to stress under normal situations. Whereas working in an isolated environment can cause discomfort among the employees. Such environments are referred to as a capsule environment, meaning a community which is remote from home, families and friends. This creates stress because of a lack of security in one’s life where loved ones and friends are not close (Fairbrother, and Warn (2003), cited in Nekzada and Tekeste, 2013, p. 9).

The problems, as stated above, motivated the researcher to think about what could possibly cause stress for employees within the department COGTA-KZN. Could it be, for example, that the employees are required to work with people from different diverse cultures? Could it be that in the department work is connected and interrelated? Or is it the fact that the physical environment is too demanding? The researcher is also curious to establish how employees address and manage their work-related stress and what measures are taken by the organisation to solve this. All these questions have motivated the researcher to embark upon the research with specific reference to this department.

While deliberating and reading on the topic at hand, the researcher came across the following information cited by WHO Online, November (2015), which states that pressure at the workplace is unavoidable due to the demands of the contemporary work environment. Pressure perceived as acceptable by an individual may even keep workers alert, motivated, able to work and learn, depending on the available resources and personal characteristics. However, when that pressure becomes excessive or otherwise unmanageable it leads to stress. Stress can damage an employees' health and the business performance (World Health Organisation Online, November 2015).

Van Zyl (2002, p. 64-69), in his workplace stress comparison study with overseas countries, found that South Africans experience abnormal high levels of stress with remarkable pressure exerted by the requirements of legislation such as the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 where the working force has to be representative of all racial groups in South Africa within employment sector organisations. According to him, this places an additional burden and stress on employers to achieve that goal, sometimes even to the disadvantage of capable workers who cannot be selected or promoted (Van Zyl, 2002, p. 64-69).

The study further investigates the effects of the recruitment and selection process within the Department and the effectiveness thereof, the organisational structure and climate in reducing or increasing work-related stress that may be possible contributors to workplace stress. Additionally, the study explores management intervention and strategies through staff wellness programmes that the Department has put in place, identifies gaps to be strengthened and any other strategies that may support staff in that regard. The study attempts to improve public management's coherent approach; the health and wellness strategy; communication strategies and the recruitment and selection policy, which staff should also take into account and which should include economic, social, and environmental problems that could have a negative impact on the work environment.

1.5 Research objectives

These are objectives which the researcher envisages to achieve within a specified timeframe commensurate with available resources at their disposal. These objectives subscribe to the SMART principles i.e. simple; measurable; attainable; realistic and time bound. Furthermore, these research objectives underline planning and strategic activities (InvestorWords Online, December 2017).

The objectives of this study are:-

- To determine how COGTA-KZN employees, across various levels, experience and manage stress;
- To describe the factors that invokes or minimise stress at COGTA-KZN; and
- To explore the role of organisational structure and climate in reducing or increasing work-related stress.

1.6 Key research questions

For the purposes of this study, the following key research questions were proposed:-

- How do COGTA-KZN employees, across various levels, experience and manage stress?
- What are the factors that invoke or minimise stress at COGTA-KZN?

- What is the role of organisational structure and climate in reducing or increasing work-related stress at COGTA-KZN?

The section below briefly highlights the research design and methods that the researcher has selected to guide the study. The research terms are unpacked and discussed briefly under the headings: cognitive interest, research type, research aims, the research paradigms, the research design, research strategy, data collection methods, sampling size and selection, data quality control and data presentation and analysis.

1.7 Research design

The research design alludes to the entire strategy that one applies to the various components of the study in a rational and logical manner to ensure that the research problem is addressed with efficacy. The design has foundations which constitute the blueprints for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data (De Vaus Online, (2001), accessed, December 2017). In addition, the function of a research design is to ensure that proof is obtained which enables the researcher to address the research problem with logic and effectiveness (Zawawi, Online, October 2011). Furthermore, research strategy initiates logical systems to obtain information from relevant people to investigate a research problem generally entailing an observable phenomenon (Creswell, 2014, p. 110).

According to Creswell (2014), research designs are divided into three categories, namely: qualitative; quantitative and mixed methods designs. A review of these designs shows that they follow a similar pattern. For example, the author announces a problem and justifies why it needs to be studied. The problem is presented in the introduction and will vary depending on the approach (Creswell, 2014, p. 110). The three categories of these research designs, as stated by Creswell (2014) are discussed in Chapter Three of this study.

A phenomenological research strategy has been employed to inform and guide the study as its goal is to describe a 'lived experience' of a phenomenon.

1.8 Research strategy

A research strategy is a step-by-step plan of action that gives direction to thoughts and efforts, enabling one to conduct research systematically and on schedule to produce quality results and detailed reporting (Willis, 2007). This enables the study to stay focused on the research problem thereby enhancing the quality of the study through efficacy in the utilisation of time and resources.

The research strategy is the ‘nuts and bolts’ of the study’s application (Barsan-Cayro, 2014) describing the rationale for the research and the experiments and appropriate tools, data quality control mechanisms and, ultimately, the presentation of data which will deliver the desired goals (Creswell, 2014, p. 14).

Accordingly, there are five research tradition strategies namely: grounded theory, phenomenological, ethnography, narrative research and the participatory case study (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). These five traditional strategies of research are all related to the qualitative research method; however they differ in attaining one’s goals and intentions as intended by the study (Occupytheory Online, November 2016 and Milliken, 2010). The strategies are explored in Chapter Three.

Phenomenological research has been selected as the research strategy to guide this study as it focuses on the lived experience within a particular group. The fundamental goals of this approach are to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon which is what this study intends to do (Creswell, 2014, p. 14-15).

1.9 Data collection methods

In conducting this research, the researcher obtained valuable information from the literature review as well as the review of applicable legislation pertaining to causes and management of work-related stress. Babbie and Mouton (2001, p. 310) claim that there are various well-known methods of qualitative data collection: observations, in-depth interviews, focus groups, documents archives and historical research. The researcher used all of these collection methods.

The ‘primary data’ were collected in the form of in-depth, interviews using an interview guide with open-ended and closed-ended questions. Open-ended questions help to obtain respondents' views, their interpretations and their experiences in the way they understand them (Babbie and Mouton, 2001, p. 233). The predetermined questions were used to initiate discussions and the interviewer followed up the discussion angle by asking further questions not included in the interview guide. This interview format allowed respondents freedom to express themselves fully and allowed the interviewer space to pursue lines of enquiry opened up by the interview. Semi-structured interviews are suitable because they allow rich and detailed information to be collected and they create a quality context for the phenomenon under study (Rule and John, 2011, p. 65). The focus of the interviews was on gaining insight into possible causes of workplace stress and strategies employed to manage stress at COGTA-KZN.

The 'secondary data' were collected from readily available data sources such as the Department's annual reports and documents, government documents, journals and any other available historical and current literature on workplace stress and measures for managing this.

1.10 Sampling, size and selection

Sampling is a process of selecting a small portion of the population to represent the entire or target population in a research study (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2002, p. 112). Punch (2005, p. 35) defines a sample as "a subset of the entire population from which data is collected for a research study". Mugo, (2010) further states that qualitative sample sizes tend to be small, with no statistical grounds for guidance. Furthermore, the sample size here is usually a function of the purpose of the study in the light of its sampling frames and practical constraints (Punch, 2005, p. 57).

Accordingly Ryan (2011), non-probability sampling represents a group of sampling techniques that help researchers to select units from a population that they are interested in studying. Collectively, Laerd (2012), these units form the sample that the researcher studies. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used the following sampling methods which are discussed in Chapter Three:-

- Purposive sampling; and
- Quota sampling.

The researcher scheduled four focus group interviews with the selected study participants that involved a sample of 20 in total with five respondents from each selected category and conducted in-depth discussions based on the predetermined questions designed to guide the discussions. The respondents included five SMS, five MMS, five LB category participants and the other five participants were drawn from the office of COGTA-KZN MEC. The respondents were selected by the researcher based on their relevance in terms of the study.

To augment focus groups, information was obtained from respondents by conducting individual interviews to enrich the discussions. These individuals were selected using purposive sampling. The individual interviews were conducted with four LB, two MMS, two SMS and two MIN. According to Creswell (2014), purposive sampling features amongst the main types of non-probability sampling methods as stated above (Creswell, 2014, p. 14).

1.11 Data quality control

As scholars of data quality control, Redman et al., (1996, p. 7) argue that the measure and quality of data is determined by its “fit for use and purpose”. Furthermore, it must resonate with properties, i.e. relevance, accuracy, timeliness, accessibility and clarity of results, comparability, coherence and completeness (Juran and Godfrey, 1999). The study explored controls such as trustworthiness, credibility, conformability, dependability and transferability. All these controls are further discussed in Chapter Three of the study.

1.12 Data presentation and analysis

The analysis and interpretation for this study concentrated on the responses. As well as data collected from a review of related literature. The analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis and Thematic analysis both of which are discussed in Chapter Four.

The research was further guided by the following general procedures for content analysis, as presented by Phakathi (2008, p. 48):

- Familiarisation and immersion;
- Inducing a main theme and sub-themes;
- Coding; and
- Interpretation and checking.

1.13 Ethical considerations

Ethics in research is an essential factor to ensure that individuals involved in the research are not offended or hurt when the researcher conducts the study, and also that nobody experiences contradicting outcomes from the research. It was important that ethical issues were considered before the research was planned and conducted.

1.14 Rights of the participant

The participants who engaged in this study were not harmed and were informed ahead of time of their right to withdraw at any time from the study.

1.15 Confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality implies that information gathered from the respondents will not be revealed to people in general nor made accessible to colleagues, subordinates or management. All participants were informed of this ethical requirement. The University of KwaZulu-Natal, like any other University, has its own ethics policy. In this study, the researcher adhered to all the required UKZN ethical considerations. For example, all respondents were informed of what the research was about and what it sought to achieve. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that confidentiality was maintained. This was done by not requiring the respondents to indicate their identity, and ensuring that anonymity was maintained throughout the study. The respondents were also informed that one was not forced to participate and could withdraw at any time should they feel so without any negative consequences. The respondents were informed about this by way of the letter of informed consent. The specimen of this letter is attached to this dissertation in the form of an annexure.

1.16 Limitations to the study

The main limitation to this study concerned the time and availability of participants as COGTA-KZN has a demanding work environment. The researcher worked proactively to ensure that all interviews were conducted as per the work schedule. Due to the sensitive nature of the study, some of the respondents did not fully disclose objective responses. Furthermore, respondents did not have total trust in the intentions and reasoning of the study.

1.17 Outline of the chapters

Chapters	Headings
Chapter 1	Introduction and background of the study
Chapter 2	Causes and management of stress in the workplace
Chapter 3	Research methodology
Chapter 4	Data presentation and analysis
Chapter 5	Research conclusion and recommendations

1.18 Chapter summary

This chapter introduced the intentions of the researcher by investigating the broad research problem which is the causes and management of stress in the workplace. In order to unpack the problem

statement, a research design and methods had to be carefully selected. Research design was understood to involve the logic of the research and the end product, with the point of departure being the research problem or question, whilst research methods were perceived as a research process and procedures, and the point of departure being the specific tasks. Here, the researcher opted to use the narrative research; grounded theory and the case study as guiding strategies. To engage the study adequately the researcher employed the in-depth interviews; focus groups; documents and archives as data collection tools.

Due to the magnitude of the study and population size, non-probability sampling was used to enable purposive sampling, quota and volunteer samplings to select a suitable sample for the study. Through the accurate sampling techniques, data presentation and analysis was credible and dependable and the quality of data verified this. However, the unavailability of some staff members posed a limitation to the study which was remedied upon availability. Moreover, some staff members needed more probing by the researcher to extract objective information of current realities to the problem statement.

The next chapter, Chapter Two presents the causes and management of stress in the workplace.

CHAPTER TWO

CAUSES AND MANAGEMENT OF STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the causes and management of stress in the workplace as a main topic of discussion, and it forges a linkage to theoretical frameworks. This chapter also explores the comparative distinctness of stress between the South African Public and Private sectors as well as International views on the concept of stress. This study will follow the model of Michie (2002, p. 67-72) who analyses stress and the sources of stress, together with buffers against stress: relationships at work, and the organisational culture. Michie argues that, “managers who are critical, demanding, unsupportive or bullying create stress, whereas a positive social dimension of work and good team working reduces it” (Michie, 2002, p. 67-72).

Moreover, this chapter is augmented by the discussion of Public Administration’s theory and practices; type of stressors; signs and symptoms and causes of stress both at work and home are argued. As a result of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, the chapter covers the consequences, management and interventions thereof. In conclusion, the chapter looks at the synthesis and evaluation of appropriate literature.

The researcher found it advisable that, prior to the discussion, the concept of stress in the workplace and its historical background should be explored.

2.2 Stress in the workplace: historical and contemporary overviews

Historically, the typical response from employers to stress within the workplace environment has been to blame the victim of stress, rather than its root cause (Michie, 2002, p. 67). Several scholars have written about this concept and have provided different meanings and definitions over the years. Originally, it was conceived of as pressure from the environment, then as strain within the person (Bano and Jha, 2012, p. 12). The generally accepted definition today is one of interaction between the situation and the individual. It is the psychological and physical state that results when the resources of the individual are not sufficient to cope with the demands and pressures of the situation (Anderson and Arnoult, 1989, p. 102). Stress is more likely in some situations than in others and in some

individuals rather than in others. Stress can undermine the achievement of goals, both for individuals and for organisations (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995, p. 99).

Alongside, the definition given by Fletcher (2002) that stress is “a continuous process that involves individual transacting with their environments, making appraisals of the situations they find themselves in, and endeavouring to cope with any issues that may arise” (Fletcher, (2006), cited in Rumbold et al., 2012, p. 173). The scholar further states that “stress represents a situation where a person is under pressure and does not have sufficient ability to cope with it”.

Signs of stress can be seen in people’s behaviour, especially changes in behaviour. Acute responses to stress may be in the areas of feelings, behaviour, thinking or physical symptoms. If stress persists, there are changes in neuro-endocrine, cardiovascular, autonomic and immunological functioning, leading to mental and physical ill health (Bano and Jha, 2012, p. 12).

Situations that are likely to cause stress are those that are unpredictable or uncontrollable, uncertain, ambiguous or unfamiliar, or involving conflict, loss or performance expectations. Moreover, stress may be caused by time limited events, such as the pressures of examinations or work deadlines, or by ongoing situations, such as family demands, job insecurity, or long commuting journeys (Fairbrother and Warn, 2003, p. 10).

Resources that help to meet the pressures and demands faced at work include personal characteristics such as coping skills and the work situation such as a good working environment and social support (Lin et al., 2013, p. 3). According to Lin et al., (2013), these resources can be increased by investment in work infrastructure, training, good management and employment practices, and the manner in which work is organised.

Michie (2002) argues that this has changed as employers have now an obligation in terms of legislative prescriptions to ensure that work is properly managed and employees do not become ill. This works in their favour as it’s in their long-term economic interests to limit stress and this is likely to lead to less staff turnover (Michie, 2002, p. 67-68). An increase in (sickness) absence and early retirement increased stress in those staff still at work reduced work performance, increased rate of accidents and reduced client satisfaction (Bano and Jha, 2012, p. 12).

Good employment practice includes assessing the risk of stress amongst employees. This involves looking for pressures at work which could cause high and long-lasting levels of stress and deciding who might be harmed by these. Further, deciding whether you are doing enough to prevent that harm (Thorgren and Wincent, 2013, p. 20-36).

Previous studies have also shown that there are several workplace factors contributing to stress (Rumbold, Flichter and Daniels, 2012, p. 3). The workplace is an important source of both demands and pressures causing stress, and structural and social resources to counteract it (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009, p. 7). The workplace factors that have been found to be associated with stress and health risks can be categorised as those to do with the content of work and those to do with the social and organisational context of work. Those that are intrinsic to the job include long hours, work overload, time pressure, difficult or complex tasks, lack of breaks, lack of variety, and poor physical work conditions (Tennant, 2001, p. 11).

Lin et al., (2013, p. 12) point out that ambiguous roles and duties of staff often cause stress and that managers who are critical, demanding, unsupportive or bullying often create stress, whereas a positive social dimension of work and a good team spirit reduces it (Lin, Kain and First, 2013, p. 12).

In attempt to respond to the causes of stress and the management of it, scholars have made several recommendations on the subject. These recommendations did not only pay attention to the causes of workplace stress, but also emphasised intervention strategies and possible management programmes on how to mitigate this challenge in the workplace. In the study of Occupational Stress Management Programmes conducted by DeFrank and Cooper (1996), the scholars argued that occupational stress is rife in Western societies as opposed to other societies (DeFrank and Cooper (1996), cited in van der Hek and Plomp, 1997, p. 133). The scholars stated that the correlation between stress and diseases has been revealed over years, which leads to socio-economic challenges made manifest through high staff turnover, absenteeism, incapacitated personnel and consistent costs paid by employers as a result of ill health (van der Hek and Plomp, 1997, p. 133). The study additionally estimated that 50 per cent of absenteeism due to workplace stress in the Netherlands increased between 1981-1994 from 21 to 30 per cent whilst these employees were paid but were at home and very few returned to active duty.

Furthermore, van der Hek et al., (1997) argued that the above statement implied that professional practitioners had limited insight into the subject matter and relied heavily on primitive instincts when they attempted to develop desperately needed defensive and restorative stress-management interventions, therefore, the scholars launched a review on the same subject in 1989 (van der Hek et al., 1997, p. 133).

Newman and Beehr (1979), van der Hek and Plomp (1997) discovered that significant strides have been achieved in terms of stress management, thus ensuring that more systematic and rigorous methods are used in dealing with it (van der Hek and Plomp, 1997, p. 133). Likewise, the scholars suggested that stress migrates and evolves over time with the conditions to which it is subjected. Furthermore, in their published works during the years 1987-1994, they showed that a good

employer-employee relationship results in a better “person-environment-fit”. This, however, can only happen when the employer provides additional support to employees on extrinsic factors and social support to ensure job satisfaction (van der Hek and Plomp, 1997, p. 133-135).

Michie, (2002) in a similar study titled ‘causes and management of stress at work’ agrees with the previous two scholars. He (2002) initially perceived workplace stress as a conceived pressure from the environment rather than strain within the person and later generally agreed with the recently accepted determination that workplace stress is as a result of an interaction between the situation and the individual but not overlooking internal and external factors as they both, equally, play a role to this phenomenon (Michie, 2002, p. 67).

Furthermore, Michie (2002, p. 68) argues that it is a psychological and physical state that results when the resources of the individual are not sufficient to cope with the demands and pressures of the situation. This argument is backed by the study on Parenting Stress, Dinnertime Rituals, and Child Well-being in Working-Class Families, conducted by Yoon; Newkirk; and Perry-Jenkins (2015, p. 63). In this study, the scholars stress an important argument in favour of education which results in better working conditions. These scholars argue that employees at the lower strata are often confronted with significantly higher levels of stress than their counterparts who are in higher echelons of management. For example, the working class are often faced with stressful working conditions involving variable work shifts, limited time off, limited benefits and often unpaid family responsibility leave compared with their higher-income earning colleagues. Moreover, the scholars argued that these stresses impact on the well-being and stress levels of the working class. This further creates new challenges for the family (Perry-Jenkins, 2005 cited in Yoon; Newkirk; and Perry-Jenkins 2015, p. 63).

The stress and its management in the workplace will be discussed in detail whilst applying theoretical frameworks.

2.3 The concept of stress management in the workplace

The concept of stress in this study is guided by Michie’s (2002) model of stress and management, which is depicted below in Figure Three. The model shows the importance of employees and their well-being in the workplace. It highlights the individual and organisational needs by focusing on both intrinsic and extrinsic factors as they contribute equally to workplace stress (Michie, 2002, vol. 59, p. 67-72).

The purpose of this model is to look at the causes of workplace stress and to look beyond to the management of it. In his model, Michie (2002) argues that workplace stress can be eliminated alongside related matters that might hinder performance at work (Michie, 2002, p. 67).

The model acknowledges that the workplace is an important source of both demands and pressures which cause stress and it indicates the structural and social resources to counteract it. It argues that workplace factors that have been found to be associated with stress and health risks can be categorised as those to do with the content of work and those to do with the social and organisational context of work. Those that are intrinsic to the job include: long hours, work-overload, time-pressure, difficult or complex tasks, lack of breaks, lack of variety and poor physical work conditions. Similarly, the model also explains that unclear work requirements or conflicting roles and boundaries can cause stress, as can having responsibility for people (Michie, 2002, p. 11).

The model of stress at work is reflected below:

Theoretical Framework diagram

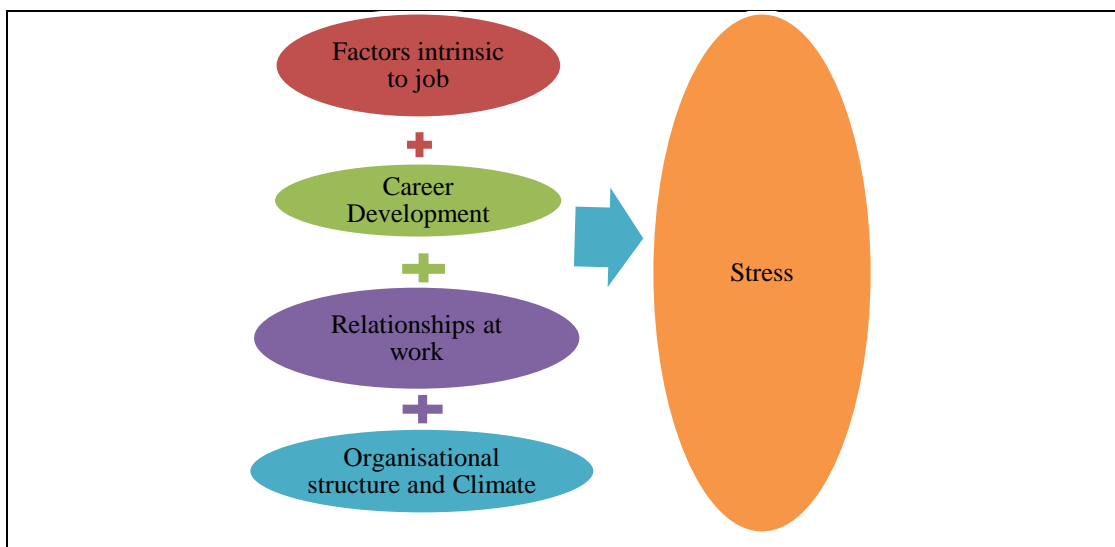


Figure 2. Source: (Michie, S., 2002, p. 67).

The model of stress by Michie above explains different factors that result in workplace stress. Michie argues that there are a plethora of factors that lead to stress, but, focuses exclusively on the organisational structure and its climate as a source of discontent. Michie argues that relationships at work are determined by the organisational structure and the climate, i.e. if the organisational structure is aligned to the budget and job descriptions then you have synergy and less likely to experience workplace stress and its effects. Furthermore, lack of career development causes stress as an individual's progression is determined by growth, physically, emotionally, and financially to meet their obligations.

Bloisi and Hunsaker (2007, p. 9) argue that there are two other sources of stress, or buffers against stress: relationships at work and the organisational culture. They state that, “managers who are critical, demanding, unsupportive or bullying create stress, whereas a positive social dimension of work and good team working reduces it” (Bloisi and Hunsaker, 2007, p. 9). Furthermore, an organisational culture of unpaid overtime or ‘presenteeism’ causes stress. On the other hand, a culture of involving people in decisions, keeping them informed about what is happening in the organisation, and providing good amenities and recreation facilities reduces stress (Bloisi and Hunsaker, 2007, p. 9).

Michie (2002) views ‘organisational change’ as one of the significant sources of stress in organisations, especially when there is no consultation. These changes include mergers, relocation, restructuring, individual contracts and redundancies within the organisation (Michie, 2002, p. 72).

Cooper et al., (2001) note three reasons that have been attributed to stress in the workplace:

- (i) The manager’s perceptions and beliefs about the impact of work environment on levels of employee strain and general well-being;
- (ii) The manager’s beliefs about who is responsible for managing employees’ levels of strain; and
- (iii) The costs associated with making organisation-level changes compared with those related to teaching individuals to cope more effectively (Cooper, Dewe, and O’Driscill, (2001), cited in Brickford, 2005, p. 17).

It can be argued that workplace stress is derived from the non-feasible organisational structure, which may lead to the non-feasible environment which results in unhealthy relations at work. Then, progress in terms of productivity and wellbeing of employees does not occur.

The researcher looks at workplace stress within the South African public and private sectors, as well internationally, to assess the effects of workplace stress in these different spheres.

2.3.1 Stress at work: South African public sector

With the advent of democracy in 1994, the South African Public Sector adhered to the Republic of South Africa Constitution 106 of 1996, which dictates that the country is a multi-party democracy which is democratic and independent with three distinctive, interdependent and interrelated spheres of government: -Local, Provincial and National governments. The Constitution directs that all these three spheres of government be governed by values and principles which have the best interest of the electorate at heart. Their greater developmental goals need to be rendered with efficacy that is transparent to all. Coincidentally, according to The Quarterly Employment Survey conducted by Mc

Carthy, cited in Alexander Forbes Online, June 2015, the public service remains the biggest employer, totalling an increase of 2.16 million in 2008 to 2.69 million at the end of 2014 (Alexander Forbes Online, June 2015). This can further be broken down to 2.37 million people who are employed by government and 322,960 by state-owned enterprises (Staff Writer24 Online, February 2016).

Furthermore, public sector organizations are referred to as state-owned and managed; these organisations are seen to focus mainly on administrative and essential services which primarily oversee to the country's socio-economic conditions. This is in contrast to the private sector that is profit-driven (Macklin, (2006), cited in Baarspul, 2009, p. 6).

Chapter Two of the Constitution, section 24, of 'the Bill of Rights' states that: "everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being". The Constitution provides that every individual conducts themselves as a responsible citizen and respects the rule of law. Chapter 10 of the Constitution speaks specifically to the management of public administration and gives a framework for civil servants to conduct themselves accordingly (Chapman, (2000), cited in Hughes 2012, p.19). Hughes (2012) argues the same that government through ethical civil servants should manage the public purse in a transparent manner (Hughes 2012, p.19).

The transformation was as a result of a rigid and bureaucratic form of public administration which dominated for most of the Twentieth Century that existed prior to 1994 and that was more concerned with procedures and translating policies derived from others, which has now been replaced by a more flexible, result-based form of public management (Hughes, 2012, p. 3). The sector has moved from the 'traditional model' of administration to the new 'management model' system (Hughes, 2012, p. 2). The public management model is assisting the sector to achieve its objectives with efficiency, as well as allowing individuals employed to make informed decisions and subsequently to take responsibility and accountability for end results (Mullins, (1996), cited in Hughes, 2012, p. 3).

It is justifiable to state that workplace stress and its management are not modern phenomena within the public sector in general. Through reading general published works of workplace stress and its management, it has emerged that these have existed within the public sphere since the early years of public administration, but, they were not been taken seriously by the ruling regime (Hughes, 2012, p.3). This resulted in a lack of service delivery within the sector and this has further resulted in various service delivery challenges and public protests. To try and address these challenges encountered by the sector, there has been an on-going transformation in the management of the sector across many parts of the world, not only in South Africa (Hughes, 2012, p. 3).

The application of the new public management as a new approach in re-organising the public sector has meant the emergence of the new paradigm which includes change management' reprioritising of management in governance matters, e-governance, accountability, sustainability, capacity building, clean audits and performance management systems, which did not exist in the old public administration (Hughes, 2012, p. 2-3).

Bearing this in mind, this chapter presents the overall theme of the research and the topic. The discussion reflected on both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that, as previously stated by Michie (2002, p. 67-68), contribute equally to the causes of workplace stress.

In terms of the intrinsic factors, a study conducted by Eriksson, cited in Bizcommunity Online, January, 2012 estimated that R3 billion a year is being lost to workplace stress in the Republic of South Africa (RSA), (Eriksson as cited in Bizcommunity Online, January, 2012). The scholar established that at times when employers needed staff to power companies out of the financial crisis with increased productivity, employees were crumbling and disempowered by stress.

This can be explained by the manner in which RSA government departments are experiencing several challenges of employee workplace stress-related matters including high levels of staff turn-over and incapacity through ill-health. The argument is justified by a holistic overview of the RSA media showing the steady erosion in public confidence and trust in government as a whole. Primarily, this is due to unethical behaviour and practices such as fraud corruption, favouritism, bribery, nepotism, conflicts of interest, patronage and maladministration that is occurring within the public service (Pillay, 2014a). Consequently, this erosion has not only affected the public as recipients of government services, but has also resulted in the absence of confidence and trust from the loyal serving public servants and has impeded their performance (Berman, Bowman, West and Van Wart, 2010, p. 393). The public sector within the RSA government is acknowledged to be going through positive transformation. However there are challenges that are facing the sector such as lack of service delivery across all spheres that have visibly impacted negatively on the wellbeing of employees. To try and manage this, the sector is continuously implementing occupational health and wellness support programmes, structures, systems and continuous guidance from Human Resource Management and Development (HRM&D) policies; frameworks and legislation. Additionally and continuously the sector tries to improve employee's conditions of service through engagements with their representative structures and forums.

These challenges can be modifiable according to Smith (2005). A wide range of studies have shown that a modifiable health risk, that is stress, can be improved through workplace-sponsored preventive medicine and health promotion programmes (Smith (2005), cited in Brickford, 2005, p. 7). The

scholar further states that “despite the widespread acknowledgement of the detrimental impact of stress on individuals and organisations, the amount of attention given by employers to understanding the sources of workplace stress and to alleviating stressful work conditions is relatively small” (Brickford, 2005, p. 17).

2.3.2 Stress at work: South African private sector

There is an explicit disjuncture between the public and private sector’s modality in the rendering of essential services and the application of conditions of service to employees. Van Der Bank et al., (2008, p. 2) argued that there are stark differences between the two sectors in respect of discipline and productivity. To further exacerbate these differences, the private sector is profit-driven with a great emphasis on productivity as opposed to public bureaucracy which can exert undue stress and pressure on public employees (Staff Writer²⁴ Online, February 2016).

A research study conducted during the year 2008-2009 by Absolv absenteeism software, which is a software programme designed by CAM Solutions, generates statistics from 150 000 employees in more than 70 SA companies at least every year, presented existing trends in absenteeism in SA companies during the above specified period. The focus was on ill-health leave due to stress. The information was collected by means of data from doctor-issued sick certificates from employees in various companies and organisations (Human Capital Review Online, September 2016).

This study may have been conducted between the years 2008-2009 an interesting revelation by Absolv is that five years after the study had been conducted, and to this day, the tendencies of the SA workforces on absenteeism are still the same if not worse. The statistics revealed that absenteeism due to stress increased slightly in companies around SA in 2009 when compared to 2008. This was perceived to be in line with the period when the country was facing an economic recession. From January to June 2009, the study showed 3.4 per cent of sick leave cases were due to psychological illness such as stress, anxiety, and depression. In 2008, only 3.1 per cent of all sick absence incidents that were recorded were related solely to general stress.

The same study revealed that, as a result of this economic deterioration in the country, many organisations were forced to reduce their staff. Based on this, employees feared for their jobs and their future careers. Therefore, stress took its toll both emotionally and financially. However, the sporadic emergence of the Global Economic Meltdown has shown that economic factors are not the only cause of stress and disharmony at the workplace. Improper governance principles such as fraud, corruption, favouritism, bribery, nepotism, conflicts of interest and maladministration are some of the recent common influences that heighten stress levels, especially in the private sector. In addition, the study revealed that people took the least amount of sick leave in December and January each year. The

month of December was documented with the lowest absenteeism rate of the year with 1.08 per cent. The month of January followed with 1.43 per cent. It was also noted that this tendency recurred each year.

In each month, the trends were recorded as follows:-

In January and February every year, the research revealed that the biggest reason why employees took time-off was 'gastroenteritis. In March to November each year, 'influenza' was the common cause. In December each year, lower 'back pain' was the main reason people were off-sick.

These three sicknesses were recorded as 'main', followed by others such as respiratory infection and others. According to the Absolv, absenteeism IT programmes, for every 250 working days per annum, sick leave will be at least 1.5 per cent. On average, an employee takes at least 3.75 days of sick per annum. It was further noted in the findings that most organisations in South Africa have a general absenteeism rate of between 3.5 - 6 per cent which is viewed as above acceptable limits.

To back up these findings, Absolv claimed that trends of illness have not changed regardless of the time lapse since the original study. The same common factors affecting the country are reflected below:

- Influenza is a major cause of absenteeism in the South African organizations with an average sick rate of 14.08 per cent;
- A further analysis highlighted that sick leave by men is due to influenza 13,8 per cent of the time;
- Their female counterparts accounted for 11.55 per cent in a 150 000 sample of a target population; Influenza showed a common trend wherein complainants reported more back pain due to influenza;
- Another lead reason for absenteeism amongst men was back pain around the pelvic area;
- For women it was bronchitis that was a leading cause of absenteeism;
- Gastroenteritis accounted for 6.09 per cent of leave taken annually; and
- Depressive disorder was found to be the difference between male and females' sick leave diagnosis (Human Capital Review Online, September 2016).

As much as this study was conducted during South Africa's technical recession the recent challenges are still similar to those of two years ago, i.e. budget reductions, work-loads, high staff turnover etc. (The Guardian Online, June 2015).

In support of these findings, a similar study conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) by the Guardian Organization, provides an international perspective on workplace stress:

2.3.3 Studies at the international level

The effects of workplace stress in the international public sector were the subject of an online survey by the Guardian Organization, conducted in June 2015. This revealed that government cuts are taking a toll on staff performance in the sector. According to the survey, this is as a result of continuous reduced budgets, reduced staff members, higher caseloads and constant red-tape in the name of cost-cutting-measures that employees struggle to keep up with (The Guardian Online, June 2015).

The survey had more than 3,700 participants in jobs differentiating from Social Work to the Police and probation services, from Social Housing to the National Health Service (NHS), charities and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) which took part on this online professional network. The survey findings gave a clear image as it was revealed that some public officials work long hours with few taking breaks. It was noted that 85 per cent of participants, when asked if stress was a fact of life for employees in the public sector, they agreed. For respondents working in probation services the figure rose to 100 per cent.

The study further found that 93 per cent of respondents agreed that their stress originated from work, as they work beyond their contracted hours. On average, respondents put in an extra seven hours a week. Close on one in five said they do not take lunch breaks during their working days, with less than a quarter (24%) enjoying a main break of at least 30 minutes a day. It was also established that budget cuts have a sustained impact on workloads. Social workers, for instance, reported having more work to do and are paid very little. There is fewer staff to deal with cases. Cuts to voluntary personnel also meant fewer external support services for children and families. The phrase 'doing more with less' that government uses to encourage minimum spending, is not only an offence against physics, but it is the frontline workers who bear this ever-increasing work load (The Guardian Online, June 2015).

It is clear that these three studies have offered different results based on their structural context. However the environmental context which leads to stress is similar if it's not identical. The study which was conducted in SA workforces on absenteeism was based on ill-health leave due to stress via the extraction of sampled sick leave notes acquired from different organisations. Even though the study was not specifically geared towards the public sector, it is argued that the public sector formed a huge part of this exercise. As a researcher, and having had an opportunity of working be stated that the research site, that is, COGTA-KZN experiences similar challenges and trends in employee absenteeism. SA studies focused on stress which subsequently resulted in ill-health based on various work-related reasons. It is also noted that this empirical study was done five years ago, though the system is designed for individual organisations to use on an annual basis at their discretion. This study

was done to test the holistic overview of the SA workplace where stress is the cause of growing absenteeism.

The international survey may have focused more on stress as a result of poor working conditions of service specifically faced by public officials. It was observed by the researcher that similar challenges that were identified in the United Kingdom (UK) are also being experienced by all three spheres of the SA government. The literature review confirmed that both the corporate and the public sector are equally subjected to similar trends and strains of workplace-related stress (Human Capital Review Online, October 2016 and The Guardian Online, June 2015).

Michie (2002; p. 67-72) concurs with the above reviews and argues that apart from organisations being aware of their employees stressful conditions at work, situations that are also likely to cause stress may be those that are unknown to the employer as they may be unpredictable or uncontrollable, uncertain, ambiguous, or unfamiliar, or involving conflict, loss or performance expectations. Michie (2002) suggests that stress may also be caused by time-limited events such as the pressures of examinations or work deadlines, or by ongoing situations, such as family demands, job insecurity, and/or long commuting journeys.

Michie recommends two resources that might help to meet the pressures and demands faced at work, which are, firstly: personal characteristics such as coping skills (for example, assertiveness, management of time, and problem solving) and secondly: the work situation should provide a good working environment and social support. Michie believes that these resources can be increased by investing in the setting-up of good work operational structures and systems, capacity building, good management and conditions of service, as well as how work is planned and organised, which are linked to Fredric Taylor's Scientific Management theory of public administration, which is the theory of systems which greatly influenced how public servants are best to be encouraged to work effectively and efficiently (Taylor, p. 59, 67-72).

As much as workplace stress carries equal weight of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, known or unknown to employees and employers, it is argued that employers as mandated by the SA Constitution, 108 of 1996 have a bigger role to play in the management of this phenomenon. There is a need for serious measures, strategies and mechanisms to curb and help reduce workplace stress as it carries serious implications for both employees and employers and manifests itself in different forms of ill-health and in compromised service delivery.

The following section presents literature on organisational theories and strategies that could be used in the public sector.

2.4 Public Administration theory and practices

2.4.1 Institutional theory

The researcher regarded institutional theory as relevant in support of this study. According to Scott (2004, p. 408), institutions “are significantly large and important associations established by people for a significant practice, relationships in society or culture as a social pattern that shows a particular productive process. To keep social order, institutions depend on rules, procedures, protocols, sanctions, habits and practices”. Scott further states that “deeper and more resilient aspects of social structures considers the processes by which structures; including rules, norms, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behaviour”. Importantly, he adds that “work arrangements are not pre-ordained by economic laws, but are shaped as well by political, cultural and social processes so that behaviours are not so much socially influenced as socially constructed” (Scott, 2004, p. 408-414).

Furthermore, Peters (2000) perceives institutional structures as characterised by incentives and/or constraints. Being rational beings, people respond to these factors in the structure of the institution (Peters 2000) in Scott, (2004) further argues that institutions are composed of various combinations of elements such as the ‘regulative’ (Moe, (1984); Williamson, (1975); and North, (1990); and the ‘normative’ (Hughes, (1939); Parsons, (1934/1990); and Selznick, 1949); lastly, ‘cultural-cognitive’ (Zucker, (1977), DiMaggio and Powell, (1991), and Douglas, (1986), see also, Scott, 2004 p. 408-414).

Scott et al., (2004) argue that these elements are interconnected and separating them would prove to be impossibility. Even if they could be used for the purpose of the study, the researcher’s focus is on the normative and cultural-cognitive elements. Hughes et al., (1939) in Scott, (2001 p. 408-414) explain normative elements as emphasizing the role of values and norms in creating expectations and obligations. Social obligations are the core of normative plans and expectation of roles and professionalisation thereof are central mechanisms by which normative expectations comprise institutions.

Furthermore, Scott et al., (2004) examine various methods whereby norms and commonly-shared beliefs systems have an impact on organisations. They contend with the fact that environmental forces don’t influence complaints in organisations, but institutional environments are dictated by regulatory forces. This all relate to rationality and rational choice theory (Hughes et al., (1939), cited in Scott, 2001 p. 408-414). Peters (2000) argues in his abstract study that by considering institutionalization as a constant variable as opposed to a nominal variable, we can begin by understanding the dynamics of

institutions, thus developing better explanations of institutional and political phenomena. Similarly, Polsby argues for institutional change and reflects on four dimensions through which we can pass judgement on the institutionalization of structures around us, through the assessment of: - autonomy, adaptability, complexity and coherence. These four have been applied to several types of institutional arrangements and they do provide one avenue for understanding the transformation that structures must make in order to survive, and to be able to influence their members and their environment (Polsby, (1968), Ragsdale and Theis, (1998) cited in Peters (2000, p. 8).

The four dimensions are:

- **Autonomy**

This dimension embodies a concern whether or not institutions do display enough will-power to implement their own decisions. Arguably, it is understood that these institutions are not dependent upon other institutions, but they can be said to be institutionalized. This notion might be set in motion in terms of autonomous revenue streams

- **Adaptability**

This dimension is capable of adapting to the fast-evolving change of the physical environment and it has the capability of moulding the environment. Systematic approaches to social life and institutions should be able to continue to introduce needed resources notwithstanding changes in the environment.

- **Complexity**

This dimension exhibits the ability of the institution to use internal structures to realize its goals and to manage the environment successfully. Again, this formation is similar to the thinking of the systems theory and the structural-functionalism that discussed the importance of structural differentiation (see Almond and Powell, 1967).

- **Coherence**

This dimension embodies the ability of the institution to control its own workload and develop standard operating procedures to process tasks timeously. This also depicts the capacity of the organisation to take informed decisions about its main tasks and beliefs.

The institutional theory connects with Michie's (2002) theoretical framework of stress which outlines the synergy between the organisational structure and climate and the relationships and career development as main sources of stress in the workplace. This theory explains how structures are established for a significant practice in society or as a pattern that shows a particular productive process. To keep social order, institutions depend on procedures, protocols and sanctions which, if not implemented effectively, may cause stress.

When an organization is established, there should be policies; rules and laws that govern that particular organisation. These are tools by which the staff compliment is expected to abide in terms of their conduct at work. Moreover, officials or senior management are inherently expected to monitor the implementation of these policies when called upon to provide leadership and to give clarity where needed. Failure to operate these with efficacy can result in stressful situations for employees. See below:

2.4.2 Public policy, administration and management

- Public policy

Public policy can generally be defined as a system of regulatory measures, courses of action, and funding priorities concerning a given topic promulgated by a governmental entity or its representatives (Kilpatrick, 2002). Many citizens influence public policy through a political process by supporting candidates and political parties which is often a swift way to make a positive impact, but often not the best way due to the fluidity of politicians and political parties. However, changing public opinion about a particular issue is the best way to obtain a lasting impact on public policy (The Mackinac Center Online, December 2017).

It is imperative that most policies from the public sector are derived and developed from the SA Constitution Act, 108 of 1996 and other various policy frameworks. It is argued that the public sector is highly regulated which results in unnecessary bureaucracy. But then again, the employer may be influenced by unknown motives and by political interferences in administration matters resulting in them intentionally failing to implement policies consistently for the benefit of employees which may cause unnecessary disputes and stress in the workplace. This may include appointing unqualified cadre deployments to vacant posts and favouring certain individuals for certain positions and promotions without following proper processes and procedures (Hughes, 2012, p. 106).

Shafritz and Hyde, (2012) perceive executive authorities as having two goals i.e. to pursue policy in order to preserve their power or to gain enough power to be able to accomplish their policy. At times this power crosses boundaries which results in stress to employees (Shafritz and Hyde, 2012, p. 501).

- Public administration

In addition to what Public policy seeks to address, Public administration is the implementation arm of government Public Policy and, in a bid to professionalize it, institutions of higher learning have introduced Public Administration as an academic to equip civil servants for working in the public service (Robert and Denhardt, 2009). (McKinney et al., 1998, p. 62) define the discipline of Public

Administration as a platform where government decisions and policies are analysed and the outcomes of the analyses paves a way forward to alternative policies.

In the public choice theory, the discipline of public administration seems a rational choice to a bureaucrat's individual ambition of public servants which can lead to outcomes not necessarily in the best interest of the organisation. Bureaucrats normally seek to please superiors and give information that portrays them positively and conceal what does not speak well of them (Hughes, 2012, p.105-115).

Successful policy implementation is certain to prevent stress in the workplace. The discussion below, addresses the synergy between public policy, public administration and public management (Shodhganga, 2012, p. 15).

- Public management

Jones et al., (2001) perceive public management as a means of performing certain tasks related to policy implementation in publicly-supported programmes. Furthermore, managers 'most important key performance area is to understand the organisational environment to enable the rendering of the services to its clients (Jones, Thompson and Zumeta, 2001, p. 19-23). Once managers fail to manage this, it amounts to dereliction of duties and this leads to systematic chaos by employees. One set of employees might enjoy not being guided whereas the other set will be stressed as they would be working under vague/and or little strategic direction.

Hughes, (2012) defined Public Policy as the broad area of government laws, regulations, and court decisions with public administration as a discipline with diverse scope to advance to management (Hildreth, and Miller, (1989), Dekker, (1999), Hughes, 2012, p. 3). Public management thus means performing certain tasks related to policy implementation in publicly supported programmes.

2.4.3 The Broad problem of stress in the workplace

Workplace stress is a broad problem and is fast becoming extraordinarily widespread. Treatment is costly and with modernity the triggers and pressures of stress are evolving too fast e.g. the advent of social media (Blaug et al., 2007, p. 88). The researcher has previously stated that stress affects people differently. There remain widespread concerns about the precise nature of stress and what it says about contemporary society and workplace practices (Blaug; Kenyon and Lekhi, 2007, p. 88).

Michie (2002), in the diagram below, explicitly elaborates on the current intrinsic and extrinsic factors and their relationship with workplace stress:

Table 1. Source: (Michie 2002, p. 68).

The problem of workplace stress	
For the individual	Workplace/Organization
Health / Well-being/ Quality of life	Increased absenteeism and turnover
Functioning/ Goal achievement	Reduced quality and quantity of work
Self-esteem/ Confidence	Reduced job satisfaction and moral
Personal Development	Poor communication and increased conflict

The intrinsic and extrinsic linkage shown above recommends resources that can help to meet the pressures and demands faced at work which include personal characteristics such as coping skills, problem solving, assertiveness, time management and the work situation such as a good working environment and social support (Michie, 2002, p. 67). Moreover, the study suggests that these resources can be increased by investment in work infrastructure, training, good management and employment practices and also the way that work is organised, which includes assessing the risk of stress amongst employees, looking for pressures at work which could cause high and long-lasting levels of stress, deciding on who might be harmed and deciding on whether or not organisations are doing enough to prevent that harm (Michie, 2002, p. 68).

There are other stressors which have not been discussed in this study. These have been identified by other scholars as critical in the various fields of studies. Stressors such as interruptions in the workplace and Eustress is -perceived as good stress and appropriate market-related incentives and practices in the workplace. These are explained below:

- **Interruptions in the workplace**

The study of Grove, (1983) and Mintzberg, (1990), as cited in Lin (2013), perceived ‘interruptions at work’ as a common phenomenon in today’s workplaces. The scholars mentioned interruptions by means of instant messaging; work emails and cellular phones as examples. The scholars described work interruptions as temporary halts in task-related behaviour due to the onset of a demand or secondary tasks. The argument outlines that as companies seek to streamline organisational processes, quick and constant information sharing amongst employees becomes essential for the longevity of organisations (Eyrolle and Cellier, (2000), cited in Lin, 2013, p. 1).

The study revealed that information-sharing has been strengthened due to technological advances, such as the popularisation of instant messaging, emails, and cellular phones (Berger and Merritt, (1998), cited in Lin, 2013, p. 1). However this tends to disrupt employees at work. In support of this

statement, the scholar mentions a technical report by Basex Inc., which found that interruptions at work take an average of at least 2.1 hours per day (Spira and Feintuch, (2005), cited in Lin, 2013, p. 1). For example, on average, an emergency room of physician experiences 10 interruptions per hour. However, as commonly found in organisational literature, processes that are aimed at facilitating organisational functioning may not always benefit the employees or the organisation itself. Furthermore, in the same technical report, the authors found that instant information-sharing through interruptions cost the U.S. economy \$588 billion dollars per year (Chrisholm, Collison, Nelson, and Cordell, (2000), cited in Lin, 2013, p. 1).

Dismukes, Young, and Sumwalt (1998) as cited in Lin (2013, p. 1), argues that almost 50 percent of all aeroplane accidents are a direct result of the lapse of concentration owing to interruptions. Kirmeyer (1988, p. 125), further implies that task-overload and buffering causes tension-anxiety as roles are associated with high levels work interruptions and disruptions. Other works mentioned in Fritz, Lin and Trougakos (2009) as cited in Lin (2013, p. 1) and Trougakos, Beal, Green and Weiss (2008, p. 131-146) seem to suggest that periodic interruptions during the course of the day are good expectable triggers and stimulants for the well-being and performance of employees.

Hargrove et al., (2016) argue a different perspective where they claim that not all stress is perceived as “negative stress”. Within the working sphere, they explain that it is crucial to set challenging standards in order to encourage workers to perform (Hargrove et al., 2016, p. 3). These expectations of a high standard of work performance can, however, result in adverse physical and cognitive-psycho symptoms, which manifest themselves in work-based anxiety, burnout and stress (Hargrove, Becker and Hargrove, 2016, p. 3).

- Eustress (good stress)

In support of this argument, the scholars associate ‘Eustress’ with ‘good stresses.’ According to these scholars Eustress is rarely looked at as a motivator within the workplace, but it is important to mention it (Wiegand and Geller, (2005), cited in Hargrove, et al., 2016, p. 11). Quick et al., (1997, p. 4) in Hargrove et al., (2016, p. 2-5) define Eustress as “a healthy, sound outcome of a stressful situation”. These scholars agree that Eustress is associated with hope and/or affirmation. Concurrently, Nelson and Simmons, (2011), as referred to in Hargrove, et al., (2013), state, “Good stress is a cognitive state of mind within the workplace.” However, the scholar emphasises that eustress can only work if good and effective systems within the organisation have been put in place (Hargrove, et al., (2013), cited in Hargrove, Becker and Hargrove, 2016, p. 2).

- Appropriate market-related incentives and practices

Similarly, having appropriate market-related incentive models to compensate employees to reinforce positive behaviour and to address under and over salary payments is very crucial (Milkovich, Newman, and Milkovich, (2008), cited in Hargrove, et al., 2016, p. 11-12). The scholars argue that through systematic strategic job designs and careful job analysis, matched and designed processes create better challenged employees. Furthermore, beyond job matching and designing, recruiting suitably qualified employees, who thrive on working under pressure, have often yielded quality workmanship (Abdel-Halim, (1981); Smith and Sainfort, (1989); Bond and Bunce, (2001); Kompier, (2003); Fairbrother and Warn, (2003); Humphrey; Nahrgang and Morgeson, (2007), cited in Hargrove; Becker and Hargrove, 2016, p. 12). In turn effective training and development programmes add to the thought-provoking process towards employees stretching their abilities to undertake existing and new tasks. This creates a fertile ground for career paving and succession planning within the organisation (Aguinis and Kraiger, (2009), cited in Hargrove, Becker and Hargrove, 2016, p. 12).

Accordingly, accurate performance appraisals assist organisations to achieve positive, desirable outcomes associated with stress in the workplace. Better still, when employees are recognised and acknowledged through employee-recognition programmes such as the long-service awards, excellence awards, effective career management and mentoring also assists organisations to minimise workplace stress (Rossett, (2009), cited in Hargrove, et al., 2016, p. 11).

Having a retrospective and historical perspective of stress, it is evident that the causes of stress have evolved over time and that stress-triggers, which would have been a non-issue before, are now increasingly portraying themselves as causes of stress. Technological factors, or lack thereof in the workplace, have been argued by several scholars such as Chun Li (2013, p. 1), that work pressure could be unbearable without these aids. Interestingly, he scholar further argued that interruptions in a day's activities may lead to adverse consequences wherein employees could seriously regress in the manner in which tasks are scheduled and completed. Importantly, he states that employers can play a role in motivating and assisting employees in stressful conditions. While stress is perceived as a negative factor by various scholars, the theory of 'Eustress' has also been explored in this section with a different positive perspective of stress in a workplace (Chun Li , 2013, p. 1).

This chapter has dealt with the negative effects of stress. Further to that, Quick et al., (1997), as cited in Hargrove, et al., 2016, p. 12), outlines the effects of negative stress. More so, as a matter of importance, it is argued that overly-layered 'eustress' can also lead to adverse outcomes of stress. In concluding these arguments, Giga and Cooper, (2003), as cited in Hargrove, et al., (2016, p. 12), claimed that there is a large body of knowledge which is part of an Employee Assistance Programme

(EAP), which seeks to minimise stress in the workplace, that employers should effectively implement and that employees should take advantage of this for the benefit of both.

2.4.4 Types of stressors

There are many types of stressors. However, as earlier indicated, the emphasis of this study is around the works of Michie (2002) and empirical evidence is provided in his published works titled *Causes and management of stress at work*.

In terms of the chronology and coherence of events which impact on employees in their workplaces, the following stressors are discussed:-

- Job Description/role – This situation exists in many instances when an employee has never undergone thorough organisational induction in the roles and functions to be performed, which leads to an overwhelming sense of panic, which, in turn, results in under-performance. Moreover, due to the streamlined nature of organisations in modern times, organisations are implicitly expecting employees to ‘do more with less’. Organisations are expected to achieve objectives with maximum efficiency (Mullin, (1996), cited in Hughes 2012, p. 3-4). Incidentally, the KZN Provincial Government took a Cabinet resolution in December 2012 to institute austerity measures. This was first affected on 18 January 2013 (KZN provincial Treasury, circular no: PT (1) OF 2013/14).
- Long hours/ Lack of Breaks – Working beyond contracted hours has a significant impact on the employee’s productivity levels as this may affect quality of productivity and social life. Injury on duty cases are prone to increase when employees work longer than expected as stipulated in Chapter Two of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, (75 of 1997).
- Work Overload – Overloading is the direct resultant of bundling loads of work, and pressures on a few individuals while possibly others are left idle. Service delivery departments like COGTA-KZN, fall prey to a saying which reads: ‘go beyond the call of duty’. This is rife since there are constant moratoriums on the filling of vacancies. This affects employees as they are expected to go beyond what they were contracted to do, and moreover, those in political offices are usually the worst affected.
- Time Pressure – Poor-planning leads to time-pressure and it affects many other targets which are time-bound. Either self-inflicted or from a third party, Government is driving for a highly competitive and accountable state with little chance that unachieved targets will be met. This has not borne fruit as officials are expected to be accountable for their actions, whilst the employer is looking for the causes of the adverse results.
- Difficult or complex tasks and not understanding assigned tasks is problematic and this may lead to difficult conditions. A demonstration of ‘goal-setting theory’ argues that specified and clear goals lead to a high level of performance, assuming that an individual has understood those

determined goals or specified tasks (Landy and Conte, 2016, p. 313). In most instances, employees are afraid to report when they come across difficult or challenging situations at work. More often than not, they ask people with little or insufficient information for assistance.

- Lack of Variety – Monotonous work in one’s setting is high on the list of stress triggers and also has the potential for dereliction of duty and/or poor workmanship.
- Poor Physical Work Conditions for optimum productivity levels, employees are to be assured of at least the minimum standards of Occupational Health and Safety within the workplace. For example, employees working in a hazardous environment need to be given proper personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Chapter Two of the Constitution, undersection 24 of the Bill of Rights states: “Everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being”. It is contended that, in recent times, Occupational Health and Safety standards are no longer a priority in the corporate world but rather production and the means thereof. For example, fire drills are very few and far between, particularly in government department offices.

In support of the above, actions which have been discussed as stress influences on employees in the workplace, Maslow’s theory on the ‘Hierarchy of Needs’ (1943) is also discussed as it concerns the emotional and physical well-being of employees.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943)

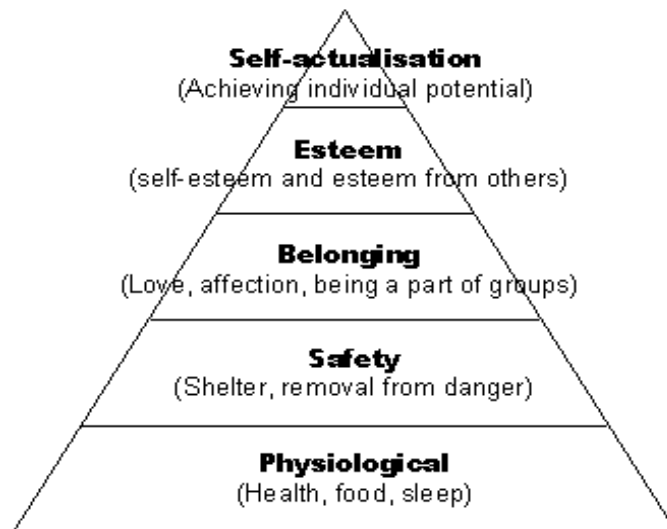


Figure 3. Source: (Maslow, A. H., 1943, cited in McLeod, 2014, p. 370).

In his theory, Maslow (1943) depicts five motivational needs, namely: self-actualisation, esteem, love/belonging, safety and physiological needs. The argument is that if these needs are taken care of or there is a concerted effort to deal with them, the levels of stress experienced with respect to these needs will be brought to a minimum (McLeod, 2014, p. 370).

The study further looks at the signs and symptoms of stress in the workplace.

2.4.5 Signs and symptoms of stress

Literature shows that the human anatomy demonstrates signs and symptoms of stress which link to the human physiology. Stress symptoms can be physical, psychosocial and behavioural in nature (Brickford, 2005, p. 4).

The effects of stress which impact negatively on the anatomy are classified as physical; psychological and behavioural:

Table 2. Source: (Canadian centre for occupational health and safety, (2000), cited in Brickford, 2005, p. 4).

Signs and Symptoms of stress		
Physical	Psychosocial	Behavioural
Headaches	Anxiety	Overeating or loss of appetite
Grinding teeth	Irritability	Impatience
Clenched jaws	Sadness	Quickness to argue
Chest pain	Defensiveness	Procrastination
Shortness of breath	Anger	Increased use of alcohol / Drugs
Pounding heart	Mood swings	Increased smoking
High blood pressure	Hypersensitivity	Withdrawal or isolation from Others
Muscle aches	Apathy	Neglect of responsibility
Indigestion	Depression	Poor job performance
Constipation or diarrhoea	Slowed thinking or racing thoughts	Poor personal hygiene
Increased perspiration	Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, or of being trapped	Change in religious practices
Fatigue		Changes in close family Relationships
Insomnia		
Frequent illness		

The relationship between the three stressors is also corroborated by Baruch et al., (1987) when they argues that there is proof that, under certain situations, work has positive effects on the health of an employee and this develops mental comfort (Baruch and Barnett, 1987, p. 63-73). In support, Repetti, et al., (1989) explains that workplaces have a positive effect on the health of an employee (Repetti, Matthews and Waldron, 1989, p. 44). The table above shows stressors that are psycho-socially orientated and it does not distinguish between these and physical and mental stressors as they can

work together and may interact with one another. Moreover, the table shows that stress brings behavioural changes which ultimately decrease the co-operation between the employees in the workplace (Cox, Griffiths and Rial-González, 2000, cited in Sohail and Rehman, 2015, p. 95).

The causes of stress as a result of the above signs and symptoms are unpacked in the form of work and personal life:

2.5 Causes of stress (work and life)

2.5.1 Workplace factors causing stress

As people are different so are the different things that may trigger stress in their lives. An online survey conducted by the United Nations (UN), WebMD Online, April 2016, established that workplace stress tops the list of all stresses in life. The survey found that 40 per cent of United States workers confessed this when questioned about suffering from work stress. One quarter confessed that workplace stress is the main cause of their stress in general (WebMD Online, April 2016).

The survey identified various causes of workplace stress including the following:-

- Not being happy or satisfied at work;
- Being allocated too much work and accountability;
- Performing longer than expected hours;
- Poor management and ill-defined roles, responsibilities and expectations;
- No say in decision-making processes;
- Poor work environment;
- Uncertain positions, for example, contract workers;
- Lack of confidence; and
- Being harassed; discriminated-against- and lack of organisational support.

Additionally, the survey's findings highlighted that with all the different demands and pressures that the workplace environment presents, stress is bound to happen. This has been elaborated on in figure 1, of this study. The study by Yoon et al., (2015), emphasises the importance of sufficient resources. Stress is often triggered when personal needs are not met (Yoon; Newkirk; and Perry-Jenkins, 2015, p. 63).

2.5.2 Life factors causing stress

Similarly, the online study on 'external causes of stresses conducted by the HelpGuide.org, (2015), established that the major contributors to personal stress in life were children and family. The study

revealed that as much as we love our children and families, they somehow play a significant role in our stress levels in our lives. The study revealed that-external stress is part of our eternal life as it evolves as one matures (HelpGuide.org, Online, October 2015).

The online study by Livestrong Online, (2015) on external stress factors, observed children at a very young age as babies and how this influences lack of sleep from parents as they might be teething, having colic and influenza. This does not end as they grow past this stage and become older because these problems change as well. At a grade-schooler stage, concerns are more about their school work, their social being and their health. This means problems do not go away. Worse still, the teenage years have more probability of shooting stress levels even higher. Parents 'concerns escalate to the type of friends their children choose and associate with, drug abuse, smoking, drinking, and even driving issues. Furthermore, while concerns grow with children, grand-parents simultaneously age and go through a decline in life in terms of ill-health and there is a probability that there could be an expectation of becoming a 'caregiver' while simultaneously not neglecting parental duties to your children (Livestrong Online, October 2015).

The Livestrong Online (2015) study further identified life factors causing stress as follows: -

- Job Loss;
- Severe ill-health or injury;
- Death of a loved one;
- Divorce/ Separation;
- Financial problems;
- Having a sick family member or elderly member;
- Relocation;
- Emotional difficulties such as grief, low self-esteem, anxiety, guilt, depression and anger.);
- Getting married; and
- Shocking events such as rape, personal attack, hijack/ burglary, natural disaster, theft.

In summary, both, the survey and the study acknowledge the fact that workplace stress and personal stress levels will vary from person-to-person, as a result of people having different personalities and responding differently to different circumstances. Some people might fear and become anxious from workplace stress and personal stress, while others will not worry much about it (Livestrong Online, October 2015).

2.6 Workplace stress in a specific job context

The systems theory suggests three aspects of ‘functioning’: biological, psychological and social. Each of these aspects have different attributes, resources, and limitations (von Bertalanfly, (1968) and Miller, (1978), cited in Murphy and Schoenborn, 1987, p. 4). The theory states that these aspects are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated to such an extent that should there be a considerable disharmony or change in one of them, the adverse effects will be felt and realised at the other levels of the system. In line with the working environment, this often happens between the individual and the organisation and various scholars have coined it as ‘Person-environment fit theory’ (Murphy and Schoenborn, 1987, p. 4).

In line with this thought the study of Edward and Cable (2009) raised similarities amongst organisation’s and employee’s values. These similarities were strengthened in their study entitled: The Value of Value Congruence which suggests that if employees hold similar or alike values with their organisation, there is a high likelihood of them being satisfied with their jobs. In agreement, (also see Edward and Cable, 2009) where the authors argue that employees tend to work longer or service organisations longer without broken service if they share a common goal (Kristof, (1996); Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, and Johnson, (2005); Meglino and Ravlin, (1998); Verquer, Beehr, and Wagner, (2003), cited in Edward and Cable, 2009, p. 654).

Several scholars have perceived these positive outcomes as mutually beneficial to both employees and employer in minimising costs for the organisation while bearing positive attitudes for the employees due to satisfactory service conditions that would be in place (Cascio, (1999); Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach, (2000); Riketta, (2005), cited in Edward and Cable, 2009, p. 654).

In addition, this argument is championed by Brickford, (2005), who argues that the availability of coping mechanisms and measures for organisations and individuals to deal with the negative impacts of stress need both parties to have a high level of emotional intelligence to detect and deal with the first emergence of stress signs (Brickford, 2005, p. 2). In his study, Bickford indicates that, as much as there are measures that individuals and organisations may take to alleviate the negative impact of stress, and/or stop it from arising in the first place, employee’s first need to learn to recognise the signs that indicate that they are feeling stressed-out. In turn, employers need to be aware of the effects that stress has on their employees’ health as well as when these signs are not attended to and that this could affect the company’s profits (Brickford, 2005, p. 2).

The study which Nekzada and Tekeste conducted in (2013) at Volvo trucks AB in Umeå about ‘stress causes and its management at the work place’, revealed that, at the time, the company employed

115,000 employees with different racial and occupational backgrounds and professional levels. These employees were selected by the researchers from both genders to avoid any bias. Their sample was not the entire population of Volvo, but it was a fair proportional representation of the company as their focus was on certain individuals (Nekzada and Tekeste, 2013, p. 8).

The Volvo group at the time had initiated a workplace Safety, Health and Wellness Award in 2006 to encourage employees to advance workplace safety, and to promote health in the workplace. The initiative included management performing regular check-ups, home visits and initiating various other health promotional programmes. Furthermore, as a good gesture, these health promotional programmes were extended to employees' immediate families. By so doing, this significantly reduced tension and stress amongst those who had sick family members as they were able to shift their focus solely to work and worry less about their loved ones (Volvo Group, (2011), cited in Nekzada and Tekeste, 2013, p. 57-58).

With this initiation and intervention from the Volvo company, the study revealed that employees indeed feel stressed when their external factors are challenging. This gave the researchers a solid indication that not all stress is directly linked to workplace manifestations, but could be as a result of external burdens. The researchers further argued that because of good employee support programmes that the company had put in place, it was concluded that stress levels were normal within the organisation. However, these researchers did acknowledge that there were other reasons why employees felt stressed at work, and these reasons were mainly due to ineffective time management, high work load, and noisy shop floors which were thought of as the main stressors (Nekzada and Tekeste, 2013, p. 60).

From reading the study, it is evident that a symbiotic relationship between the employer and employee is crucial for healthy co-existence between the two to ensure that stress levels are kept to a bare minimum. Furthermore, throughout the study it was evident that stress as a phenomenon has not evolved but rather it is still manifested through intrinsic and extrinsic factors which have evolved over the years.

2.7 Consequences of stress on employees and organisations

2.7.1 Consequences of stress on employees

The consequences of stress on employees could result in harmful and chronic diseases (Nekzada and Tekeste, 2013). These researchers suggest that stress should be placed into three distinct categories, viz, physiological, psychological and behavioural (Nekzada and Tekeste, 2013, p. 20). The researchers relate to the ‘physiological’ aspect of stress in collaboration with table 2 by Brickford, (2005), where the scholar argues that stress can manifest itself in symptoms including high blood pressure, headaches, anxiety, short temperedness, lack of concentration and indecisiveness in taking critical decisions in the workplace (Brickford, 2005, p. 4).

According to Brickford (2005, p. 4), there is also a psychological factor that produces overwhelming feelings which usually become so unbearable that the employees concerned often believe that the stressors have the negative impact on their ideal state of being in the workplace and often feel unwanted and or unappreciated. Bloisi et al., (2007, p. 323) mention that behavioural patterns play a vital role in that they would engage themselves in activities that would be outside the norm or day-to-day routine of affected employees. For example, suddenly taking of alcohol as an escape mechanism, which result in alcoholism (Bloisi et al., (2007), cited in Nekzada and Tekeste, 2013, p. 20).

2.7.2 Consequences of stress on organisations

In recent times, organisations have had to bear the brunt of poor performance, high rates of absenteeism, sub-standard quality of production and increased levels of employees who are ill-disposed which exerts undue pressure and stress on them and their performance as set out in their performance plans and individual agreements (Cartwright and Cooper, 1997, p. 1).

In mitigating these challenges, Cartwright and Cooper (1997), argue that organisations have to reinvent themselves and accommodate challenges that face their operations by redesigning jobs or activities that are relevant to their operation, reprioritise and allocate roles and responsibilities appropriately and in line with their business including realignment of expected qualifications, skills and experience. Equally, the employers should forge good relations with Trade Unions as the representatives of the employees (Cartwright and Cooper, 1997, p. 1-2).

Cartwright and Cooper (1997 p. 1) argued that this forward-thinking approach evidently yielded results and further encouraged their study to take a multi-faceted approach, which represented. The juxtaposition of the two consequences has shown a paradigm shift from both the employer and employees trying to reach common ground whilst both maintain favourable standing (Swanepoel,

2014, p. 709). Swanepoel, (2014) re-iterates the sentiments of Cartwright and Cooper, (1997) when he affirms that ‘healthy and safe working environments and employees who enjoy a general state of well-being result in a society that is stable and that is able to achieve goals in life’(Cartwright and Cooper, (1997, p. 1) and Swanepoel, 2014, p. 709).

2.8 Stress management and interventions

2.8.1 Stress management

As a researcher, with my personal engagement with different scholarly texts from different organisations, private and public, I understand the argument that stress management approaches in the workplace vary from industry to industry, depending on their organisational culture, norms and standards.

Interventions employed by management should be to strike a balance between intrinsic and extrinsic factors involving both employees and the organisation to minimise the adverse effects of stress which often lead to physiological consequences (Michie 2002, p. 70). Michie, (2002) argues that to minimise the effects of ill-health associated with workplace stress, the following approaches should be used: constant capacity building, one-on-one psychological and, /or, psychiatric services as well as occupational health and counselling. Michie further mentions techniques for managing stress which are coined as ‘Active Coping and Habitualisation’ (Michie 2002, p. 70-71).

In Active Coping, the scholar highlights aspects such as assertiveness/social skills/communication,; habits: eating, drinking, sleeping, smoking, exercise, managing time, priorities, delegation; control: self-monitoring, feedback; cognitive: positive thinking/self-talk/imagery, psychological preparation including information reappraisal – perception, interpretation as techniques of managing stress (Michie 2002, p. 70-71). Subsequently, the scholar enhances the management of stress for the individual, and contends that Habitualisation techniques may include relaxation/yoga/meditation break/leisure/holidays exercise distraction/denial/acceptance for the management of stress amongst employees (Michie 2002, p. 70-71).

To further substantiate Michie’s (2002) argument, the American Mental Wellness Association in the United States concurs with this argument as they conducted an online survey and one of their findings was that healthy and happy employees are less likely to call off-sick (American Mental Wellness Online, September 2016). Additionally, their findings maintained that being content at work can lead to improved productivity levels. However, this would depend on the structured health and wellness programmes which management put in place as this would eliminate the phenomenon called

‘presenteeism’, which is when employees are present at work, but are not productive (American Mental Wellness Online, September 2016).

2.8.2 Stress interventions

Stress interventions are aimed at improving social, psychological and health conditions by changing the organization characteristics, work conditions, and social aspects. Semmer argues that even well-implemented interventions are not likely to lead to improvements in all areas for all participants but these have to be considered (Semmer, 2006, p. 515-527).

According to the report commissioned by Public Health England and prepared by the Centre for Health Promotion Research at Leeds Beckett University, March 2016, interventions designed to reduce symptoms and impact on burnout and work-related stress were conducted more often at an individual or small-group level than at an organizational level. The report noted intervention to reduce this phenomenon to include:-

- Workshops and behavioural programmes;
- Organizational culture and working practices; and
- Workload changes.

The report hoped to produce longer-lasting effects rather than individual approaches and it seemed that Organizational interventions may be more effective than individual interventions alone. Furthermore, the report revealed that mixing individual and organizational level approaches incorporates a system modification that adopts an inclusive environment (Health and Safety Commission, 1999).

Workplace stress invention strategies



Figure 4. Source: (Work stress stock image Online, December, 2017).

2.9 Synthesis and evaluation of literature

To summarise the theories discussed in this chapter, the researcher has looked very closely at stress as a general concept of workplace stress and its causes and management. This chapter then discussed the overall theme of the research topic. At the beginning, the discussion reflected on both intrinsic and extrinsic factors as they contribute equally to the causes of workplace stress.

This chapter considered the historical aspects of workplace stress. Various workplace stress models, including its types and its symptoms were also explained. Consequences of non-stress management, specifically within the public sector were revealed. Moreover, stress management and interventions were suggested and mitigation strategies were further proposed. Organisational approaches to stress management, policies and programmes in the Department of COGTA-KZN were also discussed. The overall study from the beginning has been guided by the study of Michie (2002) entitled Causes and Management of Stress at Work with other related theories. The study of Michie understands stress according to intrinsic and extrinsic factors, from an organisational perspective and individually.

The study has examined the possible causes and symptoms of stress on individuals at home and in the workplace. Furthermore, strategies for both factors have been suggested. Interventions have also been reviewed. The researcher has made reference to the organisation and the contribution to maintaining an ideal workplace for the employees. Various studies, surveys and literature have been discussed throughout this chapter in order to show the main contributors of stress. A theory has also been backed by other theories on organisational strategies and programmes to mitigate workplace stress. Throughout the discussion, it has been evident that multi-disciplinary approaches are needed to deal with workplace stress. In turn, this means that both employees and employers need to make a consented effort for this approach to yield fruitful results both in the public and private sectors.

The researcher drew on the theories of several scholars to test if the research site actually applies to the suggested mechanisms of dealing with stress, in which the findings were interesting as they drew on various topics which, in turn, resulted in the same point of departure (stress). It would appear that, although measures are put in place for the betterment of employees and for a reduction of absenteeism at the workplace, there are still inherent pockets of delinquent behaviour which organisations, including the research site (COGTA-KZN), still have to address on an ongoing basis.

2.10 Chapter Summary

The review of texts that formed part of this chapter has clearly shown that, dealing with stress in general amongst employees, needs a multi-disciplinary approach. These approaches may deal with physiological aspects of stress or psychological aspects of stress. Stress levels in the public and private sector are experienced at varying degrees. That is, the private sector seems to endure and absorb slightly higher levels of stress as opposed to the public sector. However, it was evident that programmes that are employed by both sectors are progressive in nature. The researcher further dispelled the myth that the public sector has no structured programmes when dealing with stress. On the contrary, a decline in the temporary incapacity of employees was witnessed due to the structured interventions that were put in place.

In the chapter which follows, a review of the research methodology adopted for the empirical component of the study is undertaken.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter was based on the literature review regarding the causes of stress and its management in the workplace. Moreover, it also examined the model and framework upon which this study bases stress management. Through the interrogation of literature it emerged that a multi-disciplinary approach is needed to address the wide array of stress facets in the workplace. A comparative analysis of stress and its management was investigated and the level of progressive innovations that international and national (public and private) sectors have employed was examined.

This chapter looks at the research methodology. This study will pursue a qualitative research design, using basic/ applied methods as they drive research in different settings. The cognitive interest is based on the empirical and historical-hermeneutic technique as it allows in-depth understanding of a phenomenon through interpretivism. In this chapter, Creswell's (2014) empirical research methodology has been followed.

The researcher intends to understand thoroughly the phenomena, which are the causes and management of stress in the workplace in the case study of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in KwaZulu-Natal.

3.2 Research design and methods

This is a qualitative research design study where, the main aim is to explore and understand individuals or groups and their social or human problems (Welman and Kruger (2001). Chapter One gave the perspectives of different scholars in relation to the qualitative research design and these are broadly explained and categorised in three research traditions, namely: qualitative research, quantitative research and mixed methods designs (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber, (1998). This research is conducted using the qualitative research design as stated above.

For the purpose of the study, these research designs are explained as follows:

- Qualitative research

According to Atkinson et al., (2001, p. 7), a “qualitative research” “is a form of social investigation that concentrates on the way people perceive and make sense of the world we live in”. Atkinson argues that this type of research helps researchers understand the social reality of individuals and groups. Researchers opt to use qualitative approaches to investigate the behaviour and perspectives of people (Atkinson et al., (2001, p. 7), cited in Blackwell publishing Online, December 2017).

- Quantitative research

The UKessays Online, (2015) describe ‘quantitative research’ as methods that are used when collecting data which could be represented numerically. Generally, quantitative data are collected when the researcher has adopted the positivist epistemological approach and data has to be scientifically analysed to reach an empirical state (UKessays Online, March 2015).

- Mixed methods designs

This method involves combining both the qualitative and quantitative research methods and data in a research study. There are three designs in mixed methods research, viz: - (a) convergent, (b) explanatory sequential and (c) exploratory sequential—are detailed in terms of their characteristics, data collection.

Unlike the research design, the research strategy is loaded with differing views. These views were concisely mentioned in Chapter One and are further described below. For the purpose of this study, phenomenological strategy has been selected. The research strategies are perceived by different scholars as follows:

- Grounded theory

According to Creswell, (2014, p. 14), this theory is adopted from the discipline of Sociology to enable extrapolation wherein the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of process. This process employs varying/ multiple stages of collecting data and its refinement (Charmaz, (2006), Corbin, and Strauss, (2007), cited in Creswell, 2014, p. 14).

- Phenomenology

The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation. In the human sphere this normally translates into gathering ‘deep’ information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research participant(s). Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the

perspective of the individual, 'bracketing' taken-for-granted assumptions and usual ways of perceiving (Waters, 2017). Epistemologically, phenomenological approaches are based on a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity and emphasise the importance of personal perspective and interpretation. As such they are powerful for understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions and cutting through the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom (Lester, 1999).

- Ethnographical research

Realists subscribe to ethnography research as supported by Van Maanen (1988) who argues that this approach is commonly used by cultural anthropologists. The scholar considers ethnography as an indication of real time adopted by the researcher towards the population being studied. This study is based on empirical objective evidence (Van Maanen (1988), cited in Health Well Foundation, Online, December 2017).

- Narrative research

Heinen and Sommer (2009) view this research as a study of narratives, and nothing beyond that. Interestingly, there are no further pursuits e.g. looking at discourses such as the psychology of human nature thus restricting further exploration or even development of future themes (Heinen and Sommer 2009, p. 4). Richardson (2000, p. 168) observes that narrative research is a controlling centre which other disciplines revolve around (Richardson, (2000), cited in Heinen and Sommer 2009, p. 4).

- Participatory case research

Participatory action research (PAR) is characterised by communities that emphasize participation and action commonly used in farming communities. It seeks to understand the world by trying to change it. PAR stresses on collective investigations and experimentation by communal grouping with institutional memory and social history. These experimentations by communal groupings evolve over time and address questions and issues that are significant for those who participate as co-researchers.

This type of research integrates three aspects: life in society, democratic values and engagement with communal history. Each component is generally understood with relative and varying means from one PAR theory to another. This means that PAR is not one-dimensional, but can be viewed as a multi-dimensional method to bring about social change.

The three aspects of PAR which bring integration into the research method:

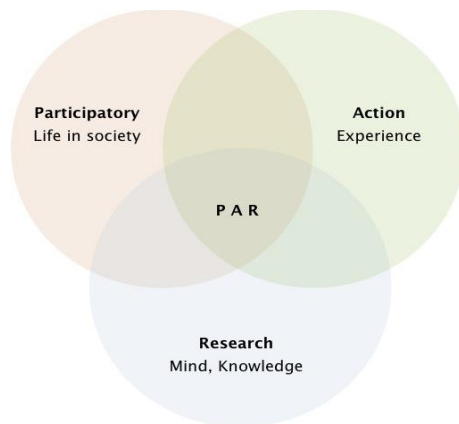


Figure 5: Source: (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013, p. 10).

This study employs a Phenomenological strategy and follows Creswell's (2014) approach. It seeks to explore and expose the causes and management of workplace stress at COGTA-KZN. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001, p. 270), the goal of qualitative research is merely to describe and understand the human actions within their natural settings over time. This method allows for in-depth engagement of the issues of interest to the study. The researcher opted to use this approach in order to be able to explore and expose possible causes of workplace-related stress. However, there are facets of the study that warrant the researcher to explore the usage of narrative research and the participatory case study and these were also applied.

The researcher used grounded theory as a strategy, but more so, explored the usage of narrative research and the case study.

Data collection methods that have been applied in this empirical research are discussed below.

3.3 Data collection methods

When collecting data, it is imperative that the following rules are followed:

- Use of multiple data collection methods;
- Use available data, but need to know how the measures were defined;
- How the data were collected and cleaned the extent of missing data; and
- How accuracy of the data was ensured.

Similarly, Teddlie (2013) cited in Driscoll, et.al (2007, p. 19) defines data collection as planning and obtaining useful information on the subject the researcher is researching. Tongco (2007) cited in Haq

(2014, p. 6) further proposes that the most important thing is the way data will be collected rather than collecting any data available (Tongco, (2007), cited in Haq (2014, p. 6). Data collection improves the decision-making by helping the researcher focus on objective information (Sedlmeir and Hilton, 2012, p229-25). Likewise, Stopher, (2012, p. 81) states: “qualitative research paradigm uses a number of tools for data collection such as the use of questionnaires, surveys, interviews, and case studies” Stopher, (2012, p. 81)

In this study, data was collected using in-depth semi-structured interviews according to the nature of the study. It is important to highlight that interviews are methods of data collection, which offer the interviewer the liberty to track some particular issues, which are of concern and may lead to constructive recommendations (Shneiderman and Plaisant, 2005). An interview guide was employed by the researcher for this study which listed the questions that were to be explored in the course of the interview. However, the predetermined questions were used to initiate discussions and the interviewer then followed up by asking further questions not included in the interview guide.

The researcher used both ‘secondary’ and ‘primary’ data tools to collect information for the study. Secondary data was obtained from documents and archives that were readily available within the Department. This information included journals, Annual Performance Plans (APP’s), official government publications, posters, newspapers, Departmental policies, reports and manuals.

- In-depth interviews

Mason, (1998), cited in Morris (2015, p. 7) defines in-depth interviews as “involvement by the researcher in asking pertinent questions and following-up on the responses in an endeavour to draw very detailed information as required by the researcher on the topic being researched”. This was done during the interviews of this study.

Furthermore, the researcher arranged four focus group interviews with the designated study participant’s sample of 20 in total with five respondents from each nominated group and had in-depth discussions centred on the prearranged questions intended to guide the deliberations. The participants included five SMS, five MMS, five LB category and the other five participants in the office of COGTA-KZN MEC. The members who were selected by the researcher were based on their significance in terms of the study. To supplement the focus groups, data was additionally attained from members by conducting separate individual interviews to get the wealth of the discussions. The individual interviews involved four LB; two MMS; two SMS and two MIN.

- The primary data

The primary data was obtained by using focus groups. Jayanthi and Nelson, (2002, p. 2-8) argue that “focus represents the role played by members of a group with an intention to discuss a pertinent issue”. Their sole role is to give direction and fact on the topic in question. The character and strength of the focus group is to allow the facilitator to gain insight into the topic. Moreover, the scholars argue that focus groups provide a platform where anonymity and security is guaranteed for participants. Furthermore, participant’s comments can trigger spontaneous comments from other participants who would ordinarily have been quiet during proceedings. Some participants may not voice their real opinion and ‘go along’ with what another participant had said. It is incumbent upon the facilitator to steer the session within the confines of the interview.

Jayanthi and Nelson (2002, p. 2) have suggested that focus groups ought to consist of six to ten participants. However, for the purpose of this study five participants were selected for each category due to the sensitivity of the study.

Furthermore, four focus groups were scheduled by the researcher namely:-Group One was salary level 2-10 (LB) employees, group Two was level 11-12 (MMS), group Three consisted of salary level 13-15 (SMS) and group Four were employees from the office of the MEC COGTA-KZN.

The use of focus group discussions does not only complement the interview data collection strategy, but also provides the following two advantages:

- Focus group dynamics provide useful information that individual data collection does not provide. For example, one participant may say something that shall trigger some details from other group member (s); and
- Focus group discussions afford a researcher the opportunity to gain in-depth insights into the topic as group members discuss how a concept applies in their diverse contexts (Jones Online, August 2016).

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010), cited in Jones Online (2015), focus groups are aimed at obtaining respondent’s impressions, interpretations, and opinions as the members talk about the event, concept, product, or service. The researcher is expected to act as a moderator, in terms of steering the discussion in a manner that extracts the needed information by keeping the members on track. Employee levels as mentioned above, (five SMS, five MMS, five Supervisors in the LB category and the other five managers from the office of the MEC) had their interview sessions in the boardroom at head office (Pietermaritzburg). The focus group discussions took one hour and thirty minutes to two hours and were facilitated by the researcher. However, where the researcher felt that employees would

not fully participate and provide honest responses as HRM specialists with the research study, the researcher requested a neutral colleague from a different portfolio to conduct those interviews.

Ten questions were asked in terms of the interview schedule which also had sub-questions as probed by the researcher as a result of provided responses for confirmation of information. In total, 10 questions were asked. Similar questions were asked for 10 individual interviews to supplement the study. The individual interviews were constituted by four LB; two MMS; two SMS and two MIN. Each category of employees met on different days as a result of the different availability of participants who had various other commitments. It took a month for the researcher to bring the participants together for the focus groups interviews. The researcher also permitted participants to use their own vernacular languages during these discussions as they could express themselves better in their own language.

Scholars provide three different ways to conduct interviews viz:-: structured, unstructured and semi-structured (Connaway and Powell, 2010).

- Structured interviews

Structured interviews consist of pre-determined questions that all interviewees must respond to. These interviews are usually straightforward when compared to other forms of interviews and the researcher can compare and contrast different answers.

- Unstructured interviews

These interviews are usually the least reliable form of interview from a research viewpoint, because no questions are prepared prior to the interview which is conducted in an informal manner. Unstructured interviews can be associated with a high level of bias and comparison of answers given by different respondents which tend to be difficult due to the differences in formulation of questions.

- Semi-structured

These interviews contain components of both the structured and unstructured interviews. In semi-structured interviews the interviewer prepares a set of the same questions to be answered by all interviewees. However, additional questions might be asked during interviews to clarify and/or further expand on certain issues.

In this study the researcher scheduled four focus group-structured interviews with the selected study participants and had in-depth discussions based on the predetermined questions designed to guide the discussions.

The following sub-topic discusses sampling, size, and the research selection. The research study site is also described.

3.4 Sampling, size and selection

3.4.1 Study site

According to Simons, (2009, p. 1-6) a study site is “a physical place where the study will be conducted in order to collect the required data”. The Department of COGTA-KZN is the provincial government Department situated in the city of Pietermaritzburg, which is the capital and second-largest city in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The city was founded in 1838 and is currently serviced by the Msunduzi Local Municipality. The main objective of the Department is to perform an oversight function and to provide support to 54 municipalities and 294 Traditional Leaders and their institutions.

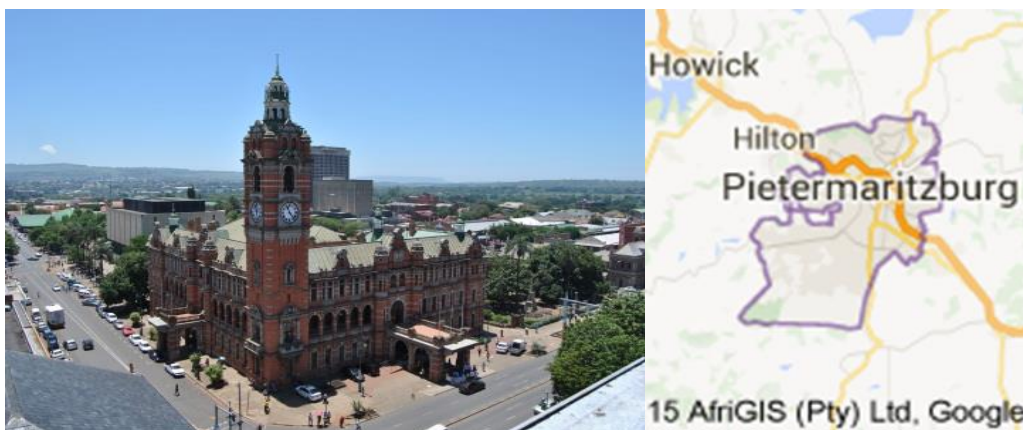


Figure 6: Source: (Google Online, view of the City of Pietermaritzburg).

The paragraph below deals with levels of employment within COGTA-KZN from which participants for the study will be selected.

3.4.2 Population and sampling

A general population is defined as “a complete set of elements of persons or objects that possess some common characteristic defined by the sampling criteria established by the researcher” (University of Missouri St Lous Online, September 2016). Population is seen by Welman and Kruger (2005, p. 52) as “the object that is to be studied as it consists of individuals; groups; organisations; human products and events”. Moreover, these researchers’ state that: “population covers the whole group of people, or matters of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate”. In other words, it refers to a full set of cases from which a sample is taken (Welman and Kruger, 2005, p.52).

Equally, Sekaran and Bougie (2013) describe a targeted population as “a term used to define all elements from which the researcher aims to draw a conclusion based on and also to obtain a better understanding” (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013, p. 130). On the other hand, Kothari (2004) describes the “target population” as “an intended population covered by a study in a specific geographical area” (Kathari, 2004, p. 76). The target population for this study consisted of 1900 public officials employed by COGTA-KZN from which a representative sample population was selected.

COGTA-KZN has a staff complement of 1900 employees (COGTA-KZN Persal System, December 2017). In this study about the causes and management of stress, the researcher considered various levels at which employees work when selecting participants. This is shown in sample size table 4 below.

Sample size table

Table 3: Source (Author)

SALARY LEVELS	COGTA BUSINESS UNITS	SAMPLE		SAMPLE SIZE PER FOCUS GROUP
		MALES	FEMALES	
Levels 2-10	Auxiliary Services	2	3	5
	HR Conditions of service			
	HR Information Systems			
	HR Recruitment and Selection			
Levels 11-12	HR Conditions of service	2	3	5
	HR Information Systems			
	HR Recruitment and Selection			
	HR Salaries/ Payroll			
Levels 13-15	Human Capital Development (HCD)	3	2	5
	Human Resource Management and Development			
	Office of the HOD			
	Traditional Administration Financial			
	Traditional Institutional			

	Support			
Office of COGTA- KZN MEC	Administration to Ministry	1	4	5
	Finance to Ministry			
	Operations to Ministry			
	Strategic Support to Ministry			
Total sample size across four focus groups		20		

3.5 Sampling techniques

For the purposes of this qualitative study, a non-probability sampling method was used to select staff for the sample, as previously mentioned in Chapter One. There are several sampling methods that can be used to conduct research (Mutinta, 2013). However, in this study the following sampling methods were considered as relevant:

- Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling was used to obtain the qualitative data; the researcher needed easy access to these groups. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to use their judgement to select cases that produce the best answers to their research questions, therefore meeting their objectives (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009).

Creswell (2014, p. 23) describes purposive sampling as one of the non-probability sampling methods in which the selection of subjects or units into the sample is subject to the choice or judgment of the researcher and this approach was utilised in this study. This is suitable for qualitative approaches. For the purpose of this study, the researcher explored the quota sampling method, the purposive sampling method and the volunteer sampling method.

Creswell claims that the use of the purposive sampling method (also known as judgemental or subjective method) is solely dependent on the discretion of the researcher. The researcher selects the sample with a specific ‘purpose’ with the intention of understanding a phenomenon. Resultant to that, the selected characteristics aim to respond to the research questions and therefore, achieve the purpose of the study.

- Quota sampling

For ease of reference, Saunders and Thornhill (2012) define quota sampling as a method of gathering representative data from a defined group. This guarantees that a sample group embodies selected characteristics of the population by the researcher. Moreover, this method is cheap, efficient and user-friendly (Saunders and Thornhill 2012, Online, October 2017).

The heading below reflects how data quality control was explored when the study was conducted.

3.6 Data quality control

The study explored controls such as trustworthiness, credibility, conformability, dependability and transferability.

- Trustworthiness

As qualitative research does not use numbers as evidence, the research uses different criteria to determine trustworthiness and credibility. Moreover, the aim of qualitative research is to promote understanding of a specific phenomenon within a specific context and not to generalise results to a broader population.

- Credibility

Redman et al., (1996, p. 7) describes “credibility” as how confident the qualitative researcher is in the truth of the research study’s findings and this boils down to the question of: How do you know that your findings are true and accurate?

- Transferability

Similarly, ‘transferability’ is how the qualitative researcher demonstrates that the research study’s findings are applicable to other contexts. In this case, ‘other contexts’ can mean similar situations, similar populations, and similar phenomena.

- Confirmability

Likewise, ‘confirmability’ is the degree of neutrality in the research study’s findings. In other words, this means that the findings are based on participants’ responses and not any potential bias or personal motivations of the researcher. This involves making sure that researcher bias does not skew the interpretation of what the research participants said to fit a certain narrative.

To establish 'confirmability' the researcher provided an audit trail which highlighted every step of data analysis that was made in order to provide a rationale for the decisions made. This helped to establish that the research study's findings were accurately portrayed participants' responses. Moreover, the scholars explain dependability as an extent that the study could be repeated by other researchers and that the findings would be similar. In other words, if a person wanted to replicate the study, they would have to have enough information from the research report to do so and obtain similar findings to those of the study. In this instance, the researcher used an inquiry audit in order to establish dependability, which required an outside person to review and examine the research process and the data analysis in order to ensure that the findings were consistent and could be repeated (Redman, (1996, p. 7) and Loshin (2001), cited in Herzog, Scheuren, and Winkler 2007, p. 234).

3.7 Chapter summary

This chapter's focus was on the research design and methods. It looked at different types of research paradigms as they carried out the cognitive interest of the researcher and, therefore, gave an onset direction as to how the study should proceed. Different types of research and research strategies in alignment with the researched topic and the selected design guiding the study which is qualitative were also discussed. Likewise, data collection rules, as well as collection tools in line with the targeted population were also discussed. Similarly, sampling, size and selection strategies were also addressed.

Chapter Four presents data presentation and analysis of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter was based on the research design and methods regarding the causes of stress and how it can be managed in the workplace. This involved a case study of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in KwaZulu-Natal (COGTA). The chapter's focus was on the research design and the methods. The chapter looked at different types of research paradigms as they carried forward the cognitive interest of the researcher and gave an onset direction as to how the study should proceed. Additionally, different types of research design and research strategies in alignment with the researched topic and the selected design guiding the study, which is qualitative, were also discussed. The importance of data collection rules, collection tools in line with the targeted population were also discussed. Sampling, size and selection strategies were also addressed.

This chapter deals with data presentation and its analysis. Data were collected by means of conducting focus group interviews as well as individual interviews to complement, supplement and balance the perception of the phenomenon. These have been presented in this chapter per question and per focus group as categorised. Also, respondents' demographics are presented.

The sub-heading that follows discusses content analysis and interpretation that have been explored.

4.2 Content analysis and interpretation

The analysis and interpretation for this study concentrated on the responses of the interviewed respondents, as well as data collected from a review of related literature. There are several methodologies of content analysis that can be used in empirical research. However, in this study, the analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. These are defined by scholars as follows: -

- Qualitative content analysis

Aleck and Settle (1995, p. 271), define the qualitative content analysis as "the collection and systematic conclusions concerning the characteristics and meaning of recorded material". Babbie and Mouton (2001, p. 383), highlight that this "recorded material can be in the form of books, magazines,

laws or constitutions”. Likewise, Boyatzis (1998), as cited in Mohammed and Ibrahim, (2012, p. 39-40) describe analysis as the classifications and presentation of themes, also known as patterns that illustrate data in detail and deal with diverse topics. Furthermore, Tubey, Rotich, and Bengat (2015) states it provides systematic elements to data analysis that allow the researcher to associate an analysis of the frequency of a theme. This will reveal accuracy and intricacies. Additionally, it gives an opportunity to understand issues widely discussed (Marks and Yardley (2004), cited in Mohammed and Ibrahim, 2012, p. 40).

In this study, respondents’ responses were organised and analysed in a thematic format. Using the following variables: stress leave, recruitment processes as well as the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

- Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was explored as one of the most common forms of analysis in qualitative research. The analysis focusses on highlighting, studying, and recording patterns (or ‘themes’) within data. Themes are patterns across data sets that are essential to describing a phenomenon and are connected to a research question. Analysis of themes emphasise the content of text, as it probes the ‘what’ more than the ‘how’ (Kohler, 2005, p. 17).

Furthermore, for the purpose of this study, investigator triangulation was used as it seeks to expand, correct or check the subjective views of interpreters and individual interviews that have been conducted through groups.

- Triangulation approach

Triangulation is used to refer to observations made by the researcher on the research from at least two different points of view (Flick, 2014, p. 178). Flick (2014) argues that there are four types of triangulation strategies and these are the triangulation of data, investigator triangulation, triangulation of theories and within-method triangulation. Denzin, 1978, p. 297-304, cited in Flick, (2014, p. 178), describe these strategies as follows: -

○ Triangulation of data

This strategy combines data obtained from different sources, times, places and people.

○ Investigator triangulation

This strategy is characterised by using different observers to balance influences of individuals’ subjectivity.

- Triangulation of theories

This strategy uses approaching data with multiple perceptions and hypothesis in mind. Various theoretical points of view could be placed side-by-side to assess their utility and power.

- Triangulation within-method

This strategy uses different methods within questionnaires and between methods which are often complex. The complexity is a driving force to ensure the validity of field efforts.

Triangulation has been critiqued by many scholars. For example, Bloor, (1997, p. 39), argues that there is too little attention paid to the fact that triangulation seeks to investigate in a specific way whereas, if this aspect is neglected, then triangulation is faced with the accusation of extreme eclecticism.

Moreover, the data collection methods for the study were focus-group centred, and used in-depth interviews, documents and archival methods. The strategy, therefore, complemented these methods.

Below is the presentation of the respondents during the research interviews.

4.3 Respondents summary

In order to understand the causes of stress and how it can be managed in the workplace, the researcher scheduled four focus group interviews with the selected study participants and had in-depth discussions based on the predetermined questions designed to guide the discussions. An interview schedule listed all the questions that were to be explored in the course of the interviews which also had semi-structured interview schedules with follow-up questions where the need arose. As explained already, Group one was salary level 2-10 (LB) employees, group two was level 11-12 (MMS), group three consisted of salary level 13-15 (SMS) and group four were employees from the office of COGTA-KZN MEC. All four focus groups were asked 10 similar questions that appeared in the predetermined interview schedule.

As stated in Chapter One, to augment data from focus groups, information was further obtained from respondents by conducting individual interviews to get the richness of the discussions. These individuals were selected using purposive sampling. The individual interviews were, as previously indicated, constituted by 4 LB, 2 MMS, 2 SMS and 2 MIN. According to Creswell (2014), purposive sampling features were amongst the main types of non-probability sampling methods as stated above.

4.4 Interview presentation

4.4.1 Demographics of the respondents (focus groups)

Table 5: Source: (Author)

FOCUS GROUPS	BUSINESS UNITS AT COGTA-KZN	WORKING DURATION	WORKING HOURS
Level 2-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Auxiliary Services - HR Conditions of service - HR Recruitment and Selection - HR Information Systems 	- All employees had been employed for more than five years	- All employees work eight hours per day with one hour for lunch
Level 11-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HR Conditions of service - HR Salaries/ Payroll - HR Recruitment and Selection - HR Information Systems 	- All employees had been employed for more than five years	- All employees work eight hours per day with one- hour for lunch.
Level 13-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Office of the HOD - Human Capital Development (HCD) - Human Resource Management and Development - Traditional Institutional Support - Traditional Financial Administration 	- All employees had been employed for more than 10 years	- All employees work eight hours per day with one hour for lunch
Office of COGTA-KZN MEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administration to Ministry - Finance to Ministry - Operations to Ministry - Strategic Support to Ministry 	- All employees had been employed for more than five years	- All employees work eight hours per day with one hour for lunch. However, the office is highly fluid. Changes to daily routine can occur in an instant due to the high demands of the political office.

4.4.2 Demographics of the respondents (individuals)

Table 5: Source: (Author)

FOCUS GROUPS	BUSINESS UNITS AT COGTA-KZN	WORKING DURATION	WORKING HOURS
Level 2-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HR Conditions of service - HR Recruitment and Selection - HR Information Systems - HR Salaries/ Payroll 	- All employees had been employed for more than five years	- All employees work eight hours per day with one hour for lunch.
Level 11-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HR Conditions of service - HR Labour Relations 	- All employees had been employed for more than five years	- All employees work eight hours per day with one hour for lunch.
Level 13-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supply Chain Management - Public Participation 	- All employees had been employed for more than ten years	- All employees work eight hours per day with one hour for lunch.
Office of COGTA-KZN MEC	- Administration to Ministry	- All employees above had been employed for more than five years	- All employees work eight hours per day with one hour for lunch. However, the office has highly fluid Changes to daily routine can occur in an instant due to the high demands of the political office.

Summary of overall participants

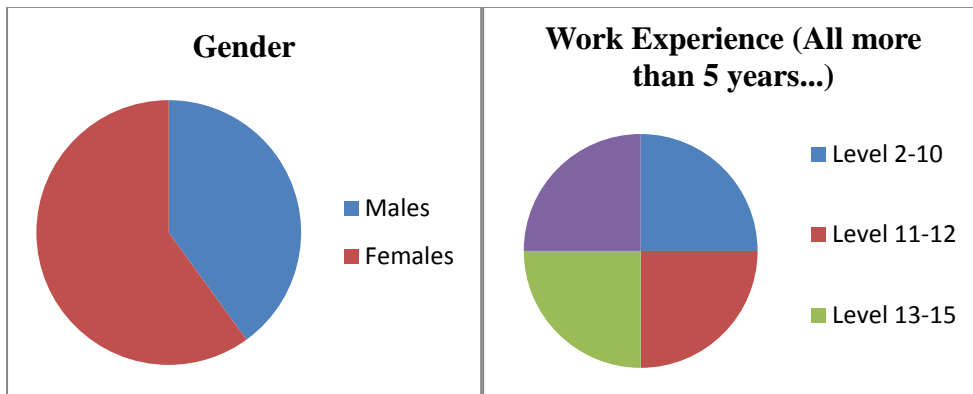


Figure 6: Source: (Author).

Figure 7: Source: (Author).

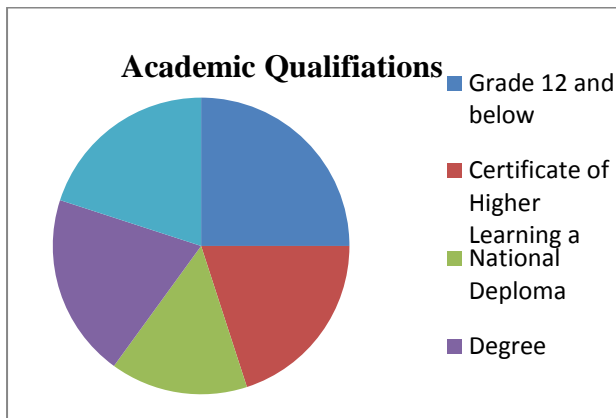


Figure 8: Source: (Author).

4.5 Interview questions and responses (focus groups)

The interview questions and responses from all participants are reflected below:

4.5.1 Question one

Does the organisational structure and prevalent climate in the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs cause employees stress? Please provide reasons for your answers.

Levels 2-10 (LB)

A number of respondents raised concerns relating to the role of the Department's executives in the process of redesigning/ realigning its existing organisational structure since 2012.

LB-1 stated: “it has been five years without any decision being made by the (EA) to finalise the process of the Department’s organisational structure after the process of redesigning started in 2012. Furthermore, as a result of the moratorium on the filling of posts within the Department, officials have been performing additional duties, some without being remunerated. When vacancies are filled, they are usually occupied by employees on contract which has a negative impact on the permanent staff”. LB-3 further stated that “most managers expect officials to perform exceptionally well irrespective of being permanent or not and having lost five years of their pensionable benefits. This is impossible as they have been unfairly treated”. LB-2 reported that “people have been working as contract workers for many years and have not being appointed permanently which has caused stress to them”. LB-5 referred to “the delays in the finalisation of the organisational structure has also impacted on employees as at times they are victimised by line managers by constantly reminding them about the nature of their appointment and how easily they can be dismissed”. Later LB-5 said, “due to delays in the filling of posts, most managers have high expectations from officials when the tasks are allocated. However, they do not consider that those tasks should have been performed by more than one individual or even by seniors”. Similarly, LB-1, LB-2 and LB3-’s concerns were that “officials are not being able to commit to long-term financial engagements as they are also employed on contract, e.g. investing in property and buying cars as their future is not as stable as expected”.

LB-4 stated, “in general, political challenges that the public sector is currently experiencing are unbearable, where political office bearers interfere with administration matters and decisions and overrule them as and when they wish to, is a major setback for the sector”. LB-2, LB-3 and LB-4’s joint concerns were ‘the ignorance of the HOD and the MEC in not implementing the Labour Relations Act, (2014) as amended to correct the nature of the appointment of contract workers that exist within the Department’. LB-5 pointed out that “the Department has had several consultative forums where the legislative framework regarding contract workers within the public sector is concern has been discussed at length however, months later; no decision has been taken by the leaders of the Department in this regard”.

To conclude the discussed question, the LB focus group unanimously agreed that the different nature of appointments that exist within the Department, the delay in the filling of vacancies and the delay in the finalisation of the organisational structure have caused tension and stress amongst employees at COGTA-KZN.

Level 11-12 (MMS)

The Researcher noticed that the focus group shared similar sentiments with the LB group. However, the responses in this group were much more vague and indirect. It was assumed that the group was avoiding blaming the executives as a result of their levels in the Department. In addition, it was

observed by the researcher that these participants are at a level where they are exposed to certain Departmental information that will make them understand issues and challenges better than the levels below them.

Apart from concerns relating to policy frameworks not being fully adhered to as well as politicians interfering with administration processes and procedures of the Department as indicated by the LB group, this group's concerns were based more on HRM Delegation of Authority, which was taken away from Human Resource managers in 2012. MMS-1 mentioned that "this has made the working life of HR managers very difficult as everything they do in HR has to be approved by the EA". As a result, MMS-5 felt that this has affected management simple processes being achieved as daily operational responsibilities need to be viewed and approved by the EA. MMS-5 alluded on that 'such decision-making includes: finalisation of the proposed new structure which has taken five years to be approved, delegation of leave, delegation on appointments of staff etc.' MMS-2 mentioned that 'the delay in filling of vacancies has become a burden to existing staff as they are expected to take over those daily responsibilities'. On the other hand, MMS-3 raised an issue that 'submissions are being delayed as a result of managers not wanting to sign if the contents in the submission does not favour them thus this causes further delays in reaching the EA. Moreover, "people are overloaded with work and are failing to meet set targets and deadlines".

MMS-1 further cited the fact that "the impact on low work performance has been visible in the majority of employee's performance assessment reports". According to MMS-4, "leave take has increased as the number of absenteeism in the Department has escalated for various reasons in the past five years; e.g. various medical reasons; stress-related due to work load pressures; stress-related due to poor supervision; stress-related due to favouritism; etc." MMS-5 concurred with MMS-4 by stating that "the increase in leave take is also as a result of two reasons, 1: Genuine Medical reasons which could visibly be seen when employees are home-visited and 2: Truant Tendencies where employees have been making excuses not to come to work and have been giving lame reasons not to come and work".

To conclude the discussed question, MMS focus group unanimously agreed that political interference in administration processes of the Department; the holding of the Human Resource Management Delegation by the EA and the delay in the filling of vacancies within the Department have caused stress amongst management and employees at COGTA-KZN.

Level 13-15 (SMS)

The researcher observed the responses to the question and that it was viewed differently by this focus group. Furthermore, as much as there were different views amongst the managers regarding this

question, all five respondents agreed that communication was the key challenge that has resulted in the Department's organizational structure not being finalised.

To the researcher, the group unanimously acknowledged the process of reviewing or realigning the current organisational structure, however, raised concerns regarding the non-existence of consultation processes in relation to its development. SMS-1 cited that "the organisational structure development process seemingly belonged to the developers and the EA and not the managers as end-users and expected implementers of the structure".

Concurring with SMS-1, SMS-2 said "this has created a stressful environment as decision-makers are involved in important decision-making without consulting management". SMS-3, SMS-4 and SMS-5 all agreed by mentioning that 'due to the Department not having an approved organisational structure and management not being consulted about the development process of it, this has impacted on our (management) emotions and increased uncertainty stress levels'. SMS-4, in addition, said: "several rumours are circulating in the Department about the uncertainty of management jobs which has caused health-related concerns within most managers". Furthermore, SMS-4 noted, "constant change in management has been observed that over the past five years and this has created instability and inconsistency within the Department".

Consequently, said SMS-5: "employees have different job descriptions as opposed to what they are performing; uncertainty in physical office locations; constant amendments to the Department's Business Plan and Annual Performance Plans etc. This has been a major concern in the Department". SMS-5 further claimed that 'the administration's political interferences are a strong factor in all management backlogs and inconsistencies'. To avoid this climate, SMS-3 said that "principals must be able to differentiate between the State vs Party as this behaviour is unbearable".

SMS-2 stated that: "some people are appointed in high positions because of their political connections and after being appointed would constantly be away from work to perform political directives during office hours and their counterpart's would be expected to pull their weight and perform those duties while they get paid".

During this discussion, SMS-3 also raised the importance of government employees at large in understanding the transformation journey that the government has undertaken from being in the Public Administration sphere pre-1994 to the current Public Management sector which is still not understood by many employees. Furthermore, "if people understood this transition, they would respect and love their jobs more". SMS-3 spoke about importance of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of government organizations, instruments and programmes, and higher quality of service

delivery that is explained in the Public Management theory, “if employees understood these theories, there would be better change in the Department”. Further to this, the respondent placed emphasis on how the theory is result-driven as its focus is on clients, outputs and outcomes.

To conclude this discussion, the SMS unanimously agreed that the process of developing the organisational structure that excludes management as the expected implementers of the structure is problematic as are the employees’ job descriptions that are different to what they perform on a daily basis. A further problem is the uncertainty in physical office locations of the Department. There is a constant amendment to the Department’s Business Plan and Annual Performance Plans and the administration’s political interference which has a major impact on management. All of this has made the climate stressful and not conducive to efficient service delivery.

Office of COGTA-KZN MEC

A number of respondents mentioned the fact that Ministry staff members are appointed under different conditions of services which are mainly influenced by the Ministerial Handbook and that the Ministry has its own structure which is different from the Departmental structure and mainly focuses on providing support to the EA. As a result, the Department’s structure does not affect the staff at Ministry as much as the respondents stated.

In turn, the question did not bear any fruitful outcomes as the organisational structure does not have a major impact on their operations as ministry staff. However, all their responses were based on the concerns that their nature of appointment is different from the staff in the Department as they are appointed on a contract basis which is aligned with the term of office of the MEC.

MIN-1 cited: “job insecurity and instability is problematic in this nature of work due to continuous changes of political mandate”. MIN-3 highlighted the fact that in “the nature of their work, loyalty is one of the bearers to the future jobs as staff depend on the referral of the current job”. Furthermore, MIN-4 mentioned, “existing staff is normally viewed as loyal and/ or still affiliated with the previous leadership. Thus this may pose a threat to new leadership which may jeopardize the operations of the new office bearers therefore resulting in job loss”. MIN-2 stated, “During the transition process this creates delays in service delivery progress as new leadership may have different opinions on existing programmes and projects and may propose drastic changes”.

MIN-4 and MIN-5 agreed that: “the prevalent climate in the department does cause employees stress in a sense that new appointees require induction and training to be able to effectively support the office which normally takes time to happen. Thus this delays training to address already identified gaps in building office capacity”.

To conclude this discussion, employees from the Ministry office were mainly concerned about their appointments which are aligned with the term of the EA.

4.5.2 Question two

Do employees' roles in the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs cause stress and if 'yes', why?

Levels 2-10(LB)

Question two of the interview schedule required respondents to provide responses on whether the employees' allocated roles within the Department causes stress to them or not. LB- 1's concern from the LB focus group was that the merging of roles as a result of lack of staff capacity in conjunction to the availability of tools of the trade to conduct operational daily work is a huge challenge within the Department. For instance, "while you are expected to perform your functions, you are also expected to do the other work as a result of a vacancy."

These concerns were raised by many as important issues and causes of non-performance. LB-1 and LB-2 further mentioned that 'employee's roles in the Department cause a lot of stress due to a number of vacant positions that have not been filled for a long time'. 'Furthermore, people are delegated many responsibilities and they are not even remunerated to recognise their efforts'. LB-5 stated that: "one of the main challenges is the mismatch between job descriptions as opposed to allocated daily duties by line managers. This has caused major challenges as some employees perform duties that are out of their scope of work and they are not recognised for the extra efforts".

LB-2 claimed that "communication breakdown is one of the main causes of role challenges within the Department. At times, management fail or delay to communicate or cascade important information to junior staff with the result that junior staff are viewed as inefficient employees".LB-4 agreed with all the other respondents by stating that: "management lacks communication skills which results in employees experiencing stress in their jobs". LB-3 stated that "sometimes officials are overloaded with tasks which are not even in their job descriptions".

To conclude this discussion, the LB focus group unanimously agreed that the way employees are allocated roles within the Department causes stress due to various reasons including misalignment of some job descriptions of staff; non-recognition of the staff who perform duties that are not theirs and political interference in the administration processes of the Department.

Level 11-12 (MMS)

In response to question two, MMS expressed views which focused on the delays in processing of information. MMS-1 stated that “MMS often receive directives and information late from SMS. This often affects our (staff) delegated duties from our (staff) line managers and further delays decision making on critical Departmental matters. Moreover the scarcity of tools of the trade in some Business Units is a challenge in delivering the required quality of work”. MMS-2 stated that “information Technology (IT) seems to cause a hindrance to our (staff) execution of duties by delaying the procurement of necessary IT equipment”.

MMS-3 further added that “contract workers are the most stressed employees as they do not receive mandatory benefits and equal conditions of service received by their permanent counterparts”. Furthermore MMS-4 and MMS-5 agreed with the above views of MMS-3 by stating ‘the delays in the turnaround time of submissions from the Department to the Ministry and vice versa is a hindrance to the speedy resolution of tasks delegated to the staff by managers/supervisors.

To conclude this discussion, MMS focus group unanimously concurred with the view that processes need to be streamlined to improve workflows and service delivery. Moreover, delays in important decision-making; lack of job security for contract employees and inadequate tools of the trade causes stress at COGTA-KZN.

Levels 13-15(SMS)

In responding to question 2, SMS views geared towards strategic operations of the organisation and the lack of seamless co-ordination and how this can cause stress in a workplace. SMS-1 said, “senior management fails to distinguish between personal and work directives by warranting the urgent execution of resolutions even in non-work-related matters”. SMS-3 concurred with the statement and said “all SMS recipients are subjected to high levels of stress because they engage directly with communities concerning matters of service delivery”.

SMS-2 and SMS-4 agreed with that statement and further added: ‘due to staff shortages, duties and tasks are distributed amongst the limited staff members available, which has caused increased workload stress in employees. Ordinarily this should not be happening and it has weighed in heavily on staff and it has had an adverse impact on the staff’s social lives which can be seen in the increase of incapacity leave monthly reports’. Furthermore, SMS-4 self-confessed that “staff shortages are caused by employees that have been off-sick for longer periods than necessary. It’s an undeniable fact that it is a primary responsibility of line managers to manage absence of their personnel and further to provide sickness absence information to HRM which they often fail to do or, at times, delay to do.

This results in HRM not being able to capture this information on the system timeously which has huge financial implications, and moreover reflects incorrect leave credits in the records of employees”.

SMS-5 further suggested that “perhaps the EA should prioritise the filling of all SMS vacant positions and all other critical vacancies to mitigate workload stress that is caused by additional allocated roles to employees”.

To conclude this discussion, the SMS focus group agreed that the main challenges experienced in the allocation of employees roles at COGTA-KZN is caused by the failure of the Executive Management and Senior Management to distinguish between personal and work-related directives which more often than not interfere with work processes. Furthermore, the long-standing vacancies of SMS that have not been filled are creating backlogs and inefficiency within the Department.

Office of COGTA-KZN MEC

The researcher noted that question 2 by Ministry staff was received and perceived as the most challenging experience within their working environment. Ministry’s role was perceived to be most challenging within the Department. During the Ministry staff focus group, it became clear from many respondents that as much as Performance Agreements have clear defined roles and functions that are signed by employees appointed in this office, the roles assigned to them (staff) on a daily basis tend to differ as their functions are linked with those of the MEC and will depend on her daily engagements.

All respondents agreed that the EA as a political appointee has an important role to provide strategic direction to all programmes within the Department and to ensure that all mandates received from communities are implemented and that the budget assigned by Provincial Treasury is utilised effectively. Bearing this in mind, it became clear from all respondents that employees’ roles at Ministry are solely dependent on the roles of the EA and could not be separated and /or disassociated from her (EA’s) daily busy schedule.

MIN-1 was in full agreement with the question that allocated roles cause stress to them and stated: “most times we (staff) are expected to work on weekends which is the time we are supposed to spend with our families and loved ones”. MIN-2 in agreement said, “I acknowledge the fact that we are compensated for working additional hours by the employer, however, this overtime has caused strain and tension in our (staff) personal lives as we do not spend enough time with our families and friends”.

According to MIN-4, “in most instances, the EA has preference for who to work with and who to travel with. In these cases you will find that the people she (EA) chooses are the same people with whom she has worked during previous assignments and thus deserve a break. This further means they will have to be on duty again as they will be specifically chosen”. MIN-3 added to the conversation by saying, “all daily allocated roles in the office are perceived as urgent which results in people becoming overworked and furthermore expected to be available on their cellular phones 24 hours”. In line with this, MIN-5 mentioned that “being expected to take on roles and tasks of other staff members who are not favoured or believed to be less inefficient puts more pressure and strain on those trusted due to long hours of work and travelling”.

To conclude this discussion, the Ministry staff focus group agreed that allocated roles within the Ministry office causes them stress. The roles assigned to staff differ from initial roles and responsibilities appearing on people’s job descriptions, additional roles that are often added as a result of staff preference and roles that always exceed working hours and expect people to work even after hours of work.

4.5.3 Question three

What are the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that cause stress at the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional affairs?

Levels 2-10 (LB)

Question three of the interview was based on what the intrinsic and extrinsic factors are that cause stress in the Department COGTA-KZN. LB-1 was adamant that as much as extrinsic factors always contribute to stress on employees, intrinsic factors were the main cause why people are stressed at COGTA-KZN, mainly from job roles and functions. LB-2 maintained that “vacant posts are not filled timeously therefore people end up performing over and above the duties they are supposed to be performing. Further to this, people are not recognised for additional work and most of them are employed as contract workers. As a result, it is not easy to complain to line managers as they do not want to be seen as ungrateful. Unfortunately, their (staff) families carry this entire strain”. LB-5 in addition alluded to the fact that the ‘majority of employees are breadwinners in their families thus losing their jobs will result in unemployment and poverty’.

LB-4 stated that “this situation has created anxiety and depression in many employees as their future is not determined and while people work, at the same time they do not know if they will be returning to work the following day”. LB-3 said that “supervisors undermine their staff; they overload them with work that is not even part of their job descriptions and further, do not appreciate the work that

they do. Delays in filling of vacant post's is one of the main challenges as these functions end-up being performed by existing personnel over and above what they are expected to do".

To conclude this discussion, LB focus groups unanimously agreed that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors do cause stress at COGTA-KZN. Mainly, the high volume of vacancies that are not filled within the Department has resulted in staff being overloaded with unnecessary work.

Level 11-12 (MMS)

Responses from the MMS focus group were not much different to those from the LB focus group. MMS-1, over and above what was said by the LB focus group, raised the point that: "numerous appointments are filled by people with no work experience. These have been processed by the Department as opposed to the required job description and publicised adverts. The existing personnel have been having challenges whereby they have been required to train those appointed to those higher positions".

In agreement, MMS-2 said, "these incidents are very stressing more especially when you (staff) are old in an organisation and you (staff) possess the right qualifications and relevant experience yet you (staff) do not get to be recognised by being promoted when opportunities become available, immediately you (staff) just fail to perform as you (staff) become de-motivated". Moreover, said MMS-3, "even when some posts are advertised, more often than not, they are filled with the wrong people, thus an intention of filling them becomes fruitless". According to MMS-4 and MMS-5, 'most employees are demotivated by these incidences and some have been booked off sick for a long time and this has affected them both physically and emotionally'.

To conclude this discussion, the MMS focus group agreed that both factors cause stress to the employees of COGTA-KZN especially when less qualified employees get preference while long-serving and qualified employees are overlooked.

Levels 13-15 (SMS)

In relation to question three of the interview, the SMS focus group felt similar to the above two focus groups. SMS-1 said "inconsistent treatment amongst staff and management and inconsistencies in decision-making by the Departmental executives is the most stressful experience that employees are undergoing everyday within the Department". SMS-5 claimed that "the employer has created a non-conducive working environment as decisions that are made in the Department are selective, people are often treated differently". Furthermore, SMS-5 complained and said "there is abuse of power by

various managers where and when it suits them, and also Departmental policies are not adhered to, and when they are followed, it is because they (executives) want to fulfil their unlawful deeds”.

SMS-2 claimed that, “there are staff that are deployed in various positions however not to perform those functions but to be ears and eyes of certain executives in those business units”. SMS-3 moved this point by stating that “such actions of executives has made working conditions very difficult for staff and has contributed to lack of trust, badmouthing and backstabbing within the Department”. SMS-4 referred to executives as ‘people who always want to blame other staff members for their mistakes and never take responsibility and accountability for their behaviour’.

SMS-2 mentioned that “sabotaging serious and critical decisions is a norm in the Department both by certain staff to management and management to certain staff. This includes intentionally delaying submissions carrying important decisions to be approved by the EA to benefit either employees or certain management”. SMS-1 mentioned that “some strategic meetings, for example, Executive Committee Meetings (EXCO) have been turned into operational meetings by the executives. Administration matters and labelling certain personnel are the discussions of the day during these important meetings instead of discussing serious challenges of the Department”.

SMS-3 emphasised this matter by stating that “some management is de-motivated by this behaviour and has lost hope as some of our (staff) concerns are not attended to either by the executive meetings or by the EA”. Furthermore, respondent 3 raised a concern that “some managers have been on very long incapacity leave due to these challenges”.

To conclude this discussion, the SMS focus group agreed that intrinsic factors are the main causes of stress within the employees of COGTA-KZN as a result of inconsistency treatment of employees with respect to decision-making, staff deployment favourable working environment and service conditions.

Office of COGTA-KZN MEC

In response to question three, Ministry staff did not differ in their responses from other focus groups as they also work for the same Department and experience similar challenges. MIN-1 highlighted the issue of ‘long working hours that are experienced in the office which includes weekends and public holidays’. In addition, MIN-4 stated that “this condition affects us (staff) both internally and externally. Internal pressures are too much to bear because of work volumes and tight work deadlines which affect time that we (staff) should be spending with our (staff) families and loved ones”.

MIN-2 confirmed this by stating that “I have been a victim of extrinsic factors as a result of work-pressures and unrealistic deadlines. I nearly lost my wife as she had to take care of the family,

household duties, extended family responsibilities and obligations single handily which in the long run became too much for her to bear and she opted for gambling to release her stress levels. Through the Employee Assistance Programme and the support from Human Resource I was transferred to another division within the Departmental directorate where I can work normal working hours. As a result, I managed to visit home timeously as I am from the Eastern Cape Province”.

MIN-3 raised the issue of ‘incapacity as a result of high vacancy rate in the Department but also as a result of staff that has been booked off sick for longer periods for various reasons’. Moreover, MIN-5 mentioned that “non/ or lack of provision of relevant Training and Development needs as and when required in the Department is a main contributor to stress levels as knowing staff will have to coach and mentor while being expected to deliver and meet tight dead-lines given to them by managers”.

To conclude this discussion, Ministry focus group agreed that their main challenge resulted from intrinsic factors i.e. a high vacancy rate in the Department, tight work deadlines, constant travelling and unrealistic working hours which has made it difficult to receive support from their families.

4.5.4 Question four

What in your view is the role of the Employee Health and Wellness unit in the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in dealing with work-related stress issues?

Levels 2-10 (LB)

LB-1 from this group noted the importance of having an Employee Health and Wellness unit within the Department and how this has taught them various things like living healthy lives, knowing their health status and other related health information and knowledge which they did not know before. LB-2 was unsure about the general role of the Employee Health and Wellness in the Department though. The researcher holds the view that this could be a result of poor communication from the Employee Health and Wellness unit to the employees within the Department.

All respondents stated that ‘normally, Employee Health and Wellness information within the Department is transmitted via intranet and emails’. LB-1 said “some employees in the Department do not have access to email and the internet since they do not have computers and perform functions that do not require them”. LB-1 mentioned that “this is a challenge as some employees do not have computer access thus cannot access information that is shared by the Employee Health and Wellness desk on an almost daily basis”. LB-2 stated that “I am not happy about the fact that even when the services are provided by the unit, confidentiality is not up to standard; this is my main concern. Most employees that are responsible for this portfolio are mainly very junior staff, furthermore, on a

monthly basis, the Department provides immune boosters to employees with very low and/or compromised immune systems, and these boosters are associated with HIV/ Aids patients which makes it very difficult to collect them or to be seen collecting and/or receiving them as a result of stigma”.

Similarly, LB-2 stated “most employees including myself choose not to collect these boosters even though we (staff) need them because of the stigma that they carry”. LB-3 understood the role of Employee Health and Wellness unit to be that of ‘assisting officials to professionally deal with personal and work-related problems and furthermore, to provide health screenings and support thereafter’. LB-3 applauded the initiative that the Department has taken to provide employees with these services which did not exist in the Department in the past.

LB-4 understood the role of Employee Health and Wellness in dealing with stress matters within the Department, but also understood the stress it carries. As a result of that stress, she openly disclosed and said: “I’m HIV positive and I acknowledge the role that the unit plays by providing us (staff) with immune boosters; however I’m not certain that confidentiality is maintained as the staff members that handle these matters do not have the demeanour to observe confidentiality protocols. From my engagements with them (help desk staff), I was not assured of any signed confidentiality agreement that protects me and other staff and the information which they have access to or any punitive measures that will be taken should this agreement be bridged. More so I need more support than the immune boosters to live a healthier life, for instance, on a monthly basis I collect my anti-retroviral medication at the nearby clinic. As a mandatory practice these should be collected and ingested at a set time to avoid weakened levels in the immune system”. “Furthermore, to be able to do this, I need to take one-day off work every month from my vacation leave days to spend a day at the clinic and collect my medication as in most instances queues are very long. These visits often include CD4 count checks and other related check-ups which makes it difficult to make it back to work on the same day. The issue is when your supervisor requires a reason to approve this vacation leave as it would have become a norm that you take vacation leave on the similar day every month. However, these leave applications are met with resistance as supervisors often counteract them because of their own challenges of being short-staffed and more often than not they tend to refuse approval of leave. Safe to say, I ended defaulting on my anti-retroviral because I was not ready to disclose to my supervisor about my status and the reason of taking these leaves”.

LB-4 added that whilst “this may sound like a fair question by supervisors; however it is an unfair question to us (staff) as one may not be ready to disclose their health status especially to that particular person (supervisor). This has resulted in unnecessary stress to me. This situation has affected me emotionally and I have opted to stop collecting treatment for several months now as I was

tired of making similar excuses every month to my supervisor to go and collect”. The respondent suggested that ‘the Departmental nurse should be informed about these challenges and further make arrangements with their clinics that medication be delivered to her and collected from her within the Department to avoid absenteeism’.

LB-1 and LB-2 in support agreed with LB-4 and further added that the Departmental nurse should be in a position to provide such medication in house to avoid such instances. Further to that, all respondents suggested that more chronic medication such as medication for High Blood pressure, Diabetes etc. be provided by the nursing sister in-house to avoid unnecessary staff absenteeism as a result of monthly medication collections.

LB-5 understood the role of Employee Health and Wellness in dealing with stress issues within the Department, be it physical, emotional or the wellbeing of employees to assist them to perform better. LB-5 seemed very satisfied with the role that this unit provides including the professionalism, good personal approach, good personal skills, confidentiality, excellent communication and amazing support provided by some of the employees who are responsible for this work.

According to all respondents, the unit is very efficient in keeping employees abreast with various, latest health information. However, this information is often shared through emails which disadvantages those without computer access and which often overflow as it addresses general health issues on a daily basis and does not specifically zoom in to specific information which could help the unit structure its messages rather than just forwarding them to employees.

Lastly, LB-2 gave an example to back up her argument where she cited the Department of KZN Health that has an annual calendar that contains various illnesses that are aligned to various themes. For example, HIV/ Aids, is marked annually on the 1 December. Further, it was suggested that the Department could align its Health and Wellness services to this calendar.

To conclude this discussion, LB focus group acknowledged the role of the Employee Health and Wellness unit in the Department and agreed that it may not be specifically spelled out that the services that the unit provides are also intended to release stress at work. However the assistance employees receive surely releases both work encountered stress and personal stress. Furthermore, the group was concerned about how these services and information is communicated to staff, the assurance of confidentiality with personal health information and the current method used to collect immune boosters to those in need.

Level 11-12 (MMS)

According to MMS-1, “the role of the Employee Health and Wellness unit in the Department is supposedly to refer employees to external doctors such as psychologists; financial advisers etc.” The respondent further stated that “there are cases of employees who have been referred to these doctors as a result of not having a good relationship with their line managers but not because they are sick or really need this kind of assistance but to settle their scores”. MMS-2 in support further added that, “the role of the Employee Health and Wellness unit in dealing with stress within the Department is seen to be of a single window oversight whereby the unit listens to one’s problems and refers fittingly”. According to the respondent, “there are no internal interventions and discussions with both parties before referrals take place. Furthermore, adequately qualified resources within the Department to assist with those discussions or ailments before they are externally referred do not exist except the nursing sister”.

In conjunction with MMS-2, MMS-3 said “these external referrals often do not automatically guarantee an immediate appointment as they work on bookings which may not necessarily be available as and when requested”. MMS-4 and MMS-5 ‘acknowledged that quarterly screening sessions conducted by the employer prove to be helpful to employees. However, they added that these could lead to relapse of conditions which could have been dealt with adequately as these screenings are not regularly and there is no effective method of monitoring or constant follow-up on reported cases to ensure continuity of support and care’.

To conclude this discussion, The MMS group unanimously acknowledged the role of the Employee Health and Wellness unit in dealing with stress-related issues in the Department, however they felt that there should be more professional consultation done within the Department by professional related employees before external referrals are suggested.

Levels 13-15 (SMS)

In response to question 4, all SMS were of the view that stress amongst them was mainly contributed by the way the executives are managing the Department. SMS-1 stated that “the role of the Employee Health and Wellness unit in the Department in dealing with work-related stress issues is minimal because staff appointed to deal with this kind of support is at a very junior level and the support cut-across regardless of the level of the employee requesting assistance. Thus, this makes it difficult to SMS to speak to junior personnel about their personal circumstances and challenges as line managers”.

In addition, SMS-5 cited that “executives have a tendency of announcing decisions made by the EA which will affect individuals personally and professionally within the Department without prior engaging those individuals that are affected. For example, the Department is currently realigning its organisational structure, as a result certain management positions are being eliminated and roles amended and this has been done without those affected individuals being consulted or informed”.

SMS-2 similarly, raised an issue of non-professionalism, “managers are recalled from their long planned family vacations, and thus having a domino effect on our (managers) families as this sudden change affects family time”.SMS-3 further mentioned that “executives have a tendency of giving verbal directives which have legal implications, however when requested to put them in writing then you (manager) will be perceived as non-receptive to duty which is viewed as insubordination”.

SMS-4 raised a concern that the “Department transgresses the law in terms of the Employees Performance Management Development System (EPMDS) implementation. For example, during the beginning of the financial year, all SMS sign Performance Agreements with agreed upon targets, however comes the end of the financial year, they (managers) are often told that they do not deserve any awards regardless of their achievements. This act by the Department has caused us (managers) a tremendous amount of stress and we (managers) are very de-motivated as it is. Furthermore, punitive measures or disciplinary actions are weak and are very selective regardless of the severity of the transgression which is an unfair process”.

To conclude this discussion, the SMS focus group acknowledged the role that the unit is playing in terms of assisting employees to deal with work stress-related matters. However, they cited additional challenges relating to communication in relation to various Departmental matters as non-existent and only happening when it suits executives. Furthermore, confidentiality is often doubted especially when critical matters are dealt with by junior staff. Selective punitive measures and non-recognition of managers have all contributed to work stress.

Office of COGTA-KZN MEC

It has emerged that MIN-1 views the role of the Employee Health and Wellness unit within the Department relates to the support structure for employees who need help with everyday work challenges. MIN-2 argued that ‘the role of the Employee Health and Wellness Unit is the most helpful role to the employees and a provision of a state of emotional wellbeing to the Department’. MIN-3 said “I believe that the role of the unit is to support employees to cope better at work, furthermore, that employees should be helped to balance internal life and the external life”. MIN-3 further stated that, “Though the support often is provided to the office whenever we (staff) are not available as our (staff) daily functions are aligned with the functions of the EA, however, the programme should be fit to our (staff) busy schedules”. MIN-4 and MIN-5’s views were similar to other raised views of

questionable confidentiality as some of these roles are handled by junior staff. MIN-5's views were that "the unit should provide the programme that will be tailored made to focus on assisting/supporting us (the office) with ways of handling psychological and emotional stress caused by the office work pressures".

To conclude this discussion, the Ministry focus group understood and acknowledged the role that the Employee Health and Wellness unit plays within the Department. However, their concerns were raised concerning unrealistic working hours and tight office deadlines.

4.5.5 Question five

Are you aware of any management programmes introduced by the Employee Health and Wellness unit to address the issue of work-related stress in the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs?

Levels 2-10 (LB)

The LB focus group had very little knowledge of the programmes offered by the Department or the Employee Health and Wellness unit according to the researcher, because of the limited responses they were providing during the interview, she could not probe further. LB-1 said "I am only aware of the referral network programme of Health Care specialists specifically for stress-related incidents". LB-2 said, "I have no knowledge about any management programmes introduced by the Employee Health and Wellness unit to assist employees in the Department".

LB-3 said that "I am aware of the Employee Health and Wellness screening days and some of the services that are being offered such as HIV/Aids counselling and testing, Pap smear tests, prostate testing; as well as provision of health supplements and boosters that the unit's help desk provides on a quarterly basis". LB-4 and LB-5 understood the role of the unit which they said 'is to assist employees with overall Employee Wellness Programmes but neither could name specific programmes offered by the unit.

To conclude this discussion, the researcher observed that the LB focus group was not fully aware of the majority of the programmes that the unit provides to employees through their help desk to assist them with the mitigation of workplace stress. It is argued that this could have been the result of the method of communicating these programmes to staff which requires staff to have computer access and to be able to read English.

Level 11-12 (MMS)

MMS-1, was aware of the existence of the unit, and said: “it is to ensure of the well-being of all employees of the Department”. MMS-2’s understanding of the programmes offered by management was limited to incapacity leave matters, whereby the employer has contracted an external Doctor’s services to validate some of the old pending cases. Moreover, the respondent knew of the gym programme; i.e. an in-house Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS) service because of emails containing information and knowledge-sharing.

MMS-3 said, “I am aware of the HIV/ Aids programme” whilst MMS-4 stated that “as much as this programme is perceived to be confidential and aims to protect participants due to the stigma it carries, it is still questionable as the internal staff handling this programme are junior thus adding to the limited Senior Management participation”. This argument was later backed-up by all other middle managers.

MMS-4 mentioned that “there are good programmes that are offered by the Department; however the challenge is that these programmes are not clearly explained to employees especially junior staff such as the in-house nursing sisters who have been running a programme of ‘Medical Male Circumcision’ for some time, but few employees know about this programme”. MMS-5 said, “I am aware of the unit and the majority of its services and programmes; however I do not know how I can link these services and programmes provided to workplace stress relief”.

To conclude this discussion with the MMS focus group, it was clear that the information on services and programmes provided by the unit are not clearly defined at the levels that all staff will understand. Furthermore, even though these programmes are communicated, it was argued that the method of communication used to reach staff is poor. Furthermore, there are those employees whose work does not require that they have computer access which means that they experience difficulty in accessing such important information.

Levels 13-15 (SMS)

The SMS focus group was aware of all programmes offered by the Department through the Employee Health and Wellness unit and understood its importance. SMS-1 said, “I have a good understanding of all the programmes offered by the unit; however I do not participate in them because they are run by junior staff”. SMS-2, in addressing this concern, the manager responsible for the unit, declared: “I confirmed that I fully participate in all programmes provided by my unit and I am very content with the programmes offered to all staff and very impressed with the programmes offered. Since the inception of these programmes in 2012, the reports are showing the attendance rising remarkably.

However, it cannot be denied that the unit has begun noticing a trend of senior management not attending these sessions, the reasons are now known and will be attended to”.

SMS-3 said, “I know and understand all the programmes offered by this office but I confirm also my non-participation as well in these programmes and the reason, as already mentioned by other managers, is that they are run by junior staff, this makes it difficult for me (manager) to relate my personal information to lower level staff as they report to us (managers)”. SMS-4 and SMS-5 confirmed knowing all the programmes, but also confirmed non-participation and shared the same concerns with other respondents.

To conclude this discussion, the SMS focus group acknowledged knowing about all the programmes introduced by the Employee Health and Wellness unit in addressing the issue of work-related stress in the department. However, they raised similar challenges concerning the barriers that prevented them participating in these programmes as a result of them being run by staff that they supervise.

Office of COGTA-KZN MEC

The Ministry focus group seemed to be very happy about the services of the Employee Health and Wellness unit. MIN-1 said “I know (about) all programmes offered by this unit and I acknowledge that I attend these sessions as and when I am available as I work unrealistic office hours within the Ministry. My main challenge though is that, in most instances when these sessions take place, I will be out with the EA doing community engagements”. MIN-2 likewise said, “I know (about) all services and programmes offered and confirm that I was once assisted by the unit when I had personal financial problems and could not cope at work. I am better now, thanks to the Employee Health and Wellness help desk”. MIN-3, on the other hand, said, “I do not know some of the programmes however I know the majority of them as I do attend as and when my time permits”. Similarly, MIN-4 and MIN-5 mentioned that ‘as much as they attend and acknowledge these sessions, their concern is that in most instances these sessions happen when they are out of the office with the EA yet they are missing out as these sessions also benefit them’.

In conclusion, the programmes of the business unit were perceived to be well known by the general staff. However, there seemed to be concerns of missing out during these sessions as they would often take place when they are away on business trips.

4.5.6 Question six

In your view, have any of the management programmes introduced by the Employee Health and Wellness unit to address the issue of work-related stress at the Department of Cooperative

Governance and Traditional Affairs achieved their desired objectives? If no, please provide reasons for your answers. If yes, please provide practical examples.

Levels 2-10 (LB)

Overall respondents in the LB focus group were unclear to whether the Employee Health and Wellness unit was providing them with a similar programme to that introduced by management at COGTA-KZN to address issues of workplace stress. It was later established though through the discussions that they do have a slight understanding of the situation.

LB-1 said, "I am only aware of the referral network programme of Health Care specialists specifically for stress-related incidents as previously stated in question five. Furthermore, I believe that the programmes introduced do address issues of work-related stress as I know that when health screenings are done and results are interpreted, the Department often refers us (employees) to external service providers for necessary help and further bears the cost implications, which takes away a huge financial burden from us (employees)". In contrast to this, LB-2 said, "I have no working knowledge of Employee Health and Wellness management programmes introduced by the Department and further I do not know if they address the issues of work-related stress and if such happens, additionally if those programmes achieved the desired employer's objective".

On the other hand, LB-3 said "I am aware of the Employee Health and Wellness screening days and some of the services that are offered such as HIV/Aids counselling and testing; Pap smear tests; prostate testing; as well as provision of health supplements and boosters. I assume that it may not be spelled out that the purposes of these programmes are to address workplace-related stress to have a better environment that has better performing employees, but indeed the programmes are to ensure precisely that".

LB-3 also said "I have some knowledge of management programmes as on a quarterly basis I see wellness screenings are taking place within the Department. However I am not sure if the intention of these screenings is to address issues of workplace related stress". LB-4 and LB-5 similarly understood the role of the unit which they said 'is to assist employees with overall Employee Assistance Programmes, but neither could name specific programmes offered by the unit. Furthermore, the respondents were of the opinion that the Department does achieve the set objectives. Through the observations and reports from Human Capacity Development (HCD), it is felt that the rate of absenteeism has decreased within the Department. Additionally, it has been proven through various Departmental reports that the number of staff attending these programmes has increased over the years'.

To conclude the discussion, the LB focus group at first could not see how the programmes that the Department provides through Employees Assistance Programme help desk related to the relief of workplace stress but subsequently it was unilaterally agreed that the programmes are addressing work-related stress through various initiatives such as accessing a professional nursing sister and other health practitioners who could guide staff with various health information and support.

Level 11-12 (MMS)

Most respondents in the MMS focus group did not know about the management programmes introduced by the Employee Health and Wellness unit to address the issues of workplace-related stress at COGTA-KZN and if they are achieving their desired objectives or not. The group understood the meaning of workplace stress, but was not aware if the programmes provided by the Department to address. This The researcher was of the view that perhaps employees did not understand the synergy between the programmes offered by the Department's Employee Health and Wellness help desk and workplace stress as a concept.

MMS-1, stated, "The role of the Employee Assistance Programme in the Department is to ensure the wellbeing of the employees. I believe that management programmes introduced by the Employee Health and Wellness unit to address the issue of work-related stress in the Department achieve their desired objectives as fairly high numbers of employees are seen queuing to attend these programmes during the wellness days".

MMS-2, subsequently added that "my understanding of various programmes offered by management in the Department is of incapacity leave cases; services of external doctor's to validate existing incapacity leave cases; the gymnasium programme; and in-house Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS) services. I am of the view that the management programmes introduced by the unit do address the issue of work-related stress in the Department and believe that they achieve the management's desired objectives based on various reports that over the years that have been shared by the unit with the employees confirming that a number of employees attending these sessions has increased drastically over the past five years and that the incapacity leave list has decreased by over 50 per cent as the programme has assisted the people with coping skills to come back to work".

MMS-3 and MMS-4 were aware of the HIV/ Aids programme as stated in their previous responses and said, "We believed that these programmes introduced by the unit address the issues of work-related stress in the Department. We are saying this because of our knowledge of the immune booster programme where all registered employees for this programme receive monthly parcels containing various immune boosters' to assist them to perform better". MMS-5 said, "I am aware of the unit and the majority of the services offered; however I do not know how these services and programmes

provided are linked with workplace stress and if they assist management to address issues of work-related stress in the Department or not”.

In conclusion, there appears to be a clear awareness of the services offered by the unit. The provision of immune boosters and general screening of employees seems to be popular amongst employees in this band.

Levels 13-15 (SMS)

SMS-1 and SMS-3, appeared to have good knowledge of all programmes offered by the unit as discussed in question five, but they confirmed that they do not participate in these programmes as they are run by junior staff. Nonetheless, they touch many lives internally and externally. In order to argue their point, the respondents mentioned various reports that the unit has shared with staff in various management meetings.

SMS-2 said, “All management programmes that have been introduced by the Employee Health and Wellness unit to address the issue of work-related stress in the Department have achieved their desired objectives. Based on various feedback reports, the number of employees attending these programmes has increased over the years; also, the increase in the intake of immune boosters; and the increase in the number of employees that have done male circumcision is a good sign”. SMS- 4 and SMS-5 shared similar responses and views with SMS-1 and SMS-3 and further emphasised that the unit responsible for these programmes should find more ways and strategies to draw more managers to screenings to act as role models for junior staff.

In conclusion, the HCD unit may want to explore other implementation strategies which should encourage senior management to attend screening services and to collect immune boosters and possibly utilise the services on a regular basis.

Office of COGTA-KZN MEC

Some of the respondents in the Ministry focus group were also not sure if management programmes introduced by the Employee Health and Wellness unit were there to address the issues of workplace-related stress in the Department or not. The focus group knew about the Employee Health and Wellness programmes introduced by management but they did not know if these were meant to address the issues of workplace-related stress or if these were achieving the desired objectives or not.

MIN-1 stated: “I am aware of all programmes offered by the Employee Health and Wellness help desk. I attend these programmes as and when my time permits because of my busy work schedule. I

believe that these programmes offered by the Employee Health and Wellness unit do address the issues of workplace-related stress as I always feel less strain each time I attended the programme”. Likewise, MIN-2 knew all the programmes offered by the help desk and proudly said, “I was once a recipient of these programmes and the support I received played a huge role in my personal life finances. I did not realise that my personal finance challenges had so much influence on my unhappiness in my household, as I would constantly stress for nothing. I ended up shouting for no reason at everyone around me. Moreover, this visibly showed in my work performance through performance assessments and more so, negatively, in my behaviour towards my children”. Equally, MIN-3 and MIN-4 responses were comparable with MIN-1 as they agreed that they also believed that the programmes offered by the unit did address the issues of workplace-related stress as they have seen their close colleagues who had serious challenges being successfully assisted by these programmes, especially the external support that is received from psychologists. MIN-5 couldn’t agree more, as he said “the programmes implemented assist us (staff) in various challenges that we (staff) experience in life. The programme is helpful even though in many instances when they take place, my colleagues and I would be out with the EA performing her engagements”.

Generally all employees were aware of the services offered by the Employee Health and Wellness unit. It is, however, recommended that a special programme be tailor-made for Ministry staff as they work extra-long hours without any warning and at times with no support.

4.5.7 Question seven

Do management and/ or co-workers in the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs cause stress for the employees? Please provide reasons for your answers.

Levels 2-10 (LB)

The majority of the respondents in the LB focus group mentioned that government is a fairly good employer as jobs are secure and conditions of service are fairly reasonable. However, most argued that government, like any employer, has its own shortcomings such as pace in responding to citizens’ complaints, which is not fast enough, pace of service delivery, which is often visible through public protests and not having adequately skilled staff to respond to the needs of the people is often a challenge. All these things were viewed by the group as stress contributors.

LB-1 said that “in this Department, stress is mainly caused by employees who do not have the ability and knowledge to do their allocated tasks. As a result, instead of line management and co-workers assisting in correcting those shortcomings, they often delegate the functions to other employees who are seen to be capable of performing the functions. This is unfair to those employees as they would be

expected to do their work and further perform the work of their co-workers”. LB-2 in support, stated that “in dealing with various challenges within the Department, most managers are seen as approachable and are very helpful towards staff, however there are some that are the opposite of being approachable especially by junior staff which has made it so difficult to deal with internal challenges on a one-on-one basis and as a result, this has created unnecessary tension as mainly staff tend to believe passage gossips instead of directly approaching their managers for the correct information and precise work directives”.

LB-3 said that “management is the major cause of our (staff) stress in different ways, such as giving verbal instructions to perform duties and refusing to write them down and when these duties are not executed; they (management) are quick to sabotage individuals, similarly here are constant delays in communicating important directives from the HOD and the EA is also a major challenge. Moreover, obvious office favouritism and the inconsistent application of punitive measures among staff by managers are the undesirable practices that are a norm in the Department that one has to endure. These issues are major contributors to workplace stress in the Department”.

LB-4 stated “both management and co-workers are contributors to workplace stress in this Department. For instance, certain employees will tend to politicise work unnecessarily and will threaten their subordinates by telling them how politically connected they are and how they can make them lose their jobs. This has become a trend in the Department which has caused some employees unnecessary tension and stress as they do not know who is monitoring their work moves apart from their supervisors and who notify politicians on whatever they are doing at work and who they associate with in the office who might not be in the politicians good books”. Furthermore, the respondent said “management somehow condone those acts and constantly fail to discipline responsible staff when and where necessary”.

LB-5 added: “work becomes easier as an employee if you keep silent and just do as you are directed by your managers as long as all instructions given to you are made in writing. This has worked for me for many years while I have been observing my co-workers who have refused to take or implement those written instructions being seen as rebellious and they even get punished or side-lined in their work”.

To conclude this discussion, the LB focus group unanimously agreed that both management and co-workers in the Department cause stress for one another. Employees may blame management and vice versa. However, both parties must play a mutual role in ensuring that the vision and the mission of the Department are realised. Either way, for that to happen, both parties should be effective in communication and should respect each other and have a clear understanding of duties to be

performed. Necessary provision of training to fill developmental gaps should not only be identified by supervisors, but should also be implemented to enable employees to perform their day-to-day functions without challenges. It was also emphasised that management should clarify the role of officials and politicians within the Department and the two roles should not be allowed to interfere with each other.

Level 11-12 (MMS)

MMS-1 argued about the rationale of the HRM Delegation of Authority at large and the delegation of duties to different managers. I further raised a concern that knowledge of these delegations is withheld by both the HOD and the EA.

The respondent stated that: “withholding information regarding delegations has led to increased workload and delays in execution of resolutions on the part of the EA, the HOD and managers. A heavy burden is placed on even everyday tasks which include the appointment of staff, etc. This has caused so much workplace stress to all managers as it has an impact on the filling of vacancies and most of the vacancies, as it is, are not filled”.

In support of MMS-1, MMS-2 argued that “most employees have been over looked for promotions. I have been overlooked on two occasions when appointments were made to staff that had lesser qualifications and experience than myself. This stressed me so much as I had to further train those officials on how to do the job while they were appointed to supervise me”. MMS-3 stated that “in some instances, you (staff) will find some subordinates undermining their supervisors and refusing to take their instructions just because they have been pre-briefed by other managers to do so and in turn those managers will protect them (the wrong doers). For other staff observing these circumstances, the experience will be very stressful and uncomfortable as this may happen to them as well”.

MMS-4 felt that “stress is at times caused by co-workers who do not compliment other workers efforts, for instance, they will do this deliberately by dodging their allocated tasks. At times, employees will not be honest and say when they do not understand their tasks; perhaps feeling embarrassed to ask their managers or co-workers to provide clarity which will in turn delay work unnecessarily”. In addition MMS-5 mentioned the issue of subsistence and travel allowance (S&T) claims that is also one that generates stressful conditions amongst employees by saying; “the norm is that, after an employee has travelled due to various work reasons, he/she must submit a travel claim. In turn the manager or supervisor should sign that claim to reimburse the traveller. Often when employees put forward these claims, you (employees) find that management purposely delays prompt approvals and claim that this is not urgent. This puts a huge financial burden on the travellers as they would have spent their money on travel and would still be expected to continue travelling without

adequate financial resources. This further cause's immense stress and impacts on service delivery", he added.

To conclude this discussion, the MMS focus group in general argued that chances within the Department for growth are very limited as vacant posts are filled with new employees while there are internal staffers that meet the requirements, but they are overlooked when the posts are filled. It was agreed that this is a measurable stressor. Various issues were cited and discussed such as payment of claims and non-protection of staff by management and/or, other staff when necessary. It became clear that both management and co-workers contribute to causing stress in the Department.

Levels 13-15(SMS)

SMS-1 highlighted that "there are co-workers who are not affected by work pressures due to being politically affiliated and connected. This has affected working relations with particular co-workers within the Department and one may even suspect that there is a plot to work some managers out of the system due to unreasonable work deliverables, thus leading to high levels of stress and employees often needing psychological consultation". SMS-2 and SMS-3 pointed out that "the high levels of co-workers being on incapacity leave pose as a huge stress trigger as this means they (managers) must be strategic and operational in nature when executing duties". SMS-4 likewise cited that "the inability of the Department to fill vacant posts is a hindrance to us (managers) in executing duties as we have to play more than one role". SMS-5 said that "the EA's unwillingness to release information regarding Human Resource delegations is a huge setback to manager's daily operations and in achieving annual business targets as set".

To conclude this discussion, SMS focus group agreed that both managers and staff cause work-stress for each other in the Department.

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MIN-1 emphasised the factors of irregular hours and unreasonable work demands as major contributors to heighten stress levels, particularly around the election season whether national, provincial or local government. Moreover, the respondent commented on the atmosphere of authoritarianism whereby one's (staff) viewpoints are not taken into consideration during planned meetings, thus leading to certain individuals not being required to serve and travel with the EA, but only the few were favoured.

MIN-4 emphasised that "stress emanates both from management co-workers and also from not communicating instructions correctly and directly". In addition MIN-5 said "working in a political environment is risky in a sense that job security is not guaranteed and once the EA get recalled or

redeployed, he/ she has no obligation to take staff with her/him to the new posting, therefore this causes stress to the remaining personnel. Further, a respondent claimed that there is a high level of lack of respect, intolerance, belittling and a negative attitude towards management, co-workers and employees in general within the Department”. MIN-3 highlighted that “falling out of favour with your manager in most instances also carries with it the potential to tarnish your (staff) future career development in the Department and you (staff) may be excluded from all possible developments in the Department and outside”.

MIN-2 furthermore mentioned that “security of tenure is another motive of causing employee’s stress in the Department. The respondent stated that within the Department there are long-serving loyal employees in the office of the EA and their expectations have been raised by either their managers or co-workers that they will be guaranteed lateral transfers to the Department should the EA leave the Department as they are appointed on contract, but on the other hand this is not a certainty if the HOD would indeed carry this out in that eventuality”.

To conclude this discussion, the Ministry focus group concluded that all levels of staff contribute to stress in the Department. As a result, and as discussed, the group sighted irregular hours and unreasonable job demands, atmosphere of authoritarianism, communicating instructions incorrectly, job security, lack of respect, intolerance, belittling and a negative attitude towards all levels of staff and falling out of favour were mentioned as their main contributors to work-related stress in the Department.

4.5.8 Question eight

What is the role of the Human Capacity Development unit in relation to career development at the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs when dealing with stress-related issues?

Levels 2-10 (LB)

The majority of employees generally felt that establishing a career path and development does not necessarily affect them nor are they exposed to upward mobility within the Department. Their loyalty towards the employer is recognised through the annual long-service awards which they feel mostly affects them as they are not academically equipped to ‘job hop’ as most managers hold higher qualifications when compared to them (staff).

LB-1 understood the role of the HCD unit in the Department which she said “is to assist staff with training and skills development through courses and workshops. However in dealing with stress

related issues, I am unclear of the unit's role". LB-2 likewise said "HCD unit is not visible to us (employees) in terms of establishing a career path. In my understanding, career 'pathing' was last conducted during the old regime and now staff is no longer hired on merit but rather on who they know within the Department". LB-3 identified the role of HCD as "the one of providing training and development to staff as well as of offering bursaries to those who wish to study further. However in terms the unit's role in dealing with stress-related issues, I have not heard or seen any role in this regard".

The group had mixed feelings about this argument. On the other hand, LB-4 argued that 'employees are requested to act in vacant positions and to take on duties of higher posts with the assumption that they are technically being prepared for those posts. This, however, is untrue since, in most cases, other people end up getting appointed which causes stress to those affected.' the respondent said. On a more positive note, LB-5 acknowledged that, through the Department's performance management system, they (employees) are financially rewarded annually for their contribution. However this is not enough as apart from being recognised by the employer which she viewed as a short term intervention, development is more appropriate as it takes one to the next level of appointment and; increases work knowledge and financial stability.

According to LB-4, "career 'pathing' and development is done and reserved for cadre deployed employees in the Department. For instance, being employed by the Department for the past 17 years, I have been overlooked when new appointments are made as normally they would be made based on favouritism. Furthermore, on an annual basis we (employees) are made to fill in Personal Development Plans (PDP's) for where performance gaps would have been identified during performance assessments however these training gaps never materialise. More so, there is a climate of purging based on political ideologies that we (employees) may subscribe to or a perceived political affiliation which results in people being appointed in posts they do not deserve and the role of the unit is not visible in these matters."

To conclude the discussion, the LB focus group, in responding to the above question, indicated that their main concerns were based on the issues of career 'pathing' and development, which was said to be non-existent in the Department, PDP's that are never implemented, political interference and rife favouritism.

Level 11-12 (MMS)

This focus group also generally felt that career 'pathing' and 'development' in the Department does not necessarily happen. MMS-1 admitted that "annually we have to sign Performance Agreements (PA) which must be accompanied by Personal Development Plans (PDP's). In these plans, with our supervisors, we are expected to identify performance gaps and necessary interventions to address

these. As much as this is an annual practice and requires compliance, not once have I seen employees sent for training to address those identified gaps”.

MMS-2 in support further mentioned that “career ‘pathing’ does happen within the Department even though it is not verbally mentioned where employees are often requested to act in higher levels or are delegated to a higher level of duties to perform in the absence of an incumbent at that higher level. However this is done by individual managers at their discretion and it does not necessarily involve the role of the Human Capacity Development unit”. In concurrence, MMS-3 said “indeed the higher roles prepare employees for the next in line opportunities and the challenges that those levels come with.”

MMS-4 concerns were that ‘even though the managers would identify employees to act in higher positions in vacant posts based on the Departmental Recruitment and Selection policy, when the time came to permanently fill those posts, more often than not, other people are recommended for appointments, but not the people who have been mentored, which has become a norm in the Department and which has increased the levels of employee stress’. As it is, the respondent added, “stress is at its peak when additional delegated duties are expected still to be performed by the same employee that was not given the opportunity”. Moreover, MMS-5 added that “stress increases when these employees have assumed that they would be appointed to those vacancies when they are advertised, evidently an expectation has been created”.

To conclude the discussion, the MMS focus group in general agreed that there is no policy or guideline in the Department that deals with matters of career ‘pathing’. However the HCD unit does have policies in so far as training and development are concerned within the Department. Moreover, it materialised that the unit does not necessarily play any role in terms of career ‘pathing’ and development in dealing with stress-related matters in the Department.

Levels 13-15 (SMS)

The SMS focus group in general argued that someone being a manager at senior level should already have had prior managerial training at a senior level or have had ample experiential training to meet the job demands. However, managers need to be developed as well since they need to grow to higher ranks and to be able to meet constant organisational changes. SMS-1 acknowledged the role of the HCD unit in relation to career ‘pathing’ and development in the Department, but was, however, not sure if this role assisted in dealing with stress-related issues. In terms of development, the respondent mentioned the provision of formal education. For example, long-term bursaries were provided by the Department to staff who had made formal applications for these. This include, added SMS-2, employees who wish to start new formal qualifications, or further their existing qualifications by means of both acquiring new degrees or additional qualifications in relation to their jobs.

SMS-3 added that “the Department assists employees with short-term courses that are relevant to their day-to-day jobs in order to assist them to perform better”. SMS-4 stated that “this should include the process of PDP’s which however never materialise as these identified training gaps that are never addressed. Instead, managers in their own space mentor their staff and recommend them to act in higher vacant posts when the need arises. The role of HCD in relation to career ‘pathing’ and development and in dealing with stress-related issues has never been seen as visible”. SMS-5 added that “the issue of career ‘pathing’ has been done in a manner of acting capacity and delegation of additional duties where there are vacancies”.

To conclude the discussion, the SMS focus group dwelled on incidents similar to the other focus groups like: issues of non-implementation fold’s, the non-existence of career ‘pathing’ and development policy or guidelines in dealing with stress-related issues in the Department.

Office of COGTA-KZN MEC

This focus group in general had different views about the posed question compared to other focus groups and this was based on their temporary appointment capacity and on their constant non-availability to be subjected to training and development within the Department as a result of their busy schedules. Moreover, promotional prospects within the Ministry were raised as rare opportunities as the Ministry structure is also not a large structure, but is linked to the larger aspect of the Departmental structure. The group was unanimous in this.

MIN-1 highlighted that “the role of the HCD unit in relation to career ‘pathing’ and development in the Department is one aspect that has added to employee’s work-related stress as a result of the lack of trainings as identified during performance assessments. Moreover, because of a busy environment, there is no time for coaching and mentoring of staff as one would be expected to do their work while they learn”.

MIN-2 alluded to the fact that “our performance arrangements are linked to the EA’s performance activities, this alone should be motivation enough to prioritize ‘up-skilling’ and preparing Ministry staff to be migrated to the Department for job security in line with the ruling party’s manifesto’s obligation to the working class should political change occur”. MIN-3 noted that “the lack of ‘upskilling’ within Ministry places most of us employees at a disadvantage, as we do not get to fulfil our (staff) PDP’s needs and this results in us stressing when we fail to perform, like everybody else. We (staff) should be receiving training as well”.

MIN-4 stated that “the role of the Human Capacity Development can be depicted as employee enrichment and academic enrichment of employees”. MIN-5 mentioned that “the Department is

having challenges of nepotism in filling of vacancies which undermines us the existing staff and which is normally informed by political office bearers. Moreover, coaching and mentoring does not exist, said MIN-5, which could be utilised as a tool to identify internal talent”.

To conclude this discussion, Ministry focus group on the discussion were more concerned about non-coaching and mentoring of staff; non-existence of coaching and mentoring policy or guidelines and nepotism in filling of vacancies which, it was emphasised, is normally informed by political interferences.

4.5.9 Question nine

Is the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs work environment accommodating people with disabilities? If yes, what is the role of the Human Resource Management and Development unit in this regard? How are employees with disabilities capacitated?

Levels 2-10 (LB)

Unanimously the LB focus group acknowledged that the HRM and Development unit has played a role in ensuring that the Department appoints and accommodates people with different disability needs. LB-1 ‘acknowledged that the HRM and D unit gives preference to people living with disabilities, in terms of recruitment and selection by reserving certain vacant positions that suit their disabilities’. In addition, LB-2 further stated that “the Department provides free transportation to those employees who are wheelchair-bound and blind. Furthermore assistive devices are provided to allow these employees to execute their duties with ease. These innovative progressive measures by COGTA-KZN further entrench the dedication to which the Department has undertaken to assist disabled and their plight”.

LB-3 supported this and acknowledged that the Department accommodates people with disabilities and that they are encouraged to apply for all vacant posts. Furthermore, the Department has forged partnerships with disability agencies and local institutions of higher learning to recommend qualifying disabled personnel should the need arise. In support of this, LB-4 stated that ‘once disabled people are appointed, the Department ensures that they are provided with relevant assistive devices and are accommodated with suitable working conditions.’

LB-5 also concurred with LB- 4 in that ‘the HRM and D unit supports the disabled appointments and this role has been extended to even accommodating youth graduates in line with Radical Economic Transformation (RET), and women are targeted.’

To conclude this discussion, the LB group of employees unanimously agreed that there's still much that needs to be redressed in terms of revamping the building in order to accommodate disabled people. It was pointed out that COGTA-KZN buildings were not fully configured to accommodate disabled employees. However, the Department has in the past five years tried to come up with various strategies to appoint and accommodate people with disabilities.

Level 11-12 (MMS)

The MMS focus group mostly shared similar sentiments with the LB focus group. However, this group questioned the reasoning of the employer's inability to comply with the building code to ensure accessibility of employees with disabilities. Notably, COGTA-KZN does not own most of the buildings that they occupy. They are owned by private owners and administered by the Provincial Department of Public Works. Therefore, any infrastructural reconfiguration that may have to be implemented will have to be done through the Department of Public Works and this reconfiguration may also be determined by the budget and priorities of this Department.

MMS-1 highlighted 'the role of the HRM and D unit within COGTA-KZN in transporting wheelchair-bound and blind employees to and from work and further mentioned various renovations and reconfigurations within the buildings such as toilets to accommodate wheelchair bound employees'. "I acknowledged that the Department may not have reached the 2 per cent threshold as endorsed by the National Cabinet in (2003) and emphasised by the Department of Public Service Administration resolution (DPSA, 2013) in appointing people with disabilities as a mandatory requirement in all National and Provincial Departments, however as per the Persal Technical Report for COGTA-KZN for the month ending September 2016, the department has achieved 1.08% compliance in recruiting disabled personnel in its establishment, which is good but still less than the required threshold".

MMS-2 and MMS-3 agreed by citing that 'the environment is conducive, however, not all buildings can accommodate disabled people'. MMS-4 and MMS-5 acknowledge the efforts by HRM and D in appointing people with disabilities as well as providing assistive devices such as brail computers, brail elevators, and reserving vacant posts for them'. Furthermore, the respondents applauded the employer for creating partnerships with various equity institutions to provide disabled cohorts to the Department when required.

To conclude the discussion, the MMS focus group's discussion revolved around the fact that because the Department does not own some of the buildings which it operates from, they are unable to

configure most of the buildings they occupy. Secondly, the mandate to build and reconfigure lies with another sector department which is out of the Department's control in terms of budget and priorities.

Levels 13-15 (SMS)

Employees at this level are striving to fulfil total accessibility to employees with disabilities, according to SMS-1 who said, "the HOD in conjunction with HCD unit have put in place a proviso that all business units should have at least 10 per cent of their intern's cohort being disabled". SMS-2 added that "the Auxiliary services unit has ensured that Head Offices namely: Natalia, Wadley and Southern Life Plaza have all been configured to accommodate disabled persons whether blind or wheelchair bound". SMS-3 shares the same sentiments with SMS-2. However, they stated that 'there are challenges wherein fully trained disabled employees seem to be poached by other departments; which evidently causes the Department's statics for disabled employees to regress all the time. Exit interviews conducted during 2016/2017 showed that disabled employees are being offered better conditions of service by other sector departments and the employer fails to retain them!'

SMS-4 and SMS-5 differed in their approach to the question as they highlighted that "the lack of political and administrative decisions to make counter-offers to the exiting disabled employees in which the Department has invested its resources, technically amounts to fruitless and wasteful expenditure, which the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) gives adverse reports to". Furthermore, the respondents stated that "the Department does not reap any benefit from this investment it makes in these employees as opposed to how able bodied employees are treated as the tools of trade they utilise are more expensive to procure".

To conclude this discussion, the SMS focus group highlighted that the minimum required standards of accessibility to head office buildings have been addressed. However, they agreed that better and more reconfigurations still need to be done to meet the requirements of equity groups. The group felt that the EA should consider counter-offers where necessary to reap the reward from investments made in these incumbents.

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All respondents within the Ministry focus group unanimously agreed that the building is not designed to cater for employees who would require specialised access into the building. It is for this reason that the EA in conjunction with Auxiliary Services are planning to reconfigure other offices within COGTA-KZN owned offices which will invariably accommodate disabled employees and or disabled visitors to the EA.

To conclude the discussion, the Ministry focus group agreed that their work environment does not support accommodating disabled employees. However the Ministry office is making means and efforts to relocate offices for easy access.

4.5.10 Question ten

Is there anything else you might wish to add in terms of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs strategy to manage work-related stress? Please provide reasons for your answers.

Levels 2-10 (LB)

The overall group felt that the employer should seriously incorporate the ‘Work-play-lifestyle’ within some business units such as the Information Technology, Planning and Infrastructure units, which are core to the business of COGTA-KZN and whose technical make-up resembles the opposite. The group further argued that, generally, IT staff is often young and vibrant. Therefore, it is proposed that they live the image of the industry they represent. This has proven to lower stress in the workplace.

LB-1 agreed that it should not come to the point whereby employees raise their stress issues through EAP. Instead the Department should offer coping skills as part of Departmental training and workshops. LB-2 desires that the employer should scrap all contract appointments and confirm all permanent appointments. LB-3 suggested that the employer should have team building sessions to improve team skills and co-operative behaviour.

LB-4 proposed that the nursing sister services be extended to dispensing chronic medication which could be collected at various clinics by employees as this would improve productivity and minimise unnecessary leave-taking. LB-5 felt that the Department needs to implement programmes that address environmental risks in terms of physical infrastructure and social cohesion amongst employees.

Level 11-12 (MMS)

In the main, this group were more concerned about building their careers. They value the notion of climbing the corporate ladder. Managers should not be stifling their contributions due to their status and networks. MMS-1 raised the issue of contract worker’s future uncertainty as most employees have been on contract for more than five years. MMS-3 raised an issue of designed and matched duties which generally does not exist in the public service and stated that: “generally in the public sector, if you are in the post, you remain in it regardless of the qualifications and skills you possess, unless you see another post and then apply. If you don’t get successful, you will remain there forever”.

MMS-2 felt that management should involve junior staff in all decision-making processes to assist in implementing decisions taken and suggested that the model of disseminating information within the Department must be improved. MMS-3 cited disrespect from subordinates needs to be addressed and respect for work needs to improve, especially among the younger generation.

MMS-4 cited “the prioritisation of filling of posts by unfreezing them from the organisational structure, better strategies must be introduced to market the services of Employee Assistance Programmes and furthermore, management should allow junior staff in the department in the decision making processes”. MMS-5 cited that “the department needs to have proper succession planning especially to also cater for employees in the political office and office of the HOD as this I believe will improve the transition process of the entrants of new employees”.

Levels 13-15 (SMS)

Most of the responses received by the SMS focus group reflected the responses from other focus groups. SMS-1 suggested that the Department needs to increase flexi-time and seriously respect employees’ family time. Moreover, SMS-2 cited that “improved communication and reasonable work time frames are a serious concern to managers”. SMS-3 raised concerns of career development within the Department. He said, “I feel career development within the Department is not effectively being implemented as most of the identified training gaps by line management hardly get implemented.” Likewise, SMS-4 said “the nonexistence of a guideline/policy on mentoring and coaching as well as retention strategies in the Department results in high staff turnover”. SMS-5 in closure raised the importance of ‘being happy about what you do as an employee regardless of all other workplace challenges’. The respondent argued that ‘work fulfilment is important as my personal happiness at work translates to my happiness and satisfaction in my personal life. If I am happy at work, the chances are I will be happy at home, and visa-versa. Regardless of incentives that one receives or should have been receiving at work, if they are happy at what they do and have good support structures at home, they will perform better at work’.

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This level would like to see more security of tenure in relation to their jobs because EA’s are deployed and could leave at any time. Therefore, the group suggested that they should be seconded from the Department to the Ministry and this would ensure job security. Further, the respondents cited that if stress is experienced by managers, before it is transmitted to others, it should be addressed and contained.

4.6 Interview Questions and responses (individuals)

4.6.1 Question one

Does the Organisational Structure and prevalent climate in the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs cause employee stress? Please provide reasons for your answers?

Levels 2-10 (LB)

In response to the question, LB-1 stated “not entirely but maybe at times. The supervision in the section I work in can be stressful at times as we have to deal with being supervised by two people, one person wants this now and the other reckons that other work is more important. It becomes stressful to us as much as we are being assisted.” LB-3 in support added by saying, “yes, sometimes it does. Currently our Departmental structure is revised which can lead to some employees being stressed as they will be placed in a different atmosphere to work. Some posts in the structure are graded very low while duties aligned to these posts are strategic and challenging for the level”

LB-4 similarly agreed with LB-3 by also stating that some of the posts do not appear on the new proposed structure which is more stressful and as a result of the structure being revised, we have been on contract for over five years without being confirmed permanent and we have lost five years of salary benefits and allowances.” On the other hand LB-2, said “no, the manner in which the organisation has been structured, everyone has a role and a responsibility for which we are accordingly accountable.”

To summarise these individual interviews, the responses given by the respondents were definitely similar if not identical to the focus group responses. The respondent who tended to differ from other respondents was observed not to be responding objectively as after her response she did not want to comment any further.

Level 11-12 (MMS)

Responding to this question, MMS-1 said “no, the environment in the Department is conducive”. The respondent did not want to talk further and it became clear to the researcher she was afraid to say more. MMS-2 in support said “no, the Department’s organisational structure and culture enables employees to perform their duties under minimal stress levels. It is only when there are deadlines where there would be pressure”.

To summarise these individual interviews, it became clear that both respondents responded to the question. However, the responses were assumed not to be genuine from the look in their faces. The

respondents may have been seen at different times and venues by the researcher, but the similarities in their responses and behaviour could not be hidden.

Levels 13-15 (SMS)

In contrary, SMS-1 disagreed and said “we are stressed in all aspects. The structure has taken so long to be finalised, most employees are on contract appointments and are uncertain about their future. The climate is stressful as no one wants to talk about these challenges as people are afraid they might be punished”. SMS-2 agreed and stated that leadership has created cliques within the Department which has made the climate very stressful and challenging to work in.”

To summarise the responses, it became clear to the researcher that across SMS levels, management seem to share similar views. SMS focus group responses did not differ from the individual views.

Office of COGTA-KZN MEC

The ministry staff in response to the question were recorded as follows, MIN-1 “yes, the organisational structure causes employee stress. Employees get information from grapevines which lead to uncertainty and insecurity, uncertainty of what the future holds. MIN-2 said “yes, sometimes it is not the structure, or the prevalent climate, but it’s the non-transparency that causes stress in the Department.” Both respondents did not sound happy in their responses, but again did not want to say too much.

The view of the researcher is that Ministry staff, as reported by focus group respondents, may not necessarily be stressed by the structure as it does not affect them that much. However, the inconsistencies that occurred in the office came out as stressful.

4.6.2 Question two

Do employees’ roles at the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs cause stress and if yes, why?

Levels 2-10 (LB)

In response to this question, LB-1 said “no, we are employed to do work that we studied for, or rather have experience in. It may be challenging but at times not stressful.” LB-2 said “maybe, only when it comes to their roles not being appreciated or recognised.” LB-3 on the other side said “no, employee’s duties can only be stressful when the effort is not recognised and appreciated by the management”. LB-4 did not differ much from the other individuals. She said “it depends on days. I work in the HRM

environment, towards month ends it gets very busy because people must get their salaries and mistakes are not permitted. Otherwise, the roles are reasonable.”

The individuals in this category seemed to be okay about their roles and did not complain at all.

Level 11-12 (MMS)

In response, MMS-1 said, “no, everybody knows their roles. Employees are trained on most aspects and spheres.” MMS-2 also responded by saying “not necessarily when your work is up-to-date.”

To summarise, individuals at this level shared similar sentiments with LB individuals and they all seemed happy in their roles.

Levels 13-15 (SMS)

In responding, SMS-1 spoke very well about her role. However, this was true until other people interfered with her work. The respondent said, “When staff is appointed they go through selection criteria, thus it is very rare to find staff not knowing what they are expected to do. However, the challenge comes when leadership starts to interfere with your role, more so when incompetent staff is appointed to perform those functions.” SMS-2 also complained about leadership and political interference and incompetent staff appointed to perform roles that they do not even qualify to perform.

In summary, in view of the responses, SMS equally experience similar challenges in terms of performing their roles and are mainly influenced by the Departmental leadership and political influences.

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MIN-1 responded: “yes employees sometimes feel they are not fairly compensated, even though they receive ministerial allowances as work is forever piling up. Employees are sometimes not provided with means to air their concerns or if management is consistently unclear in communication.” MIN-2 said “the office is too hectic, everything is said to be urgent by the management even unnecessary items. At times pressure is caused by them not the MEC as they will always make excuses about her.”

These individuals in this office clearly are not happy with their allocated roles, which corresponds with the focus group respondents from this category.

4.6.3 Question three

What are the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that cause stress at the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional affairs?

Levels 2-10 (LB)

LB-1 said, “The lack of motivation and praise. Once in a while a simple thank you or you have done well goes a long way and it shows employees that you see their hard work”. LB-2 said “some of the factors are the workload, working conditions, interpersonal relationships both within the organisation and at work and employees health.” LB-3 said “intrinsic factors rewarding selected employees to receive performance bonuses, nepotism when appointing people within the Department. Extrinsic factors include favouritism, pride, ignorance, diversity and unconstrained reports about other people (gossip).” LB-4 complained about the decisions that take time to be taken on important matters like the appointment of contract workers.

To summarise these discussions, it was clear that, individually, employees experience stress regardless of the contributor as a result of internal or external factors including delays in decision making regarding contract employments, nepotism, workloads and other factors.

Level 11-12 (MMS)

In attempting to respond to the question, MMS-1 said “both factors are caused by intrinsic factors as one take stress from work to home. The Department is taking employees’ rights for granted as most of them have been in employment for long enough to be confirmed permanently. Yet every year they are being rated fully effective” MMS-2 said “it is intrinsic factors that sometimes cause stress in the Department, “insufficient resources to execute our duties such as not having enough stationary. Also inability to adapt to change brings no joy to employees. Extrinsic factors would be over-expenditure which results in financial problems and is a cause of stress”.

Individual interviewees seemed to agree that both factors have contributed to employees stress at COGTA-KZN, specifically the issue of benefit loss by not being confirmed permanently.

Levels 13-15 (SMS)

SMS-1 said “I feel it is more of a trust issue and that leads to decisions that may cause stress for selected employees” SMS-2 complained mainly about intrinsic factors which include non- payment of SMS performance bonuses by the EA. Similarly, the concern was more on the issue of the EA refusing to release HRM delegations of authority for HR managers to perform their day-to-day operational duties. This has created several challenges including process delays.

SMS respondents were also found here to be similar with those of the focus group responses. Intrinsic factors seemed to be more of a challenge for this level.

Office of COGTA-KZN MEC

In responding, MIN-1 said “intrinsic factors happen when employees sometimes feel they are not appreciated or rather management is not satisfied with their accomplishments. Extrinsic, is when employees are not motivated because of security i.e. contract workers.” On the other hand, MIN-2 said, “It happens normally when employees think they have done their best and management does not recognise those efforts. Further, when employees work and don’t get performance bonuses, working with difficult clients to satisfy them with our help but they still don’t appreciate this.”

To summarise these individual discussions, it became clear that communication, appreciation and acknowledgements from management play a significant role in individual employee’s wellbeing as being overlooked creates stress.

4.6.4 Question four

What in your view is the role of the Employee Health and Wellness unit at the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in dealing with work-related stress issues?

Levels 2-10 (LB)

In responding to this question, LB-1 said “the unit is keeping us aware of work-related stress issues and how to deal with it if found in that situation. They also provide us with articles via Departmental notices advising and assisting us, basically they do health awareness campaigns via emails which is most convenient because most of us are office based.” LB-2 said “this unit is in place to ensure that employees are aware that their health is important not only to them, but to the organisation as well”. LB-3 said “the unit is there for stress management intervention on health and stress issues by introducing strategies to handle these. LB-4 also understood the role to be the one of supporting staff on wellness issues including physical and emotional wellbeing.”

In summarising these individual interventions, the researcher was impressed with the level of understanding of the staff at this level of the role and the intentions of the unit which basically meant it can be assumed that staff at this level also understands the management programmes put in place to support them.

Level 11-12 (MMS)

In answering, MMS-1 said she does not think that the unit deals with stress-related matters. Likewise, MMS-2 said “I don’t think they deal with them.”

Respondents were interviewed on different days, venues and times. However, the responses received were similar.

Levels 13-15 (SMS)

SMS-1 said: “The unit provides wellness services for the Department to ensure that employees perform appropriately. SMS-2 said that the unit was there to ensure that staff had enough capacity with appropriate skills performing functions as expected at all times. If employees are appointed, the employer should ensure that there is enough capacity; therefore it should be in the interest of the employer that this should include physical and emotional health to enable the delivery of the vision and the mission of the organisation, hence the existence of the unit. However, most SMS do not attend these programmes as they are run by junior staff.”

SMS responses revealed that they understand the role of this unit and its purpose in the Department although just like in the focus groups the fact that programmes are run by junior staff resulted in a minimal number of participants.

Office of COGTA-KZN MEC

MIN-1 said, “The unit provides services that assist with mental health issues such as in anxiety and depression. The unit supports positive lifestyle changes, coping skills and healthy relationships. MIN-2 said “the role is to make sure those employees wellbeing are catered for and their health. As a result, this is helping the Department to maintain more production. The unit also refers employees to recommended psychologist for help if they need it.”

Individually, employees at this level understood the role of the unit in the Department.

4.6.5 Question five

Are you aware of any management programmes introduced by the Employee Health and Wellness unit to address the issue of work-related stress in the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs?

Levels 2-10 (LB)

LB-1 said: “No, except email correspondence on employee wellness programmes.” LB-2 said: “Yes” but no further comments were made by the respondent. LB-3 said: “Yes, they introduced wellness programmes to deal with stress and other health issues and challenges. Additionally, the unit conducts health and wellness screenings every quarter.” LB-4 said: “The unit issues immune boosters to those that require them on a monthly basis.”

Level 11-12 (MMS)

MMS-1, said: “No” she has no clue about these programmes. MMS-2 said she knew about the circumcision programme and the wellness helpdesk.”

Levels 13-15 (SMS)

SMS-1 knew about the exercise programme which she rated as the best, and she also mentioned knowing about counselling by both internal and external councillors. SMS-2 knew about the general health screenings, e.g. HIV/Aids testing; external referrals; and circumcision.

Office of COGTA-KZN MEC

MIN-1 said: “We do not have any programmes but we do receive guidance on how to deal with stress and depression via emails.” MIN-2 said: “Yes, we all know where to go when we need assistance or help at work regarding stress.”

4.6.6 Question six

In your view, have any of the management programmes introduced by the Employee Health and Wellness unit to address the issue of work-related stress in the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs achieved their desired objectives? If no, please provide reasons for your answer. If yes please provide practical examples.

Levels 2-10 (LB)

LB-1 said: “I am yet to know about them, I am sure there are programmes in place.” LB-2, said: “Yes, there is only so much an organisation can do for individuals and considering that the causes of stress differs. They can do as much as they are obligated to but responsibility also rests upon the individuals in the workplace that need to manage stress outside of the work environment.” LB-3 said: “Most people are sceptical to use the indoor health and wellness screenings due to confidentiality issues. Some employees are swamped and they cannot partake in wellness classes during the stated hours.” LB-4 stated that confidentiality was a main problem and why some employees do not attend.

Level 11-12 (MMS)

In response, MMS-1 said she has no clue of the programmes nor has she any idea if they have been helpful to anyone or not. MMS-2 similarly, said: “No, I haven’t heard of this and I am not aware of any stress-related management programmes in the Department of COGTA-KZN.”

Levels 13-15 (SMS)

SMS-1 in response, said: “yes, they have as the numbers of people seeking their services on referral have increased.” SMS-2 stated the same comment that the number of attendees since its inception in 2012 have grown.

Office of COGTA-KZN MEC

In answering the question, MIN-1 said: “I haven’t heard of or I am not aware of any stress management programmes in the Department of COGTA-KZN.” MIN-2 stated that there are programmes that are being conducted by the wellness help desk. However, when they happen, they usually conflict with her schedule.

4.6.7 Question seven

Do management and/ or co-workers in the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs cause stress for the employees? Please provide reasons for your answers.

Levels 2-10 (LB)

In responding to this question, LB-1 said: “Not that I am aware of.” LB-2 said: “I’d say partially. Only in the cases where there is mismanagement or lack of appreciation from management towards the employees etc. LB-3 said: “Management does cause stress to employees in cases where they do not investigate matters and just make conclusions based on what they are told regarding an employee. Some co-workers cause stress to fellow colleagues by not adhering to procedures to perform their duties or by not performing their duties at all and those duties get passed moved to another employee with immediate deadlines. LB-4 was concerned with on line management that gives different instructions for similar work.”

Level 11-12 (MMS)

MMS-1 stated that some managers do cause stress for co-workers when they ill-treat them for no reason. This is normally associated with nepotism. MMS-2 said this normally comes out during performance assessments where managers will be so obvious to score people that they prefer highly rather than assessing employees objectively according to the work that has been produced.

Levels 13-15 (SMS)

SMS-1 said: “Yes due to the above mentioned trust issues, tension, has been escalating.” Unnecessary meetings are called by management instead of allowing managers to do their work; they spend hours in duplicated meetings discussing duplicated issues. SMS-2 said that leadership has created such a stressful environment that is full of gossip and lies.”

Office of COGTA-KZN MEC

MIN-1 said: “Management causes stress due to the work load we are given, the workload is sometimes overwhelming and it puts pressure on employees to get all tasks done.” MIN-2 stated: “Some managers do cause stress for co-workers when they ill-treat them.”

4.6.8 Question eight

What is the role of the Human Capacity Development unit in relation to career ‘pathing’ and development in the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in dealing with stress-related issues?

Levels 2-10 (LB)

LB-1, stated: “the unit has an employee health and wellness programme in place to enhance employee’s satisfaction and to keep us aware of illnesses in general and how to deal with them.” LB-2 said: “They ensure that employees have equal opportunities and employees will be less stressed if they are being empowered career-wise.” LB-3 said: “They identify areas for improvement in the employee’s performance then introduce or send them to necessary training in order to deal with employees that are experiencing difficulties in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities of the post which can cause stress to an employee.” LB-4 said: “the role is to assist employees to pursue their studies both in the short term (immediate trainings relevant to day-to-day functions and in the long term (bursaries for degrees etc.).”

Level 11-12 (MMS)

MMS-1 said: “I haven’t seen HCD playing any role in terms of handling stress-related issues but instead those issues just escalate to misconduct cases.” MMS-2 said that HCD facilitates trainings that support employees to perform better.

Levels 13-15 (SMS)

SMS-1 said “the unit provides training and a recently developed succession policy for staff to mentor employees for next up roles”. SMS-2 said that as much as the unit is responsible for various training programmes, these do not happen the way they should as employees on annual basis are made to fill

performance development plans with their supervisors during performance assessments. However, these hardly get implemented which defeats the purpose and the intention.

Office of COGTA-KZN MEC

MIN-1 said: “The role of HCD is aimed at developing employees, making progress possible, but to be honest, we are not receiving any benefits from the unit.” MIN-2 said: “The unit has to train employees on how to manage stress through workshops.”

4.6.9 Question nine

Is the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs work environment accommodating people with disabilities? If yes, what is the role of the Human Resource Management and Development unit in this regard? How are employees with disabilities capacitated?

Levels 2-10 (LB)

LB-1 said: “Yes, we have a vast number of officials with disabilities. Further, there’s a worthy cause undertaken by the Department called ‘casual day’. We buy stickers in order to fund this project for the empowerment and the ‘upliftment’ of persons with disabilities.” LB-2 stated: “Yes, the role is that they ensure people with disability are comfortable with their work environment” LB-3 said: “The Department does accommodate people with disabilities through accessible necessities, HRM&D is ensuring that they can move around the building without any difficulties and most of them have specialised computers and other related equipment to work with”. LB-4 agreed to the question and applauded the unit for continuously training staff with disabilities and also for ensuring that they are transported by the Department from home to work and back.

Level 11-12 (MMS)

MMS-1 said. “Yes, service lifts within the building have voice assistance. They also have computers that accommodate their special needs too. HRMS has ensured procurement of such resources, including transporting them home.” MM-2 said the environment is accommodating and said the Department is constantly revamping the building’s toilets and offices where necessary.

Levels 13-15 (SMS)

In response to this question SMS-1 said: “Yes it does because the Department does offer support, job opportunities, equipment provision and all of the above are done with the help of HRM&D. SMS-2 said: “Yes they do”. He further explained that, in keeping with the prescripts of the DPSA regulatory threshold of 2 per cent appointment of disabled employees in key positions across the public sector,

the Department as at December 2017 is in employment of 1.9 per cent. Furthermore the Department is issuing them with assistive devices depending on the nature of their disabilities.

Office of COGTA-KZN MEC

MIN-2 said: “Yes, the Department has offered transport to staff with disabilities.” MIN-1 said,: “Yes, they are provided with all the necessities that they might need within the organisation and they are transported to and from work by state vehicles.”

4.6.10 Question ten

Is there anything else you might wish to add in terms of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs strategy to manage work-related stress? Please provide reasons for your answers.

All respondents

None of the respondents commented to this question.

4.7 Data presentation

Table 9: Source (Author).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	FOCUS GROUP GUIDE	NO.
To determine how COGTA-KZN employees, across various levels, experience and manage stress.	How do COGTA-KZN employees, across various levels, experience and manage stress?	Do employees’ roles at the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs cause stress and if yes, why?	1.
		Have any of the management programmes introduced by the Employee Health and Wellness unit to address the issues of work-related stress at the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs achieved their desired objectives?	2.
		DCOGTA-KZN employees perceive management and/or co-workers to induce work-related stress? If yes, explain.	3.
		Does the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs take cognisance of work-life balance and its importance as a management strategy to	4.

		manage work-related stress? Please explain.	
To describe the factors that invokes or minimise stress at COGTA-KZN.	What are the factors that invoke or minimise stress at COGTA-KZN?	Do employees' roles in the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs cause stress and if yes, why?	5.
		What are the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that cause stress at the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs?	6.
		What is the role of the Employee Health and Wellness unit at the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in dealing with stress-related issues?	7.
		What management programmes have been introduced by the Employee Health and Wellness unit to address the issues of work-related stress in the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs?	8.
To explore the role of organisational structure and climate in reducing or increasing work-related stress.	What is the role of organisational structure and climate in reducing or increasing work-related stress?	Does the organisational structure and climate at the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs cause employees' stress?	9.
		What is the role of the Human Resource Management and Development unit in relation to Career 'Pathing' and Development in the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in dealing with stress-related issues?	10.
		Is the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs work environment accommodating differently abled people? If yes, what is the role of Human Resource Management and Development unit toward ensuring 'capacitation' for those differently abled?	11.

Below are the responses, categories and themes of all the respondents.

4.8 Responses; categories and themes

4.8.1 Response: one

- Causes of stress in the workplace

The study established a variety of contributory causes of stress at COGTA-KZN which have created the prevailing climate in the Department. The focus groups agreed unanimously that the Department has failed fully to implement the matters listed below:-

- Prolonged contract appointments in a wide pool of employees;
- Unnecessary delays in filling vacant posts;
- Considerably long delays in finalising the organisational structure;
- Non-existence of Management Delegation of Authority delegated by the EA to the HOD and by the HOD to HR Managers;
- Non-existence of programmes known to be able to deal with workplace stress-related matters specifically; and
- Political interference in the Departmental administration matters.

The views indicated below suggest that workplace stress could be caused by a multiplicity of factors within an organisation, specifically in the case of COGTA-KZN and that the inability of the EA to approve the organisational structure has contributed to the problems being experienced by the employees. This finding is supported by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), who indicate that the lasting effect of institutional pressures is to increase the uniformity of organizational structures in an institutional environment (DiMaggio and Powel, 1983, p. 48).

The scholars further mentioned that the reason behind this ideology is to mitigate three types of workplace pressure. A coercive pressure that comes from legal mandates and influences organizations that they are dependent upon this theoretical framework supports that notion that the EA uses coercive measures in not releasing HRM Delegations to managers.

Mimetic pressures which have to do with copying successful forms that arise during high uncertainty, even though there are moratoria which have been put in place in the filling of posts, but all Departments within the provincial government have filled all their long existing contract posts. However, all COGTA-KZN posts have not been filled which defies all professional and logical reasoning.

The normative pressures, a uniformity that comes from the similar attitudes and approaches of professional groups and associations brought into the organisation through hiring practices, was

supported by the respondents. The Department should emulate the good practices of other Departments in order to dispel a view that COGTA-KZN is not compliant with legal prescripts, which is what is currently happening within the Department (DiMaggio and Powel, 1983, p. 48).

Scott (2004) argues similarly on the basis of three criteria namely: routines, norms and rules and he states that they determine social behaviour. The scholar claims that work arrangements are not pre-ordained by economic-laws. However, they are influenced culturally, socially, and, in this modern era, there has been a paradigm shift to include the political sphere (Scott, 2004, p. 408-414).

This statement is backed by LB- 4 in question one, where the respondent cited that:

“in general, political challenges that the public sector is currently experiencing is unbearable, where political office bearers interfere with administration matters and decisions and overrule them as and when they wish to, is a major setback for the sector”.

As much as Scott, (2004) acknowledges the paradigm shift that includes the political sphere, it still presents some serious intolerable consequences where politicians fail to draw the line between administration and political matters. Moreover, routines, norms and rules determine social behaviour. Without a predetermined recognised organisational structure to provide organisational direction, these cannot be realised.

4.8.2 Response: two

- Uncoordinated job roles

As discussed in the literature review, uncoordinated job roles can lead to employees' stress. Wall and Clegg, (1998, p. 265) argue that “a job is an organisational unit consisting of a group of defined tasks and a role that is played by individuals and patterns of behaviour expected of them in fulfilling their work requirements”.

In Chapter Two of this dissertation, Michie (2002) divides stress into three distinct categories, namely physiological, psychological and behavioural. Furthermore, they could result in harmful and chronic diseases. The findings of this discussion agree with these scholars. The roles of both management and employees at COGTA-KZN seem to have equal challenges where both parties blame each other. Which are associated with a behavioural category, whereby LB-2, question cited:

“Communication breakdown is one of the main causes of roles challenges within the Department. At times, management fails or delay to communicate or cascade important information to junior staff and this result in junior staff being viewed as ineffective employees”.

LB-4 claimed that:

“Management lacks communication skills which results in employees experiencing stress in their jobs”.

As a result, Brickford (2005) supports these statements by arguing that workplace stress can manifest itself in symptoms of high blood pressure, headaches, anxiety, short temperedness, lack of concentration and indecisiveness in making critical decisions in the workplace (Bickford, 2005, p. 4). In support, Hobfoll and Shirom (2001, p. 57-80) refer to consequences of stress as emotional fatigue, depersonalization, low personal accomplishment, lessened enthusiasm about work, hopelessness and feelings of being setup. These consequences were found to be similar to the symptoms mentioned in the Departmental organisational climate study/ change management process report, the study that was conducted as a result of the Department of Strategic Planning session that was held on 17-18 November 2016 (Hobfoll and Shirom (2001, p. 57-80), cited in PsycINFO Online, August 2017).

4.8.3 Response: three

- Factors of stress

It was found that the Department has more intrinsic factors.-than extrinsic during the interviews, the focus groups mentioned different stress factors. However, the frequencies in responses mentioned were noted as follows:

- Absenteeism and high staff turnover;
- Delays in the filling of critical vacant posts and when filled, they are occupied by pre-identified candidates that don't even have relevant experience to perform those duties;
- Job insecurity as a result of people being employed on a contract basis;
- Long Incapacity Leave cases as a result of anxiety caused by job insecurities and unrealistic working conditions and hours;
- Non-provision of training regardless of employees completing the annual personal development plans (PDP's);
- Not having standardised office environments;
- The Performance Management system not being fairly implement especially to SMS;
- Training and Development;
- Unrealistic deadlines given in some instances; and
- High workload with limited support staff.

These findings are in line with the views shared by Michie (2002, p. 68). The scholar points to the workplace stress as an important source of both demands and pressures causing stress. Furthermore structural and social resources are in place to counteract stress (Michie, 2002). Workplace factors that have been found to be associated with stress and health risks can be categorised as those to do with

the content of work and those to do with the social and organisational context of work, in terms of work content. Michie (2002) refers to absenteeism and turnover, reduced quantity and quality of work, reduced job satisfaction and morale, problems of recruitment, poor communication and increased conflict as the main workplace stress factors (Michie, 2002, p. 68).

It was found also that absenteeism is costing the Department a lot of money as a result of managers failing to perform their duties. This finding was confirmed by MMS-4, in question 1 who stated:

“leave take has increased as the number of absenteeism in the Department has escalated for various reasons in the past five years; e.g. various medical reasons; stress related due to work load pressures; stress related due to poor supervision; stress related due to favouritism; etc.” MMS-5 further concurred with MMS-4 by stating that “the increase in leave taking is also as a result of two reasons, 1: genuine medical reasons which could be visibly seen when employees are home-visited and 2: truant tendencies where employees have been making excuses to come to work and have been giving lame reasons to come and work”.

SMS-2 and SMS-4, in response to question 2 conquered by saying:

“staff shortages are also caused by employees that have been off sick for longer periods, primary it is the responsibility of line managers to manage absence of their personnel and further giving sickness absence information to HRM which they often fail or at times delay to do. Moreover, this results in HRM not being able to capture this information on the system timeously which has huge financial implications, and additionally reflects incorrect leave credits records for those employees”

The findings are supported by The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CPID, 2016), ‘Championing better work and working lives’ annual survey report for the public sector summary, Absence Management (2016), which talks about the primary role that line of managers must play in managing absence and absence documentation of their staffs and ensuring that this reaches the relevant management for control purposes.

The report further reveals that there has been a small reduction in absence levels in the private sector. However, despite this, the cost of absence has increased from £789 per employee in 2015 to £835 2016. It remains considerably higher than in other sectors (for example) private sector being £500; non-profits: £510 (CPID, 2016, p. 2).

4.8.4 Response: four

- Organisational role in the workplace stress management

The Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1993 dictate that the employer must establish a safe working environment that is free of health risks for employees (Researchgate Online, 2017). This statement is backed by SMS-5, in question three who said:

“The employer has created a non-conducive working environment as decisions that are made in the Department are selective, people are often treated differently. Furthermore, there is abuse of power from various managers where and when it suits them. Department policies are not adhered to; and when they are followed it is because they want to fulfil their unlawful deeds”.

The Employees Health and Wellness Strategic Framework for the Public Service (2008) speaks about two major points that are crucial in the Employee Assistance Programme unit when discharging their duties:- namely viz Confidentiality and Ethical Behaviour. These two principles are strictly observed unless there are cases of risk to the employee and/or a direct perceived risk to others and, lastly, when directed they reveal information in terms of the legislation. Guarded confidential records and information are kept with the traditional employee records. The Unit must ensure the confidentiality of all medical and personal records of employees. As directed by the constitution, public servants have a constitutional right to confidentiality concerning their HIV and AIDS status. Should an employee reveal his/her HIV status, this information shall not be disclosed to any other party including other employees, union member or management. Consent for disclosure should be in writing.

The strategic framework provides protection for LB-4, in question4, where she raised concerns as follows:

“I’m HIV positive and I acknowledge the role that the unit plays by providing us (staff) with immune boosters; however I’m not certain that confidentiality is maintained as the staff members that handle these matters don’t have the demeanour to observe confidentiality protocols. From my engagements with them (help desk staff), I was not assured of any signed confidentiality agreements that protects me and other staff and the information which they have access to or any punitive measures that will be taken should this agreement be bridged”.

4.8.5 Response: five

- Management role

The introduction of programmes to lessen the effect of stress in the workplace has borne positive results. The Department has observed that stress management as a concept in the workplace requires more than helpful tips, but a further echelon of structured programmes as a support mechanism.

This statement is supported by MMS-4, question five, who responded as follows:

“There are good programmes that are offered by the unit. However, there are slight challenges in terms of publicity of the programme to staff in the field. The recruitment of the Nursing Sister, who has been running a programme of ‘Medical Male Circumcision’ for some time, has seen a slight increase in the dissemination of information”. MMS-5 further said, “I am aware of the unit and the majority of its services and programmes”.

The scholars Prasad and Mills (1997) argue that diverse work force management approaches should include Affirmative Action policies with strong pertinent internal controls (Agocs, Burr and Somerset, (1992), cited in Prasad and Mills, 1997). Better still, the scholars in recent times argue that diversity management should further include recruitment and selection strategies to recruit and retain employees from diverse demographic backgrounds recognizing and appreciating the multi-cultural nature of contemporary organisations (Diversity Management Toolkit, 2017) and training and development in various digital methods as well as performance outcomes of leadership effectiveness (Prasad; Mills; Elmes and Prasad, 1997, p. 3-5).

In pursuit of total transformation, the genuine observation received from the respondents was that the Department is using the approaches of diversity management as argued by the scholars above. However, there is still a need to strengthen the current management systems and the role must be consistent, fair and confidential amongst all employees.

4.8.6 Response: six

- Stress management Interventions

In the study of Michie (2002) as argued in the literature review of this thesis, “interventions employed by management should be to strike a balance between intrinsic and extrinsic factors involving both employees and the organisation to minimise adverse effects of stress which often lead to physiological consequences” (Michie 2002, p. 70).

Michie outlines factors which mitigate against the effects of ill-health associated with workplace stress. The Organisation should constantly capacitate and build their staff; have one-on-one psychological; and or psychiatry services in-house; and constant occupational health and counselling

as and when necessary. Better still, have techniques of managing stress which are coined as ‘Active Coping and Habitualisation’ (Michie 2002, p. 70-71).

In support of Michie’s (2002) arguments, it has been established that there are challenges also in the Department in terms of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that were discussed at length in question three. It was further established, based on various respondents, that these in turn have adversely affected the Department. Consequently there was the introduction of management programmes, as previously discussed, which included an Employee Assistance Programme that looks at flu vaccinations, detection of cancers, pap smears, prostate testing, blood pressure readings, HIV/Aids pre-counselling testing, referral network of health care specialists, and provision of supplements as indicated in the Departmental HCD Employee Health and Wellness Report, October 2016.

The study revealed that the interventions that the Department has made include recruitment and selection strategies to recruit. They do not, however, have strategies to retain employees and staff turnover has been highlighted as one of the major challenges by respondents as well as recognizing multi-cultural employees, training and developing of staff through PDP’s and bursaries as well as application of performance management systems.

Feedback received indicated that even though these interventions are in place within the Department, they are not clearly explained or defined to employees. There was agreement between, MMS-4 and MMS-5, in their responses to question five where they specifically mentioned that:

“there are good programmes that are offered by the Department; however the challenge is that these programmes are not clearly explained to employees especially junior staff such as the in-house Nursing Sister services who has been running a programme of ‘Medical Male Circumcision’ for some time, but few employees are aware of this service”. MMS-5 further said, “I am aware of the unit and the majority of its services and programmes; however I do not know how I can link these services and programmes provided with reduction of workplace stress”.

As a matter of importance, it can be argued that the Department management still requires investing time in developing internal capacity for all programmes and interventions that have been initiated and how these, individually, can and will benefit the organisation and individuals.

The table below suggests some of the management workplace stress interventions that the Department may adopt.

4.8.7 Response: seven

- Relationships at work

Social exchange theory defines relationships at work as an exchange of resources for the purpose of achieving utility or power amongst employees (Blau, (1964); Homans, (1974), cited in Ragins and Dutton, 2006, p. 6). Dutton and Ragins (2006) discuss positive relationships in the workplace and relate this view to building positively on the psychology of relationships, which are central to personal growth, life satisfaction and enrichment. The study reveals that relationships do not only represent the essence of people's lives, they also resemble the core being of the organization's life (cf. Berscheid, (1999); Reis and Gable, (2003); Snyder and Lopez, (2002), cited in Dutton and Ragins, 2006, p. 4-5).

In support of the above theoretical framework, MIN-3, MIN-4 and MIN-5, and the Ministry focus group, in response to question seven pointed out that:

“This depends on the unit however, and sections of the Department. Stress emanates both from management and, co-workers to line functionaries by not communicating instructions correctly and directly”. MIN-5 in addition said “working in a political office is risky in a sense that job security is not guaranteed and when the Executive Authority is recalled or redeployed, he/ she has no obligation to take you (staff) with or to his/ her new posting, therefore causing stress. Further, there is a high level of lack of respect, intolerance, belittling and a negative attitude towards management, co-workers and employees in general within the department”. MIN-3 highlighted that “falling out of favour with your manager who in most instances will bear potential possibilities to tarnish your (staff) future career developments in the department and outside as you will be implicitly excluded in all possible developments of the department and outside is also a major challenge”.

The general observation received is that, within the Department both management and co-workers at COGTA-KZN cause each other stress. However positive relationships within the work environment are important to minimise the effects of this.

4.8.8 Response: eight

- Succession planning and Retention Strategies

Generally, officials should show pride and satisfaction in the manner in which they execute their duties. This pride and satisfaction will weigh heavily on the nature and complexity of the tasks assigned to them by their supervisors. Ordinarily, this should help them grow professionally. In turn, this should prepare them for the next in line opportunity in the organisation and they should be given a fair chance to compete. Michie (2002) discusses workplace stress as quantifiable in both financial terms and in terms of human resources; it further translates to the financial health of the organisation.

This will, therefore, mean that, the organisation's ability to implement its retention strategy and succession planning is limited to minimal levels (Michie 2002, p. 70-71).

MMS-4 and MMS-5 further support the scholars theoretical view that argues for the quantifiable nature of workplace stress in terms of succession planning and retention strategies as follows:-

“The prioritisation of filling of posts by unfreezing them from the organisational structure, better strategies must be introduced to market the services of EAP and furthermore, management should allow junior staff in the Department into the decision-making processes”. MMS-5 cited that “the Department needs to have proper succession planning especially to cater also for employees in the political office and office of the HOD as this I believe will improve the transition process of the entrants of new employees”.

The observations received from the respondents reflected that there is a lack of co-ordinated effort to develop a coherent retention strategy and a succession plan for the Department. That being said, employees experience an understandable level of frustration as a result of not having these tools.

4.8.9 Response: nine

- Conducive environment to productivity

In Brenner's articles on the influence of worker environment on employees (2004), it is argued that the ability of workers in a workplace to relate with others, managing and sharing information is mainly due to the assertion that there are favourable working conditions in the workplace. Furthermore, Taiwo (2010) concurs with Brenner that, if work conditions are favourable, employees tend to excel in their duties and a high work ethic is experienced. In addition, Brenner (2004) argues that a workplace or an environment laid out to suit worker satisfaction is an ideal fertile ground to reap flowing and constructive ideas which will ultimately motivate workers towards higher production. Brenner argues that the reverse can be said, that, in the work environment, there can be positive and negative effects of the environment on some employees caused by noise, work temperature and/or personal aspects (Elywood, 1999).

The Employment Equity Plan is a mandatory implementable action plan for the employer to roll out workplace equity programmes for designated groups i.e. Black people, women and persons with disabilities (Hofmeyr, Gule, and Bain, 2016). The Plan seeks to address hindrances to fair practices in the workplace (Employment Equity Act, 1998, p. 4). The HR council Online (2017), in its work Diversity at Work argues that the employer is duty bound to accommodate employees in an environment where adverse effects are removed to ensure that employees don't experience barriers that may have an adverse impact on individuals or groups under the Equity Plan. Compliance such as

incorporating physical infrastructure reconfigurations, technological adaptations into the workplace is one meaningful way of achieving the principals of the Employment Equity Plan (HR council, Online, October 2017). In supporting and accommodating disabled people, it is advised that existing facilities should be accessible to people in wheel chairs and there should be a reorganising of workstations (Transformsa Online, September 2016).

SMS-1 and SMS-2, in response to question nine, said:

“The HOD in conjunction with the HCD unit has put in place a proviso that all business units should have at least 10% of their intern’s cohort being disabled”.

SMS-1 further added that ‘the Auxiliary services unit within the Department has ensured that Head Offices namely: - Natalia, Wadley and Southern Life Plaza have all been configured to accommodate disabled persons whether blind or wheelchair bound”.

The above responses show that the Department is progressive in dealing and accommodating people with disabilities in the workplace and has proven that it has the highest intake of disabled employees for the financial year 2017/2018. Assistive devices such as tools of the trade, elevators and cloakrooms have been reconfigured to suite disabled employees. Capacity programmes apply to employees through PDP’s agreed between them and their respective supervisor.

4.8.10 Response: ten

- Career Development

Shigekazu Fukuyama once said “Unless work satisfaction is derived, an individual’s self-fulfilment is not acquired and, consequently, a person’s true happiness is not secured” (Shigekazu Fukuyama, cited in Magnuson and Starr, 2011, p. 90). In support of Fukuyama’s statement, the study revealed that intrinsic factors do contribute to extrinsic factors and vice versa in the workplace. This was concurred with by SMS-5, in his response to question 10, when he argued that:

“Work fulfilment is important to the personal facet of life as my personal happiness at work translates to my happiness and satisfaction in my personal life. If I am happy at work, surely the chances are that I will be happy at home and visa versa. Regardless of incentives that a worker receives or should have been receiving at work, if they are happy at what they do moreover have good support structures at home, they will perform better at work”.

When employees know what they do and subsequently understand what they are expected to do, the employer’s role is to further strengthen those skills and/ or capabilities, apart from equipping employees with relevant knowledge. This becomes an investment in terms of talent management, and

it assists an organisation to increase productivity and it further minimises staff turnover. The study of Gutteridge (1986) refers to career development as “career plans viewed from both individual and organizational views”. Gutteridge further argues that the desired state of affairs regarding the perfect match between people and their jobs and the flexibility of independence and not considering monetary rewards much ranges from situation to situation (Gutteridge, 1986, p. 52).

The study revealed that career development is minimal within the department of COGTA-KZN especially when it comes to short-term training that will assist employees to perform better in their day-to-day jobs. SMS-3, in response to question 10, raised concerns of career development within the Department when he said:

“I feel career development within the Department is not effectively being implemented as most of the identified training gaps by line management hardly get addressed”. Likewise, SMS-4 said “the nonexistence of a guidelines/ policy on mentoring and coaching as well as retention strategies in the Department further subsidise to challenges that are being experienced as a result in high staff turnover”.

4.9 Summary

This chapter focussed on the analysis of the findings of the study and aligned the findings with the theoretical framework. The researcher discussed in detail the thematic considerations of findings and analysis was conducted by coding and categorising all findings. The credibility of data was interrogated and looked into.

In the chapter which follows, recommendations of the study are proposed and the study is concluded.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the aim was to analyse the responses from the observed findings alongside a predetermined framework. The analysis of data was discussed, based on the empirically tested themes which were developed from stress theories discussed in earlier chapters and interview schedules that were used during the interview processes. In this chapter, the aim is to summarise the study, make concluding remarks and propose recommendations that could be adopted by the Department of COGTA-KZN when dealing with the issues of workplace stress.

5.2 Summary of the study

This study focused on selected employees of the Department COGTA-KZN which is a Provincial Government Department situated in the city of Pietermaritzburg. The Department has 10 district offices dispersed all around the province. The study focused on levels 2-10 (LB); levels 11-12 (MMS); levels 13-15 (SMS) as well as on employees in the office of the Member of the Executive Committee (MEC) with five respondents from each selected category which was a total of 20 respondents.

5.2.1 Chapter one

This chapter explored the research proposal which contained the following: background to the study; the aims and objectives of the study; key research questions; the problem statement; the research design and methodology; sampling method; sampling size and selection process; literature review; theoretical framework; delimitations of the study; ethical consideration and the research work-plan.

The primary objectives of the study were determined as follows:

- To determine how COGTA-KZN employees, across various levels, experience and manage stress;
- To describe the factors that invoke or minimise stress at COGTA-KZN; and
- To explore the role of organisational structure and climate in reducing or increasing work-related stress.

For purposes of this study the following were the key research questions:

- How do COGTA-KZN employees, across various levels, experience and manage stress?
- What are the factors that invoke or minimise stress at COGTA-KZN?
- What is the role of organisational structure and climate in reducing or increasing work-related stress at COGTA-KZN?

5.2.2 Chapter two

In this chapter, various items of literature were reviewed on workplace stress and its management starting from historical aspects and various workplace stress models to current material. This included types of stressors, signs and symptoms of stress, causes of stress (at work and in life), consequences of stress and stress management and/or interventions. The discussion was influenced by the study of Michie (2002). A focus was on the discussion, which was two-fold: Firstly, intrinsic factors: (which were intrinsic to job, role in an organisation, career development, relationship at work, organisational structure & climate). Secondly, extrinsic factors which illustrated the likelihood of employees being affected by stress as a result of external challenges: (which were, personality, personal problems and the amount of life change).

Furthermore, consequences of non-stress management, specifically within the public sector were revealed. Finally, the study blended the synthesis and evaluation of literature and provided a conclusion.

5.2.3 Chapter three

This chapter introduced the research design and methodology employed in the thesis. The chapter further provided direction as to how the study was conducted. Moreover, it provided the guidelines in terms of the study purpose and research questions which allowed the research not to stray from the anticipated goal when the study was conducted. Finally, the chapter provided an overview of how the research was preceded in obtaining data and the chosen sampling techniques up to the data analysis stage.

5.2.4 Chapter four

In chapter four, the aim was to analyse the responses from the observed findings alongside the predetermined framework. The analysis of data was discussed based on empirically-tested themes which were developed drawn from stress theories discussed in earlier chapters and interview schedules that were used during the interview process. Furthermore, data was collected using in-depth semi-structured interviews due to the nature of the study. An interview guide was employed. A letter of invitation was sent to all participants. An interview schedule listed all the questions in the course of the interviews. Four focus group interviews with the selected study participants were scheduled. The

researcher had in-depth discussions based on the predetermined questions designed to guide the discussions.

5.2.5 Chapter five

In this the final chapter, certain recommendations are proposed and the study is concluded. The recommendations are made to seek the best practices for ensuring the mitigation of workplace stress at CoGTA. The recommendations have been interrelated with the findings.

5.3 The findings of the study

The study revealed that staff turnover; staff workloads, bureaucratic and unprofessional leadership and management style, political interference in administrative matters, conflict between staff and line management, reduced budgets by both the National and Provincial Treasuries which resulted in reduced staff members due to leaving vacancies, unfilled, maladministration, incompetent cadre deployments which has undermined the existing personnel, which in many instances can be seen as violating constitutional provisions, legislations, and regulation of the public service appointments., all of this has compromised governance within the Department, the lack of intermediate training and development for employees as would have been identified by their line managers during performance assessments has resulted in the majority of employees being unskilled. Ill-health has resulted in employees being on long incapacity leave, delays in making decisions about existing caseloads while suspended employees still get remunerated, constant change in leadership and additional red tape in many other service delivery matters including payment of subsistence and travelling allowances (S&T). These are amongst the challenges that have been found to be the main contributors of distress for the employees at COGTA-KZN.

Furthermore, the study revealed that non-recognition through performance rewards, inconsistent application of consequence management and lack of punitive measures against some managers are also main challenges at COGTA-KZN.

5.4 Recommendations:

5.4.1 The Department should employ further steps in relation to management delegation which are held by the office of the EA as this hinders service delivery as it contributes to the delays in decision-making;

- 5.4.2 The Department should consider taking further steps in relation to management delegation which are held by the office of the EA as this hinders service delivery as it contributes to delays in decision-making;
- 5.4.3 It is suggested that employees, as individuals, be supported better in terms of training and development; career ‘pathing’, coaching and mentoring;
- 5.4.4 The lack of understanding of what workplace stress is and how sources of stress vary between different practice areas, lack of predictive power of assessment tools, and a lack of understanding of how personal and workplace factors interact should be addressed and improved;
- 5.4.5 The Department’s redundant staff should be re-skilled and re-deployed where they can be more productive within the Department;
- 5.4.6 Management should review staff job descriptions and strengthen some of the Key Result Areas (KRA’s) in staff Performance Agreements for the effectiveness of service delivery and efficient measuring of Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s) when performance assessments are conducted;
- 5.4.7 In the long run, the public service will have to come up with strategies and controls on cadre deployment as most of them consider themselves to be deployed by their political parties instead of being civil servants. This is necessary so that this kind of deployment is not seen as nepotism by the rest of the staff.

5.5 Recommendations for further research:

An area of further research is the transition between the EA and HOD in the Department, bearing in mind that friction between them promotes uncertainty and stress in terms of the general staff population:

- 5.5.1 Cadre deployment should further be explored as there seems to be blurred lines and often borders on nepotism and favouritism, often undermining existing staff who have been mentored and coached for years;
- 5.5.2 Strategies that government can employ to re-skill the current cohort of employees in order effectively to implement knowledge management from within the current staff currently the high staff turnover from within provincial government seem to stress both the employee and the employer particularly at a senior level.

5.6 Limitations of the study

Some staff members were afraid to participate or respond truthfully to questions in the study fearing reprisals from their supervisors or seniors. Due to the researcher's seniority in the workplace, some respondents were suspicious of the study and were not certain about its intentions. In some instances the researcher requested the research assistant to probe further on sensitive or unclear areas.

5.7 Conclusion

The emphasis of the study primarily focused on two specific areas that were, workplace stress and its management. The findings revealed that stress management should be managed seriously and actively by both the employees and management to ensure tolerable levels of stress within the workplace. Furthermore, this study focused on the triggers, management techniques and effects of stress on COGTA-KZN employees based on a number of reasons stipulated by respondents. That being said, it can be concluded that both the employer and employees at COGTA-KZN are the target readers of this research. Accordingly, both categories of employees should ideally maintain manageable stress levels.

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LIST OF ACTS

Year	Legislative or Policy Framework	Purpose or Result
1996	<i>Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996</i>	<p>Chapter ten requires that “the public service be governed by democratic values and principles; maintain(s) and promote(s) a high standard of professional ethics; promote(s) efficient, economic and effective use of resources; be orientated towards development; deliver(s) services impartially, fairly, equitable, and without being bias(ed); respond(s) to people’s needs and encourage(s) public participation in policy matters; people to be accountable for their actions; transparent by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information; cultivate good human resource management and career development practiced to maximize human potential; broadly be representative (of) the South African people with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness and the need to redress the imbalances of the past”.</p> <p>Chapter two, section 24 ‘the Bill of Rights’ states: “everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being”.</p>
1998	<i>Employment Equity Act No. 55</i>	<p>The intention of the Act is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To promote equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination; and

		<p>- To implement affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups, to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce.</p> <p>Section twenty of the Act requires that designated employers prepare and implement an Employment Equity Plan to achieve employment equity within the organization; and further give provision and different steps to follow during the preparation of this plan.</p>
1995	<i>Labour Relations Act No.66</i>	<p>The Act provides (for the) advancement of economic development, social justice, labour peace and the democratisation of the workplace by fulfilling the primary objects of:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - giving effect to and to regulate the fundamental rights conferred by section 27 of the Constitution; - To give effect to obligations incurred by the Republic as a member state of the International labour Organisation; and (c) to provide a framework within which employees and their trade unions, employers and employers' organisations. The act seeks to protect both, the employer and the employees in terms of social labour justice.
1994	<i>Public Service Act, 103</i>	To provide for the organisation and administration of the public service of the Republic, the regulation of the conditions

		of employment, terms of office, discipline, retirement and discharge of members of the public service, and matters connected therewith.
2001	<i>Public Service Regulations of chapter 1, Part VIII</i>	Direct departments to implement a system to manage performance and development through the monitoring of performance on a continual basis and the provision of feedback to the official. In so doing areas of satisfactory/unsatisfactory performance can be identified and developmental strategies implemented where needed. Outstanding performance by an official can further be acknowledged and rewarded.
2001	<i>The Public Service Regulations of chapter 2</i>	Provide emphasis on the need for compliance with, the code of conduct for the public service in order to enhance and promote professionalism within the sector. The code is a comprehensive set of rules that regulate the standard of conduct to be adhered to by public servants in the performance of their official duties and their private lives.
1993	<i>Occupational Health and Safety Act, 85</i>	Section 1 of the Act standards advise the department concerning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The formulation and publication of standards, specifications or other forms of guidance for the purpose of assisting employers, employees and users to maintain appropriate standards of occupational health and safety; - The promotion of education and training in occupational health and safety; and

		- The collection and dissemination of information on occupational health and safety.
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COGTA'S POLICY MANDATES

Year	Legislative or Policy Framework	Purpose or Result
2017	<i>Annual Performance Plan (APP)</i>	<i>The Annual Performance Plan APP</i> contains strategic objectives which need to be achieved every financial year. Furthermore, the APP aims to help accounting officers and managers track performance of pre-identified objectives per financial year.
1999	<i>Code of Conduct: Chapter 2 of the Public Service Regulations</i>	<p>An employee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-operates fully with other employees to advance the public interest; - Executes all reasonable instructions by persons officially assigned to give them, provided these are not contrary to the provisions of the Constitution and/or any other law; - Refrains from favouring relatives and friends in work-related activities and never abuses his or her authority or influences another employee, nor is influenced to abuse his or her authority; - Uses the appropriate channels to air his or her grievances or to direct representations; - Is committed to the optimal development, motivation and utilisation of his or her staff and the promotion of sound labour and interpersonal relations; - Deals fairly, professionally and equitably with other employees, irrespective of race, gender, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion,

		<p>political persuasion, conscience, belief, culture or language; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refrains from party political activities in the workplace.
2009	<i>King III report, chapter 6 of King III report</i>	The report's emphasis is on compliance matters. Companies must comply with all applicable laws. Laws should be understood not only in terms of the obligations that they create, but also for the rights and protection that they afford.
1997	<i>White Paper on Human Resource Management</i>	This gives provision to the Batho Pele Principles, with a strong emphasis on and initiatives to put people first.
2008	<i>Employee Health and Wellness Strategic Framework</i>	<p>The framework recognises the importance of linking individual health, safety and wellness, organisational wellness, environmental sustainability, and quality management to productivity and improved service delivery outcomes. This is effectively achieved through critical common strategic interventions in priority areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HIV&AIDS, STI and TB Management; - Health and Productivity Management; - Safety, Health, Environment, Risk and Quality Management (SHERQ); - Wellness Management.