

Influence of Head Teachers' Human Relations Practices on Staff Motivation among Public Primary School Teachers in Narok County Kenya

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Abstract

Management competencies are collections of traits and qualities in Managers' personality that allow them to manage their staff effectively within the organization. The Head teacher is a Manager in the school where many aspects of the school revolve and he / she is accountable for all operations including human resource management and should be adequately trained and equipped with the requisite skills to successfully and efficiently manage staff. There are reported concerns about staff motivation levels, pupils' academic performance, and this raises questions as to whether the head teachers have requisite managerial competencies. In this study school management is expected to be realized when the staff are motivated. The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of head teachers' human relations practices on teachers' motivation in Narok County, Kenya. This study adopted a correlation research design, for it allowed for the processing of qualitative and quantitative data obtained by the researcher. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the head teachers and Curriculum support officers. The study adopted the Katz theory of managerial skills and Minzberg Managerial Role Classification Model. Validity was identified. Split half-technique and test coefficient Cronbach Alpha is used to assess coefficient of reliability, and thus a score of 0.721 was appropriate. Quantitative data was analysed by use descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation. Qualitative results obtained from open ended questions were analyzed using textual analysis. The study established that head teachers human relations had a significant positive influence on staff motivation in most of the public schools.

Keywords: Human Relations, Motivation, Academic Performance, Human Relations, Human relations competencies

Introduction

The complexity of the head teachers' school management tasks requires them to have requisite competencies. Such competencies include human relation competencies; Research reveals that head teachers have varied strengths in these competencies which could influence the motivation of the teachers they supervise. Reforms have been introduced, making managerial competencies obligatory if schools are to achieve set goals. Furthermore, there is little information about how the capabilities of head teachers were consistent with the effectiveness of the school. There are still unresolved issues related to staff motivation, academic achievement, This paper examines the relationship between head

teachers' human relation competencies and staff motivation in public primary schools in Narok County, Kenya.

Management and Staff Motivation

The concept of Motivation focuses on explaining what moves behaviour. According to a survey by the National College for Leadership for Schools and Children's Services (NCLSCS), (2010), successful leaders respond to their context and recognize, understand and attend to the needs and motivation of others within their organizations. In a study by Mendels (2012), it was observed that school Principals had a great influence on how schools operate in terms of the motivation of teachers and students to enhance learners' performance in their schools. This shows that effort by the school manager to motivate the teacher is crucial to achieve this goal. In today's world, being a teacher is an incredible challenge. Beyond the day to day role of teaching and marking, teachers are faced with students with behavioural issues, learning disabilities, and more. As a school administrator, keeping teachers motivated is an important part of their role. Motivated teachers foster a collaborative culture and a positive environment for students. Keeping teachers motivated can be a challenge if the head teachers lack requisite managerial competencies.

Belle and Horil (2020) investigated the motivational factors that affect the performance of primary school teachers in Mauritius. The results demonstrated that school managers were not successful in implementing educational reforms put in place by Governments to motivate teachers. This is evidenced by many shortcomings of the education system that have influenced teacher motivation. The head teachers were not able to rise above or control de-motivators brought about by the education system. The findings further indicated that the motivation of teachers was influenced by several aspects of their job. Teachers were not motivated due to excessive parental interference, a lack of discipline of pupils inside and outside the classroom, unwilling learners and poor working conditions. School managers thus, needed to be equipped with adequate managerial competencies to be able to handle such situations.

According to Amin (2015), there was a positive influence of teachers' working conditions on job performance of teacher. Working conditions included pleasant working environment, availability of work, clarity of tasks of each member and well-organized work programme. The study concluded that positive improvement in the performance of teachers is influence by working conditions, job satisfaction, and motivation of teachers to teach. Han and Yin (2016) in their study identified five research areas related to teacher motivation research and these were: influencing factors of teacher motivation; teacher motivation and teaching effectiveness; teacher motivation and student motivation; teacher motivation research across different disciplines; and the instruments for assessing teacher motivation. This had implications on head teachers' knowledge and skills on how to tackle such aspects. Teacher motivation is an essential component to enhancing classroom effectiveness.

Pisoňová (2017) in a study in Slovakia observed that the role of the head teacher was to be familiar with teachers, to have a positive impact on their behaviour and entrust them with such tasks corresponding to their knowledge and skills. Work motivation is focused on carrying out a work obligation and should lead to the required working behaviour. Motivation to work is also connected to the work environment and can have an influence on their motivation. Kasule (2016), examined the impact of work environment on academic staff job performance in Ugandan universities, using Kyambogo University. The study revealed that working conditions at Kyambogo University were below standard and therefore negatively affected job performance of staff. This was evidenced by inadequate teaching facilities, work overload

and dysfunctional administrative policies. However, in-depth information remained lacking as the study did not use any qualitative approaches, which would have elicited participants' lived experiences and personal perspectives on the working conditions and staff job performance. Further, the study was conducted in a university setting. This is different in many aspects from the setting of a primary school. Sobe (2013) examined the effect of motivational practices of head teachers on teacher performance at public primary schools in Ikerege Division, Kuria West District, Kenya. The study observed that school management effectiveness was evidenced by motivated teachers. The head teachers achieved this by recognizing teachers' efforts through material incentives, tours, and through oral praise. The essence of teacher motivation as an indicator of effective school management was emphasized in a study by Lokuruka and Ronoh (2017) in Turkana County. In the study, the scholars observed that head teachers' task of motivating teachers made the delivery effectively. The study which was conducted in 16 public secondary schools also implied that the level of teacher motivation enabled the school to attaining its goals. Motivated teachers foster a collaborative culture and a positive environment for the departments and students.

In a study on the effects of the motivational practices of head teachers on teacher performance in the Koibatek District, Ocham (2010) found that most teachers perceived the recommendation of head teachers to attend seminars and workshops to be effective in improving their motivation. Ocham also found that teacher engagement in school decision making was strongly linked to teacher motivation. The results show that head teachers' management competencies contributed to higher teacher motivation and indicator management effectiveness.

Literature review

The Concept of Motivation has been defined as the strength and direction of behaviour and the factors that may make people behave in certain ways. People are motivated when they expect that a course of action is likely to lead to the attainment of a goal and a valued reward (Armstrong, 2014). For this study the focus was on how head teachers' Human Relations Competencies influenced the motivation of teachers.

Head teachers Human Relations Practices and Staff Motivation

Picincu (2018) observed that managers' competencies concerning employee relations enhanced employee motivation and subsequently, made them better workers. Happy staff were more efficient and they put more effort into their work. Improving employee relations brought higher retention rates and lower turnover. The study also found that increased morale and motivation was found to be one of the primary benefits of good employee relations. It is notable that it was essential for people to be comfortable with one another and to work together as a single unit towards a common objective. Munir, Quraishi and Shokat (2020) observed that the skills of the head teacher in school management can motivate or de-motivate teachers. The approval by the head teacher, the large proportions of crucial decisions taken within the schools are taken seriously by the teachers. In addition teachers carefully monitor whether the desired educational outcomes are being obtained or not. Vinding, (2006) found that a large portion nations explored in the structure of this investigation have increasingly confined comprehension of human resources as assets and staff motivation was critical in the realization of organizational goals.

Green (2019) observed that effective human relations management involved the art of developing and implementing strategies that enhanced employee motivation and performance and reduce conflicts. It was further observed that some managers had achieved this by conducting interviews for employees to collect information that could help in designing a benefits package that would enhance employee satisfaction and meet the interests of the organization. The benefits programmes included paid vacation and sick leave, health insurance plans, pension benefits, and a monthly or annual award programme. This study established outcomes in the context of public primary schools in Kenya. Marsha (2018) investigated the relationship between administrator interpersonal skills and school climate, student learning, and teacher retention. The study found out that, school leaders' interpersonal skills do impact school climate. School leaders' interpersonal skills did not statistically predict teacher turnover in this research; however, trend data collected from teacher interviews indicated that teacher morale and retention were based on the human relations skills of the head teacher.

Recognition and Teacher Motivation

According to Ackers (2017) the development of effective human relations skills is crucial for establishing and maintaining productive working relationships and subsequently motivating employees. Ackers found that employee motivation was directly linked to the idea of greater productivity. The most famous classification of needs is the one formulated by Maslow (1954). Motivational theory in Maslow's hierarchy of needs demonstrates that positive human relationships determine whether an employee's esteem, self-actualization, safety, and physiological needs are met. If an employee felt that their needs were met through the performance of his job tasks, they were more likely to be motivated to do them. By recognizing the work performance of an employee by congratulating him on an outstanding job, the head teacher may raise the motivation of the teacher to repeat the good performance.

The head teachers as Human Resource Management (HRM) experts need to establish that remuneration is reasonable, satisfies schools' guidelines, and is sufficiently high to lure school representatives. What's more, HRM experts need to ensure that the compensation is equivalent to what is paid for other persons performing comparable occupations. This includes establishing pay frameworks that reflect on the number of years with the association, long distances of involvement, training, and comparable perspectives (Rao, 2001). In different nations, for example, Egypt and Georgia, human relations experts are viewed as an imperative area of school institutional self-sufficiency and all things considered, not meddled with by national experts (Blandford, 2007).

Baba, Wachiko, and Shehu (2018) investigated primary school head teachers' competencies in conflict management and staff appraisal functions in Niger State, Nigeria. The study revealed that head teachers in Primary Schools need capacity-building in conflict resolution techniques and methods of appraisal staff performance (evaluation). Many of these head teachers are faced with numerous administrative and leadership problems and challenges which seems difficult for them to solve. Some of these problems are conflict among teachers and between staff and management, indiscipline among students and teachers, poor school-community-relation as well as poor staff appraisal and staff development mechanisms. When head teachers are well equipped with necessary competencies and skills, they could be more effective, knowledgeable, and qualified to facilitate continuous improvement in human resource management (Mathibe, 2007). It was thus, useful to find out the relationship between such skills and management aspects such as staff motivation.

Brown and Owusu (2014) studied the effects of head teachers' management styles on teachers' motivation in Selected Senior High Schools (SHSs) in Ghana. The study also attempts to look at and explain how head teachers' informal relationship with teachers serves as a motivation for teachers to work to achieve institutional goals. From the study it was revealed that though teachers were involved in decision making, the actual setting of objectives for a school were left in the hands of the heads and the school management team. It should be noted that motivation is enhanced by leadership, which sets the direction, encourages and stimulates achievement and provides support to employees in their efforts to reach goals and improve their performance generally (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014). The head teachers therefore should adopt the Management by Walking About and Management by Objective so as to get closer to their teachers in the running of schools.

Aacha (2010) observed that for teachers to be motivated extrinsically to give off their best, the head teachers' management style contribute immensely (Holten, Dent & Rabbett, 2009; The issue of management style and employee performance has gained so much ground especially the western world. Many studies conducted in the field of business have proven that the management styles of managers greatly influence the motivation of subordinates. However, when it comes to the teaching field it remains unclear how the styles of management of heads have influenced teacher motivation.

Interpersonal Relationships and Support

Studies have linked interpersonal relationships to teacher motivation and head teachers should be keen on maintaining positive interpersonal relationships in schools to boost teachers' motivation to perform. According to Bareng (2016) head teachers should establish a good working relationship with the teachers. This is by making sure the avenues or effective communication are available and can be utilized.

Oboegbulem and Alfa (2013) stressed that conflicts are bound to occur in all human interactions, especially organizations. Like other organizations, the collection of people with diverse personalities makes conflicts inevitable in schools. Conflict can be harmful if it results in the ineffective breakdown of communication and working relationships, tension, argument, low team members performance, and hostility which in turn will affect the smooth operation of the schools, contributing to solidarity among conflicting groups and reconciling legitimate interests where, in turn, relationships are strengthened, problems and solutions are better identified, knowledge/skills increased and peace safeguarded (Ramani & Zhimin, 2010). Thus, the ability to manage or resolve conflict is important for school leaders to run the school smoothly. It was therefore important to investigate this relationship because of public primary schools in Narok County.

Shanka and Thuo (2017) explored conflict management and resolution strategies among teachers and school leaders at Wolaita Zone, Ethiopia's primary schools. The study determined that it included major conflict management strategies; building leadership skills, following rules and regulations, including change, wise allocation of recourse, involvement in decision-making, training opportunities, and understanding of individual differences and roles, including techniques in disputes; discussion, punishment, forcing, compromise, avoidance, and ignorance. However, their study did not investigate the relationship between these leadership skills and school management effectiveness.

Gyimah (2013) investigated chief educator relationships in four Middle schools in the Sekyere South Locale of Ashanti in Ghana. The outcomes uncovered that a quality trade relationship among principals and teachers affects participation, duty, and performance to the two principals and teachers. The

outcomes additionally demonstrated that cooperating in a warm relationship and a progressively law-based condition brings dependable profit for the school and the students.

Barmao (2012) investigated the causes and effects of conflict on teacher morale in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya. The study found that less conflicts occur when teachers are assured of job security, have high interaction opportunity, and institutional support. It is when head teachers have requisite human relation skills that this can be realized. Besides, teachers are motivated to work when their efforts are recognized by the head teachers. Barmao, further argued that conflict could be managed by providing good working conditions, like; availability of teaching materials, supportive supervisory service, and opportunities to innovate as well as in-service training. With enhanced skills in human relations head teachers can provide the necessary support to effectively perform their duties.

Shanka and Thuo (2017) investigated various strategies used to manage and resolve conflict between teachers and school leaders in government primary schools of Wolaita zone in Ethiopia. The study established that staff motivation was high in schools where head teachers were able to use appropriate conflict management strategies. Major conflict management strategies included; building leadership skills, following rules and regulations. Embracing change, wise allocation of recourses, involvement in decision making, providing opportunities for training, and understanding individual differences and roles. This study concluded that school leaders need to understand the sources of conflicts and have a mechanism in place for staff to voice their concerns.

Koskei (2004) observed that the absence of formal preparation in the head teachers' abilities and managerial experience has resulted in wastefulness and insufficiency normally found in the performance of numerous teaching frameworks in Africa. The scientist suggested that the most ideal method for improving head teachers in their administration job is to carefully consider their authoritative experience and training levels amid determination and give customary workshops and courses to sharpen them on instructional strategies and furnish them with the executives' aptitudes.

According to Ocham and Okoth (2015) recognition of teachers and good working conditions enhance teachers' performance. Shared leadership between teachers and head teachers had a positive effect on teacher performance. Teachers' professional growth enhances performance. The teachers who receive head teachers' support such as teaching materials are more motivated to perform. Saiteu (2024) agrees that teacher recognition plays a crucial role in influencing various aspects of teaching and learning ultimately leading to improved student academic performance and observes that enhancing teacher recognition in public schools is crucial for improving teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and overall performance. The authors recommend that a culture of teacher recognition within a school should be initiated and supported and a collaborative environment where teachers feel valued and motivated to excel should be created. This may lead to highly motivated teachers and improved academic achievements among students.

Theoretical framework

The investigation was guided by Katz theory of Managerial Skills. Katz (1974) introduced an order of administrative abilities which was the primary significant arrangement of these sorts of aptitudes that were seen to be fundamental for all supervisors. The theorist explains that human relation competencies are essential since head teachers who had great relationship building abilities had the capacity to get the best out of their teachers. These school leaders realize how to impart, persuade, lead, and rouse

eagerness and trust (Gana & Ifah, 2012). Theoretical aptitudes are the abilities school managers required in order to contemplate and deal with unique and complex circumstances.

According to this theory three types of skills that are essential for a successful management process: Technical skills, Conceptual skills and Human or interpersonal management skills. The theories seem to suggest in the context of this study that when head teachers are equipped with such skills, they become effective school managers, and thus this aspect needs to be promoted. School leaders must possess certain technical skills that assist them in optimizing managerial performance. While these three broad skill categories encompass a wide spectrum of capabilities, each category describes the way in which these skills interact with management at various levels.

Methodology

Research Design

The study used a correlation research design to establish the influence of head teachers’ human relations practices on staff motivation among public primary school teachers in Narok County Kenya. Data was collected using the triangulation approach. This design was preferred owing to the fact it allowed the researcher to collect gathered and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data. In this case, both sets of data were collected and analyzed separately and then combined into one set of related results.

Sample Size

To select respondents who participated in the study, probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used. In order to ensure that all the schools were represented geographically, the target population was clustered into the 6 sub-counties and selected using simple random sampling to ensure equal representation. In this method, each unit in the universe had an equal chance of inclusion in the sample. The sample size of this study was calculated using a scientific formula by (Kothari, 2004) as outlined below;

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pqN}{e^2(N-1) + Z^2 pq}$$

Where:

n = the sample size for a finite population

N= size of population which is the number of primary school head teachers.

p = population reliability (or frequency estimated for a sample of size n), where p is 0.5 which is taken for all primary school head teachers’ population

p + q= 1 e: margin of error considered is 10% for this study. Z α /2: normal reduced variable at 0.05 level of significance z is 1.96

According to the above formula, the sample size for all the primary schools is:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5 \times 665}{(0.1)^2 (665 - 1) + [(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5]}$$

$$= 84.03057734$$

85 primary schools

Table 1: Sample Size

Sub-county	Number of head teachers	Population Proportion	Sample size of head teachers (%pp x 85)
Narok North	156	23%	20

Narok East	72	11%	9
Narok South	135	20%	17
Narok West	110	17%	14
Trans-Mara	113	17%	14
Trans-Mara East	79	12%	10
Total	665		85

This means that the study sample was made up 25 Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs) and 1 County Auditor.

Sampling Procedure

The study adopted a multi-stage sampling approach. The first stage involved the classification of the population into geographical/administrative units, thereby using the cluster sampling technique. Consequently, five clusters will be created namely Narok North, Narok East, Narok South, Narok West, Trans-Mara, and Trans-Mara East sub counties. The study also employed the stratified sampling technique whereby the study used three strata namely: Head teachers and Curriculum Support Officers. This technique was useful for the identification of the sample. The next stage was the sample selection. A census approach was used in the identification of the Curriculum Support Officers, whereby all the 25 Curriculum Support Officers were used for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of the CSOs as well as the County Auditor.

Results and discussions

Correlations between Head teachers Human Relations and Staff Motivation

The results for Pearson correlations between head teachers human relations and staff motivation were as presented in Table 2

Table 2: Correlations between Head teachers’ Leadership Competence and Staff Motivation

		Head teachers Human Relations	Staff motivation
Head teachers Human Relations	Pearson Correlation	1	.452**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	83	83
Staff motivation	Pearson Correlation	.452**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	83	83

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results in Table 4.47 show that the Pearson correlation results between head teachers human relations and staff motivation were as follows: (r = 0.452, p = 0.000). This shows that there was an association between head teachers human relations and staff motivation. Given that, the p value (0.000), was less than the test significance level (p < 0.05), and thus, this relationship is statistically significant.

The results suggest that there was a weak relationship between head teachers' human relations and staff motivation in public primary schools in Narok County. The results are in agreement with a study by Ackers (2017) who observed that developing effective human relation skills is crucial to establishing and maintaining productive business relationships, and subsequently employee motivation.

Head Teachers' Human Relations Practices and Staff Motivation

The objective of the study sought to examine the relationship between head teachers' human relation competencies and staff motivation. The results show that majority of the head teachers in most schools were not effective in approving benefits programmes such as paid vacation and sick off. Majority of the head teachers in schools were not keen on planning hours of work and day offs. The study also established that in most of the schools head teachers were not effective in resolving conflicts between the staff and between them, and in providing support to the staff to promote work-life balance. The study also reveals most of the head teachers were not effective in the use of recognition and awards for employees performing their work done satisfactorily. The results also further indicate that in most school the head teachers had not been effective in the creation of a friendly and supportive environment and did not have defined scheduled for staff motivation programme

Conclusion

The study concludes that head teachers human relations had weak positive statistically significant relationship with staff motivation in most of the public schools in Narok County. The study also concludes that even though there was such positive influence; there were still cases of schools where high levels of ineffectiveness were reported. This was attributed to the fact that Head teachers still did not have adequate human resource skills to handle all arising employee related concerns.

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