

Leadership Behaviour and Role Stressors among Primary School Teachers in Kenya

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Abstract

There is growing concern with the growth and prevalence of stress among teachers. In most schools, autocratic administration and supervision appear to be the rule rather than the exception. Recent estimates suggest that teachers in Kenya are so demoralized, despised, frustrated and ridiculed that 30 to 40 per cent of them do not enjoy optimum health while 45 per cent experience occupational tedium. It is against this background that this study investigated the relationship between leader behaviour and experienced role stress among primary school teachers in Nyanza province. Given that most studies have been conducted in industrial settings, this study hopes to fill this gap by deeply exploring incidences of role stress in educational settings within the Kenya context and suggest remedies for mitigating it. The Ex-post facto research design was used to establish the relationship between the independent and dependent variables in the study. Purposive and stratified random sampling techniques were used to select the study sample. The population of the study was 399 primary school teachers drawn from 32 primary schools and 8 District Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (DQASOs) in Nyanza province. Data was collected by means of both structured and unstructured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 16.0. The two tailed t-test and product-moment coefficient of correlation were run to establish the differences and relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The level of significance was set at 0.05. Content analysis of the written free responses was also carried out. It was established that primary school teachers in Nyanza province experience high levels of role stress. It is recommended that individual teachers, educational management personnel, planners and policy makers should have an informed understanding of role stress and its early warning signs hence equip themselves with skills, abilities, behaviours, conflict management and resolution policies and strategies needed to minimize incidences of role stress.

Key words: Leadership, Leadership behaviour, Consideration, Initiating structure

Introduction

There is a global concern with the growth and prevalence of stress among teachers (Gillian, 2007). The teaching profession has become increasingly challenging and complex. Enough evidence exist to show that teaching is one of the most complicated and stressful occupations (Kyriacou, 1981; Friedman, 1991; Hughes, 2001; Antoniou, Polychroni & Vlachakis, 2006). Researchers indicate that teachers continually face increasing workloads, larger class sizes, unmotivated and undisciplined pupils, minimal parental or

administrative support, and decreasing resources to highlight a few (Espin & Weissenburger, 2001; Hastings & Bham, 2003). This inevitably leads to the development of stress which is a phenomenon that is suffered by teachers (Cherniss, 1980a; Hughes, 2001).

According to Jackson and Rothmann (2005a), educators experience a great deal of stress practically on a daily basis. The impact of this on teachers' mental and physical health is decidedly negative (Tang, Schwarzer & Schmitz, 2001; Pomaki & Anagnostopoulou, 2003; Antoniou, Polychroni & Vlachakis, 2006) and may lead to psychological dysfunction (Griva & Joeke, 2003). Consequently, stress among teachers has received considerable research attention across the globe (Pretorius, 1994; Travers & Cooper, 1996; Tang *et al.*, 2001; Griva & Joeke, 2003; Pomaki & Anagnostopoulou, 2003; Sari, 2004; Antoniou *et al.*, 2006; Stevenson & Harper, 2006).

The focus of this study is on the relationship between head teachers' leadership behaviour and experienced role stress among primary school teachers in Nyanza Region, Kenya. The region has continued to post poor results since the inception of Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination (KCPE). In fact in the early 1980s, the province used to lead in the primary school examinations nationally hence, the need to establish the possible reasons for the decline in academic standards at this level.

Head teachers' leadership behaviour is described in terms of two broad behaviour patterns; one, concern with establishing an attitude of warmth and respect with teachers (concern for people or consideration) and two, organizing and defining the tasks of teachers in relation to goals (concern for tasks or initiating structure). The type of leadership is seen as an important factor contributing to the degree of conflict and occupational tedium among staff members.

Many researchers have shown that consistent exposure to stressful working conditions has been associated with both short and long term individual reactions including negative effects (Zohar, 1999), job dissatisfaction (Jackshon & Schulaer, 1985), burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter 2000), physical symptoms (Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991) psychological strains and even increased mortality rates (Jex, 2006). In addition to individual costs, the direct and indirect cost of occupational stress incurred by organizations is estimated to be more than \$150 billion per year worldwide (Pelletiaer & Lutz, 1991). Such estimates are predicated on the assumptions that occupational tedium can lead to outcomes such as increased absenteeism, turnover, healthcare costs and workplace accidents (Cooper, Liukkonene & Cartwright, 1996; Manning, Jackson & Fusilier, 1996; Jex, 2002).

Basically, in the world of work today, there is a change in the concept of work. There is need for increased productivity. One does not work only for a living and thus one's work has to be viewed in the context of one's immediate environment and wider social needs. The work one does is an extension of oneself. Workers get motivated when their jobs afford them the opportunity to feel involved, and their needs and wants coincide with the organizational objectives. An individual works because the job provides him or her recognition, collegial interaction and a social life. Against this background is the head teacher who is seen as vital in shaping the fulfilment of human needs among those working under him or her. Therefore, leadership behaviour is likely to be an integral, yet understudied factor in the process that should be amenable to change in primary prevention efforts. As salient members of the environment, leaders definitely have a direct influence on the subordinate behaviour (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989). As such, head teachers may either increase stress (e.g. through using excessive control) or they can prevent stressors or facilitate coping with stress (through participatory management) (Misumi, 1985; Bass, 1990).

The head teacher and entire management of the school must therefore provide the teacher with not only a good physical environment and welfare amenities to keep him or her healthy but also other essential ingredients, which make the work itself human, rewarding and challenging. Taking cognizance of the fact that environments in which people work are diverse in context and content of human interactions, any intervention efforts require a research base.

Generally, studies (Tepper, 2000; Begley, 2004; Capel, 2005 & Pines, 2006) on leader behaviour and stress have brought out the following facts. First, Leadership is a function of groups, not individuals. The quality of relationship between the leader and follower is an important determinant of experienced stress, satisfaction and team success. Second, Leadership styles can be differentiated as being either task-oriented or people oriented. Workers in organizations where there is a perfect blend of the two styles experience low levels of stress. Finally, The causal variables (things that leaders can modify), for example, organizational climate and structure and supervisory leadership moderate or mediate the levels of experienced stress among workers. The study therefore determines the impact of the head teacher's leadership behaviour on experienced occupational tedium among primary school teachers in Nyanza region, within a Kenyan context.

In several public primary schools in Kenya, and Nyanza region in particular, autocratic administration and supervision by head teachers appears to be the rule rather than the exception. Despite the emphasis of democracy in the modern world there are still too many administrators who are at least semi-dictators. They rely on "position power" instead of "people power" (Wangai, 1995; IPAR, 2008). The structure of administration demands that the classroom teacher is directly answerable to the head of the institution who

provides both guidance and supervision and determines the rate of promotion or the quality and speed of incentives.

Consequently, with such leaders, teachers are reduced to mere artisans applying customarily the rule of the thumb techniques of survival which they have learned. Such administrative and supervisory procedures result in a lack of creativeness, a frustration of the need for independence, diminution of professional self-esteem, increased intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts and hence the experience of high levels of stress.

It is against this background that a systematic study was needed to address this gap and shed light on the relationship between leader behaviour and experienced role stressors among primary school teachers in Nyanza region. Consequently, the study was guided by the key question that there exist correlations between head teachers' leadership behaviour and perceived role stressors among primary school teachers in Nyanza region.

Significance of the Study

Academically, this study hopes to reduce the dearth in the existing literature on leadership behaviour and role stressors among teachers in Kenya and Africa at large. The study findings may point researchers to investigate leadership behaviour and role stressors among teachers outside of a Eurocentric perspective. Such an endeavour should provide essential information about the cross-cultural applicability of the construct.

Study Limitation

First, this research was limited because it was not longitudinal. The relationship between leader behaviour and role stressors was not measured over time during the entire school year, that is, January to November. The actual study was carried out in second term which is usually the longest of all the school terms. The responses, therefore, may not be representative of other times. However, the limitation should not have affected substantially the testing of relationships among variables all of which were measured at the same time.

Research Methodology

The study combined both quantitative and qualitative designs which Howard (1983) describes as methodological pluralism. However, it was mainly quantitative in nature. Primary school teachers were selected for the study because they are charged with the responsibility of handling children during the formative stages of their development which is very important in shaping their future lives.

The research design adopted was *Ex-post facto*. This study design was selected mainly because besides collecting and describing the relevant data for the study, it explored the existence of certain relationships

among the independent variable (leadership behaviour) and dependent variables (role conflict and role ambiguity).

The population of the study was 3132 practising primary school teachers drawn from 518 schools and 32 Sub county Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (DQASO's) spread across 32 sub counties in Nyanza region. The study sample comprised 400 teachers, who were not head teachers, drawn from 32 public primary schools spread across 16 districts in Nyanza region and 8 DQASOs. Head teachers were not included in the study mainly because their leadership behaviour was being investigated.

In this study, purposive sampling technique was used to identify common characteristics of the schools in the study. Thereafter, the stratified random sampling technique was used to select the study sample. The sampling unit was the school. The schools were classified into rural and urban categories. From each stratum, one school was chosen at random using the random number table. This technique of sampling ensured that each of the given type of school was represented in the study.

Given that the proportion of the population having the required characteristics is estimated at 50% ($p=0.5$) the sample size was determined using the following formula (Fisher, 1983).

In this study the proportion of the target population with a certain characteristic is .50, the z-statistic is 1.87, and the desired accuracy is at the 0.5 level, therefore, the sample size is:

$$(3) \quad n = \frac{(2.0)^2 (.50)}{(.50)^2} \\ = 400$$

From the sampled thirty two primary schools, all the 400 teachers employed by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) completed the questionnaires. However, one teacher did not return the questionnaire hence final study sample comprised 399 teachers and 8 DQASO's who accepted to complete the questionnaires.

Since the respondents were drawn from diverse working environments (rural and urban) it was believed that they would provide rich and helpful data. The researcher sought permission to conduct the study in the identified schools. The researcher then obtained the teachers' consent for participation in the study after giving full information about the study and clarifying all issues of concern to the respondents. This was done through signing the informed consent forms.

To collect data in this research self report questionnaires were used. The researcher also provided an opportunity for the respondents to give free responses. This helped in validating responses from the respondents. Finally, an interview schedule was used to collect data. All the research tools were piloted to ascertain their validity and reliability in the Kenyan situation. Pilot study was done in two rural and two urban schools which were all excluded from the final study sample.

Leader Behaviour Questionnaire (LBQ) and Role Stressor Scale (RSS) were used to collect data. The LBQ a forty item questionnaire consisting of two sub-scales, Consideration (C) and Initiating Structure (IS) that measure different patterns of leadership behaviour. The LBQ contains short, descriptive statements which describe a certain way in which a leader may behave. Respondents indicate how often their leaders engage in the described behaviour by circling one of the five frequencies. The sub-scales were scored on a five-point response scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Of the 40 items, only 30 are scored (15 for each of the two dimensions). There are five statements which are scored negatively, that is reversed. The ten unscored items were retained in the instrument in order to maintain the conditions of administration utilized in standardizing the questionnaire (Halpin, 1959). The estimated reliability by the split-half for the LBQ is .83 for the Initiating Structure score, and .92 for the Consideration scores (Halpin, 1959). The instrument's validity as a measure of leadership style has been long established. The LBQ has exhibited a high degree of validity and reliability and has been widely accepted and used in numerous instances (Northouse, 2001; Yukl, 2002; Gilian, 2007).

Rizzo, House and Lirtzman's (1970) measure has been adapted to assess Role Ambiguity (RA) and Role Conflict (RC). The Role Ambiguity sub-scale contains six items and Role Conflict includes eight items. The items on this scale reflect certainty about duties, authority, allocation of time, and relationships with others, the clarity of existence of guidance, directives, policies and the ability to predict sanctions as outcomes of behaviour. The scale was scored on a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 (Strongly agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree) The internal consistency estimates for each wave were .77, .83, and .80, respectively for Role Ambiguity and .77, .82, and .82, respectively for Role Conflict. Further, the scale has been tested for construct validity and found to be significantly and consistently correlated with several measures of organizational structure, climate, and leader behaviour that would be expected to be correlated with the existence of Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity. Kuder Richardson reliability was found to be .78 (Nisa, 2003). The range for Role Ambiguity score is 6 to 30 and the range for Role Conflict score is 8 to 40. The study reversed all the items of the Ambiguity measure so that they would reflect Role Ambiguity. High scores indicate high levels of Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity.

The tools were self administered, that is, the respondents were allowed to complete the instruments themselves, but within a designated time. Whereas the, LBQ and RSS were completed by the teachers, the interview schedule was administered to the DQASOs to obtain the relevant data.

After scoring the questionnaires, the data was coded and data files prepared for computer analysis. The analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 16.0. The level of significance was set at 0.05. Content analysis of the written free responses of the respondents was also carried out. The product-moment coefficient of correlation was used to establish the relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

Results and Discussion

Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Table 1.1 shows the distribution of male and female teachers in the sample population.

Table 1.1: Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	%
Female	230	58
Male	169	42
Total	399	100

Overall, most (58%) of the respondents in the sample were females teachers. Male teachers only accounted for 42% of the whole sample. This is a good example of the actual distribution of female and male teachers in Kenya. It appears that females have a more positive disposition towards the teaching profession than their male counterparts who seem reluctant to join the profession. Wanjiru (2007) believes women are more sociable, empathic and nurturing than men. Besides, they have better communication skills which are essential for the teaching profession.

Distribution of Respondents by Age

Table 1.2 provides the age ranges of the sample population.

Table 1.2: Age of the Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	%
Below 21 Years	0	0
21 – 30 Years	149	37
31 – 40 Years	128	32
Over 40 Years	122	31
Total	399	100

The data shows that 37 percent of the teachers belonged to the 21 – 30 years age group. Those within the 31 – 40 years age group accounted for 32 percent of the total sample. Teachers with forty years accounted for 31 percent of the total study sample. Teachers with over 30 years accounted for 63 percent of the total sample. This implies that most of the schools had older and perhaps mature teachers.

Distribution of Respondents by Experience

Information on the distribution of teachers in terms of years of teaching experience is shown in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3: Years of Teaching Experience

Years of Teaching Experience	Frequency	%
Less than 1 Year	21	5
1- 5 Years	112	28
6 – 10 Years	67	17
11-15 Years	114	29
Total	399	100

The results show that 28 percent of the teachers had between 1 – 5 years of teaching experience. Those with fifteen or less years of teaching experience accounted for 71 percent of the total sample. On the other hand, those with over fifteen years of teaching experience accounted for 29 percent of the total sample. This shows that most of the teachers in the total sample had relatively fewer years of teaching experience.

To establish the correlation between occupational tedium, leadership behaviour and role stressors among teachers in Nyanza region, the product moment coefficient of correlation was worked out in order to ascertain the strength and degree between the variables. This analysis was carried to test the following null hypothesis.

H₀₁: There is no significant correlation between head teachers' leadership behaviour and role stressors among primary school teachers in Nyanza region.

Table 1.4 shows inter-correlations on the variables of leadership behaviour, role conflict and role ambiguity.

Table 1.4: Inter-correlations on the Variables of Leadership Behaviour, Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Consideration	-			
2. Initiating Structure	.32**	-		
3. Role Conflict	-.53*	-.48**	-	
4. Role Ambiguity	.70*	.63**	.26**	-

*P < 0.05 **P < 0.01

The measure of Consideration is negatively correlated with role conflict. The r value is -.53 which is significant at 0.05 levels. This shows that when the leader is supportive and involves teachers in discussion making, they do not experience role conflict. Role conflict is negatively correlated with Initiating Structure. The coefficient of correlation is -.48 which is significant at 0.01 levels. In line with the discussion presented in the conceptual framework, it is evident that the more the teachers experience role conflict, the more they see the head teacher as high in initiating structure. Teachers should be allowed to make decisions in school because lack of this leads to experience of role conflict. Teachers need autonomy. Autonomy here indicates that teachers have the freedom to make prescriptive professional choice to decide appropriate services and activity to their pupils. Similar results were reported by Pearson and Moomaw (2005) who indicated that when teachers are involved in the management of school, they perceive their head teacher as supportive and also experience low levels of role conflict.

The measure of Consideration is positively correlated with Role Ambiguity. The r value is .70 which is significant at 0.05 levels. This shows that even when head teachers exhibit high consideration, to some degree, the teachers still experience role ambiguity. This is probably due to the fact that teachers do not fully internalize the briefs on their job description.

Role Ambiguity is positively correlated with Initiating Structure. The r value is .63 which is significant at 0.01 levels. This indicates that when head teachers are authoritative, the teachers do not experience role ambiguity. This is perhaps because high standards of performance are set and the teachers' roles are clearly defined as was also reported in the findings of Bobin and Boles (1996).

From the foregoing discussion, it is clearly emerging that indirect models of the effects of leadership on employee experienced stress would suggest that leaders engage in behaviours that either cause or reduce work stressors, and it is through this relationship with the work stressor that strains occur. Leader initiating structure may lower levels of role stressors for example, role ambiguity and role conflict, which then enhances employee well-being. Much of the research on the distal effects of leader behaviour on employee well-being has focused on its relationship with two commonly studied role stressors namely role conflict and role ambiguity.

Employees receive roles or expectations about what they should and should not do at work. These roles can be sent from both formal for example, communications from the supervisor, job descriptions and informal sources for example, co-worker interactions and customer interactions (Katz & Kahn, 1978). According to role theory, role expectations, role stressors such as role ambiguity or role conflict may result.

Although few studies tested mediating effects of stressors in the relationship between leadership and well being, some studies examined the direct relationships between leader behaviours and work stressors (the hypothesized mediating variable) (Schriesheim & Murphy, 1976; Teas, 1983; Michaels, Day & Joachimsthaler, 1987). Given that some studies found direct effects of leader behaviours on stress, and that it is established that commonly studied work stressors for example, role ambiguity and role conflict are associated with acute stress outcomes such as emotional exhaustion and perceived stress, then an indirect effect of leadership on stress would seem theoretically plausible if supervisory behaviours indeed impact specific work stressors.

In a study of restaurant service providers, Babin and Boles (1996) found that both role conflict and role ambiguity were negatively associated with increasing perceptions of supervisor support. However, Ruyter *et al.* (2001) found no significant associations between leadership as defined by consideration and initiating structure, and role stressors.

While studies (Teas, 1983; Michaels, Day & Joachimsthaler, 1987) suggest the possibility of an indirect effect of leader behaviours on employee stress via their effects on stressors, few studies have examined this mediated relationship directly. Using a sample of salespeople, one such study found that leader

consideration had an indirect effect on job anxiety and job satisfaction, mediated through its inverse relationship with role conflict (Jones *et al.*, 1996). In the same study, leader initiating structure behaviours were associated with lower levels of role ambiguity; however ambiguity was not associated with job anxiety or job satisfaction, so mediation was not supported.

Expanding the concept of leader behaviours and employee stress, O'Driscoll and Beehr (1994) examined the link between a composite of supervisor behaviours (i.e., initiating structure, support, provided feedback on job performance, supervisory goal setting behaviours, problem solving behaviour) and psychological strain, job dissatisfaction and turnover intentions. Their findings were consistent with the mediation hypothesis of the link between supervisory actions and employee well-being and behavioural intentions to quit. Their results demonstrated that while supervisor behaviours may have had some direct impact on employee outcomes, greater influence was exerted indirectly via ambiguity and job satisfaction. Role ambiguity was most strongly related to job dissatisfaction, which was associated with psychological strain and intentions to quit. Role conflict had less systematic relationships with the outcomes, but there was some direct effect on turnover intentions. In some cases, leader behaviours may not be expected to cause or reduce stressors, but to alleviate the effects of stressful work conditions.

An intervention study conducted by Theorell *et al.* (2001) measured effects on employees after managers had participated in a psychosocial manager programme. There was a significant decrease in serum cholesterol levels and a significantly improved authority over decisions among employees with managers who had participated in the intervention, compared to the control group.

According to Bakker and Schaufeli (2008), the modern organisation places great emphasis on the management of human capital. Positive psychology is a more modern and effective approach, as it focuses on human strengths (Luthans, 2002). A positive organisation focuses on the dynamics within the organisation that lead to the development of human strength, foster vitality and flourishing employees, make possible resilience and restoration and cultivate extraordinary individual and organisational performance (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003). Positive organisational behaviour fosters engaged employees and this is the key to ensuring high performance and overall wellness for both the organisation and its employees, while increasing the commitment of employees, thereby lowering the risk of losing talent (McHugh, 2001).

The main outcome of a healthy, positive organisation is the retention of talent (Ulrich, Brockbank, Johnson, Sandholtz & Younger, 2008). These organisations focus on their employees with as much passion and enthusiasm as they do on new processes and products (Bryan & Joyce, 2007). Talent management and the effective management of employee turnover is a central issue that is managed in order to avoid negative

implications, such as high economic costs and disrupted social and communicative structures (Bergiel, Nguyen, Clenney & Taylor, 2009). An increase in profits, employees' happiness and productivity and customer satisfaction results from the retention of employees (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2000). The ability of leaders to empower their employees will have an impact on the organisation's labour retention (Taplin & Winterton, 2007).

According to Snyder and Lopez (2002), leaders within an organisation play a vital role in designing a healthy work environment that encourages the talent of the organisation to stay. Furthermore, leadership behaviours have a strong influence on employee and organisational outcomes (Chen & Silverthorne, 2005), including work engagement and turnover intention. Engaged employees are aware of the organisational context and work with others to improve performance within their roles for the benefit of the organisation (Devi, 2009). When employees are engaged, they become less likely to leave the organisation. Baskin (2007) reports similar findings stating that an employee who is not engaged is more likely to leave the organisation.

As postulated in the conceptual framework in this study, it is expected that empowering behaviour by leaders will impact on psychological empowerment, work engagement and reduce incidences of role conflict and ambiguity. Konczak, Stelly and Trusty (2000) identified six dimensions of leader empowering behaviour, namely, the delegation of authority, the leader's ability to emphasise accountability, encouragement of self-directed decision-making, the leader's ability to share information, development of skills and coaching to promote innovation.

A leader's ability to demonstrate these behaviours will influence how employees perceive the tasks presented to them by their leader (Wilson *et al.*, 2004). According to Greco, Laschinger and Wong (2006), employees will be empowered if a leader enhances the meaningfulness of work, allows participation in decision-making, facilitates the accomplishment of tasks, communicates confidence in high performance and provides autonomy. A leader that utilises empowerment creates benefits for both the organisation and the employees, as empowerment improves the economic performance of an organisation and reduces role conflict and role ambiguity amongst employees (Greasley *et al.*, 2008).

According to Mardanov, Heischmidt and Henson (2008), employee behaviour depends on the relationship between an employee and the leader, as experienced by the employee. Every employee within an organisation should have a specified set of roles and these allow the leaders of an organisation to hold the employee accountable for performance (Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970). Mukherjee and Malhotra (2006) found that when a leader offers clarity in terms of these roles, a positive relationship results. Leader

empowering behaviours influence employees' perceived role clarity in a positive way (Nielsen, Randall, Yarker & Brenner, 2008). Leaders who provide guidance in terms of the tasks presented to employees create less uncertainty (Hong *et al.*, 2004). Nielsen *et al.* (2008) support this in their findings that a positive relationship exists between supervisory consideration and perceived role clarity. Klidas, Van den Berg and Wilderom (2006) found that employees who indicated disempowerment due to leadership behaviours were experiencing low role clarity.

As has been discussed earlier, it is clear that role clarity consists of two concepts, namely role conflict and role ambiguity (Rizzo *et al.*, 1970). Role conflict occurs when two or more conflicting job requirements arise, so that complying with one would make doing the other more difficult (Rizzo *et al.*, 1970; Teh, Ooi & Yong, 2008). Role ambiguity refers to the lack of clarity and predictability of the outcomes of one's behaviour (Rizzo *et al.*, 1970; Slatten, 2008). Employees who feel empowered report low levels of role conflict and ambiguity (therefore higher levels of role clarity) in their roles because they are able to control their own environment (Greasley *et al.*, 2008).

Psychological empowerment is a motivational construct manifested in four cognitions (Spreitzer, 1995). First, *meaning*, which refers to the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to one's own ideals or standards. Second, *competence*, which is an individual's belief in his or her capability to perform activities with skill. Third, *self-determination*, which indicates the individual's sense of choice in initiating and regulating action and finally, *impact*, which is the degree to which an individual can influence strategic, administrative or operating outcomes at work.

This motivational approach stresses psychological enabling as the main reason for an individual's feelings of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995). Organisations which empower employees through greater meaning, competence, self-determination and impact in their work experience positive outcomes (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Employees who are empowered offer the benefit of responding more quickly to environmental changes and stakeholder demands in comparison with their disempowered counterparts (Carson & King, 2005). According to Greasley *et al.* (2008), organisations with higher levels of empowerment have demonstrated improvements in various economic performance areas, global competition, the constantly changing business environment and the ability to deal with pressures to improve efficiency and performance. When employees experience empowerment they also demonstrate higher levels of engagement (Greco *et al.*, 2006).

Psychological empowerment is directed by the six dimensions of leader empowering behaviour (Konczak *et al.*, 2000). Leader empowering behaviour is correlated with greater feelings of empowerment (Greco *et al.*, 2006). According to Avey, Hughes, Norman and Luthans (2008) leadership style and psychological

empowerment are significantly related to feelings of empowerment. Sauer (2003) found that leader empowering behaviour is significantly correlated to the degree of psychological empowerment that employees experience. There are two aspects of empowerment: empowerment as behaviour of a supervisor who empowers his or her subordinates and the psychological state of a subordinate resulting from his or her supervisor's ability to empower (Avey *et al.*, 2008).

For the empowerment of employees to be successful, it is necessary to investigate the role of the leader because he or she has a substantial impact on the employee's perception of empowerment. It is the leader's responsibility to assess the employee's perceived feelings of empowerment (Greasley *et al.*, 2004). An empowered organisation is one in which a leader encourages employees by involving them in decision-making and assigning responsibility to them (Malone, 2004). When leaders are effective in using empowering behaviours, employees are aware of the expectations placed upon them (role clarity) and they feel confident (empowered) in achieving them; consequently employees experience higher levels of engagement (Greco *et al.*, 2006).

Further, role clarity has been found to play a role in work engagement (Steele & Fullagar, 2009). When expectations are not clarified employees are not engaged, as is evident in the expression of negative emotions like boredom and resentment (Harter *et al.*, 2002). Increasing clarity of expectations was found to increase positive emotions that led to engagement of employees (Russel, 2008). When roles are not clearly defined, the likelihood of an employee's intentions to leave that job, role conflict and ambiguity will increase because of the lack of role engagement (Steele & Fullagar, 2009). Employees who perceive their environments as predictable and consistent are more engaged in their work (Saks, 2006). According to Konrad (2006), the more transparent leaders are in terms of the organisation's operations, the more engaged employees will be. Coffman (2002) endorses this, stating that the best way in which to engage a workforce is through offering employees clarity in terms of the desired expectations of their roles. This is confirmed in the findings of Prieto, Salanova, Martinez and Schaufeli (2008) that role stress are negatively related to work engagement, with role ambiguity or clarity being a strong predictor of dedication, a sub-construct of work engagement.

Greco *et al.* (2008) found that workers who experienced psychological empowerment were more engaged in their work. Empowered employees demonstrate the characteristics of an engaged employee (Avey *et al.*, 2008; Greasley *et al.*, 2008). Avey *et al.* (2008) found that empowerment is sub-sequential to engagement. This is substantiated in the findings of Stander and Rothmann (2010) who found that psychological empowerment was a statistically significant predictor of employee engagement. Competence and meaning are two sub-scales that encompass psychological empowerment and have been found to lead to work

engagement. When employees experience meaning in their work they experience engagement (May & Harter, 2004). Engaged employees view themselves as competent in dealing with their job demands; they have positive self-efficacy (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002). Reynders (2005) found in her study of employees in a government institution, that higher levels of psychological empowerment encompass increased levels of work engagement.

Conclusion

From the analysis presented, it is evident that leadership behaviour impacts on experienced role conflict and role ambiguity among teachers in Nyanza region. In most schools, head teachers are not supportive and show little respect for teachers hence they experience high levels of role conflict and role ambiguity. Therefore the hypothesis that there is no significant correlation between head teachers' leadership behaviour and role stressors among primary school teachers in Nyanza region stands rejected.

Most of the head teachers are high on initiating structure. In other words, the teachers do not perceive them as supportive and warm. Teachers feel powerless, alienated and oppressed. They are combative and passive and are largely dissatisfied with leadership. Traditional, rigid bureaucratically administered schools result in low teacher commitment, job dissatisfaction, and occupational tedium Flexible schools that use collaborative problem solving strategies, which promote greater teacher affiliation with the school raises teacher morale. In the more flexible schools, teachers believe they can contribute to positive school change and that their ideas will be sought after and used.

Recommendations

Despite the limitations of the study discussed at various sections of this thesis, some implications and recommendations are considered appropriate for concluding the study.

It is important to ensure that the teachers' roles are clarified through the provision of the necessary information regarding expectations placed upon them. The extent to which information is successfully received and understood is also important. Tasks must be communicated to employees in such a way that their fit and function within the organisation is comprehensively understood. Headteachers must ensure that teachers have clear career paths, detailed job models and a structured process to consult when clarification of expectations is needed.

Head teachers should develop strategies to prevent incidences of stress through staff activities and the general organization and management of the school. They should make sure that the teachers have the necessary tools to implement new initiatives, consulting with staff and changes taking place in the school.

When teachers experience an active, positive influence on policy decisions, occupational tedium is reduced and job satisfaction is increased.

Head teachers must help identify the early warning signs of stress. They must also identify teachers experiencing stress and take steps to reduce it on the individual. A safe, comfortable and supportive work environment facilitates the maintenance of teachers' motivation and self efficacy. The failure of the school to provide safety and support for the teachers is likely to generate teacher disillusionment and apathy.

In terms of leadership behaviour, the principal strategy is to replace authority based management with participative management as a means to improve school effectiveness. Providing teachers with a significant role in school decision making is a key element in empowerment in that teachers gain the opportunity to increase control over their work environment.

Head teachers also need to be equipped with skills on conflict management and resolution. They should adopt functional conflict management strategies which move the school from stagnation to generation; it stimulates and energizes. Ideas and issues are often clarified and as a result, productivity is increased, creative problem solving is exhibited and the incidences of occupational tedium are minimized.

Through the Kenya Primary Schools Head teachers Association (KEPSHA) seminars and workshops should be organized so that head teachers can share idea on how to effectively manage their schools. From such interactions the head teachers should also be equipped with strategies on conflict management and resolution.

Kenya National Union of Teachers should not just be interested in the terms and conditions of service of teachers. It should be actively involved organizing informed forums to discuss challenges facing education and teachers welfare. This will help to exert professional influence on the thinking of the government and public on educational matters.

The government through the Ministry of Education has a vital role to play in reducing the incidence of occupational tedium among teachers. They must acknowledge that such teachers are going through a negative experience, and are not very effective in their jobs. This is detrimental not only to the teachers themselves, but also to the children, school and staff. Such may even leave the profession all together. The education administrators should make regular visits to schools and interact with the head teachers and individual teachers to consult, encourage, guide and also learn from them. This will aid in the diagnosis of existing problems which will in turn be crucial formulation of pragmatic solutions.

The government should ensure that the school management committees are empowered and involved in the administration of schools. This will enable them guide the head teachers on leadership matters and also boost teacher morale. The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) should ensure that the professional ethics guide is periodically revised. This will ensure that it incorporates the modern trends in school matters.

The government should accordingly defend teachers from public negative criticism by the public and those in authority. This is common when teachers go on strike to demand for their rights. The teachers are usually left demoralized and less motivated and some leave the profession all together. This situation if not addressed makes the community undermine the teaching profession thus according it a low status.

Essentially, individual teachers need training in conflict resolution. They should be able to discern whether the conflict they are experiencing is intrapersonal or interpersonal or both. They require coping strategies, for example, using appropriate relaxation techniques. They can thus determine which techniques are effective for them individually or collegially.

Overall, an aggressive intervention in school leadership is needed if its negative impact on both the teacher and the educational process is to be prevented (Hughes, 2001, p. 297). For intervention to be effective, however, it should be systemic (Taris et al., 2004) and should address stressors originating in the work and personal environments of educators (Maslach et al., 2001), such as work overload, a lack of control, insufficient reward, a breakdown in the work (educator) community, the absence of fairness and conflicting values (Angerer, 2003). At the same time, effective intervention cannot rely on generic approaches imported from other settings but should be context and situation-specific (McCarty, Zhao & Garland, 2007).

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