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Relationship Between Principals' Autocratic Leadership Style and Motivation of Support Staff in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya

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Abstract

Staff motivation is a significant factor in enhancing organizational commitment and productivity. In a school system, two types of staff perform their duties in a complementary manner, namely the teaching staff and the support staff. The school principal is expected to play an administrative role, which includes motivational. However, the principals' motivation to support staff has been an issue of concern in the management of schools in Kenya. The specific objective was to: find out the relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff. Descriptive correlation and exploratory designs were used. The study population consisted of 170 principals, 172 deputy principals and 170 BOM chairpersons with 1020 support staff, a total target population of 1532. Stratified, random and purposive sampling techniques were used to select 51 principals, 51 deputy principals, 51 BOM chairpersons and 306 support staff members, making a total sample of 459 respondents. The instruments for data collection were questionnaires, interview schedules, and document analysis. The study used descriptive and inferential statistics of chi-square, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation, and simple linear regression analysis. Qualitative data were analyzed by organizing the content into themes and sub-themes as they emerged, then tallied and reported as excerpts. Validity was determined through JOUST experts. The study employed a Cronbach alpha coefficient analysis of which a minimum of 0.709 and 0.84 was obtained for each of the items whose reliability was tested. There was a statistically significant negative relationship between principals' autocratic ($r = -.231$, $n=306$, $p<.05$) leadership style and support staff motivation and that principals' autocratic leadership orientation accounted for 5.3% of the variation in motivation among support staff. Ministry of Education should design regular in-service courses for support staff and principals to maximize motivation and principals to evaluate their leadership styles and the level of motivation of the support staff.

Keywords: Public Secondary School, Staff Motivation, Support Staff, Autocratic Leadership Style

1. Introduction

The autocratic (authoritative) style is characterized by implementing the will of a leader, without taking into the consideration the opinion of subordinates. Leaders decide alone, give orders to subordinates and expect them to carry them out, based on unilateral, top-down communication. In order to motivate, leaders use their position to decide on the appropriate remuneration. Undertook management style research of experiments, observing teachers instructing children, for how to make a paper mache (or pulp) mask, in a classroom (Lewin, 1939). Findings show that the productivity (output) of masks made by the children, for example, the quantity of work, was the highest under autocratic styles of leadership.

Further, the study revealed that the work from the children ceased altogether under the autocratic leadership style. The children expressed a strong hostility towards autocratic styles. The study also found that decision-making was less creative under authoritarian leadership. Lewin (1939) also found that it is more difficult to move from an authoritarian style to a democratic style than vice versa. Authoritarian leadership is best applied to situations where there is little time for group decision-making or where the leader is the most knowledgeable member of the group. However, Lewin's study, involved school children and teachers as respondents while the present study involved principals, deputy principals, BOM chairpersons and support staff members as respondents. The present study sought therefore to fill this gap in the literature.

A study in the USA by Warrick (2007), found out that an autocratic leader puts a high emphasis on performance and a low emphasis on people. Assumes that people are lazy, irresponsible and untrustworthy and that planning, organizing, controlling and decision making should be accomplished by the leader. Autocratic some but little consultation by a manager with subordinate for instance at least subordinate has explained to them the reasons for the manager's decision. Autocratic leadership styles which are a more bossy way of managing subordinates, based on centralised decision making by the manager, who is often impatient, aggressive and dominating. An autocratic manager would not encourage participation in decision making from their subordinates.

According to a qualitative study by Fulmer (2006) conducted in Tanzania. The study explored the role of instructional leadership and its impact on instructional behaviours of teachers, leading to improvement in student achievements. The study used descriptive research design. The data was collected from 25 pre-service principals on their reflections in becoming instructional leaders along with secondary data from progress and curriculum intervention reports. The findings indicated that the instructional leadership role was crucial for lasting and productive changes in schools and instructional interventions of principals did impact on the thinking and behaviours of teachers to improve student achievements. However, this study only focused on instructional leadership behaviour. The present study sought to look into autocratic leadership style and strike the relationship between leadership style and support staff motivation. Fulmer's study was purely qualitative research approach while the current adopted a descriptive survey research design of both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

In Kenya, a study by Karori (2013) focused on the effects of headteachers' leadership styles on students' performance in K.C.P.E in public primary schools in Kikuyu district. The study adopted the ex-post facto survey research design. All teachers and headteachers in all the public primary schools in Kikuyu district were targeted. Twenty-seven headteachers and 154 teachers were randomly sampled from 27 primary schools. Responses were obtained using questionnaires. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were utilized in data analysis. The current study adopted descriptive correlation and exploratory design. Findings revealed there was a significant relationship between head teachers' leadership styles and students' academic performance. According to the study findings, there was no relationship between headteachers' gender, age, teaching experience and marital status and their leadership styles. Teachers perceived their headteachers as autocratic. However, this study was majorly focusing on public primary schools and students' performance in KCPE but failed to provide any information on principals' leadership styles, and secondary schools support staff motivation. The present study sought to fill this gap and determine the relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools in Nyamira County, Kenya.

2 Objective of the Study

This study focused on achieving the following objective: To establish a relationship between of principals' autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools.

Research Hypothesis

The research was guided by the following hypothesis: H_{01} -There is no statistically significant relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools. H_{a1} -

There is a statistically significant relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive correlation survey and exploratory research designs to explore whether there was a correlation between the principals' leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools in Nyamira County. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2005), a descriptive correlation survey research design determines and reports the way things are. Descriptive correlation survey design was employed because it guaranteed breadth of information and accurate descriptive analysis of characteristics of a sample, which was used to make inferences about population (Orodho, 2004). This design is useful when a researcher wants to collect data on phenomena that cannot be observed directly. Its advantage is that it allows collection of large amounts of data from a sizeable population in a highly effective, easily and in an economical way, often using questionnaires. Exploratory design helped in clarifying about this phenomenon on the relationship between principals' leadership styles and motivation of support staff that would not have been clearly studied in this specific context. Quantitative and qualitative approaches (mixed methods) guided data collection procedures for this study. Tools including questionnaires, interview guides, and document analysis were used to collect relevant data on the relationship between principals' leadership styles and motivation of support staff.

The study was carried out in Nyamira County. The Latitude and Longitude of Nyamira County are 0°56'S34°93'E respectively. Nyamira County is located in the former Nyanza Province, and borders the counties of Bomet to the East, Narok to the South, Kisii to the West, Homa Bay to the South West and Kericho to the North East. It covers an area of 899.3 km². The population of Nyamira County is 598,252 people, with the male comprising 48%, and female 52%. The population density is 665 people per km² (County Government of Nyamira, 2015). The Government of Nyamira County has four constituencies, namely West Mugirango, North Mugirango, Borabu and Kitutu Masaba and five sub-counties, namely Nyamira South, Nyamira North, Borabu, Manga and Masaba North (County Government of Nyamira, 2012), prepared a map showing the location of Nyamira.

Nyamira County was chosen for the study because of the following main reasons, namely; the existence of many schools and a large number of staff employed in schools which made it possible to have respondents who could give the required information for the study. Similarly, the various economic activities in the area provide an alternative source of employment, hence a competitor and a fallback alternative to formal employment in the schools. This makes motivation an important variable in attracting staff to work in secondary schools.

There is also a widespread support staff turnover in secondary schools in Nyamira County despite the fact that county is fairly developed and productive area. Support staff's motivation has persistently been dismal. Hence the county was convenient for the study. The sub-counties in Nyamira County were easily accessible because of the good road network which cuts across the sub-counties and given that no similar study has been conducted in the county. No seminar or workshop ever held to address the support staff's motivation. The study location became more suitable.

This study had a target population of 1532 which comprised of 170 Principals, 172 Deputy Principals, 170 Boards of Management chairpersons and 1020 support staff members. Units of analysis were 170 public secondary schools Nyamira County, five sub-counties namely Nyamira North, Nyamira South, Masaba North, Manga, and Borabu. The target population is summarized as shown in Table 3.1

Table 3. 1: Target Population

Sub-County	Number of schools	Principals	Deputy Principals	BOM Chair	Support Staff	Total
Nyamira North	43	43	43	43	258	387
Nyamira South	44	44	45	44	264	397
Masaba North	32	32	32	32	192	288
Manga	28	28	29	28	168	253
Borabu	23	23	23	23	138	207
Total	170	170	172	170	1020	N=1532

Source: Nyamira County Education Office (2016)

Mugenda & Mugenda (2005) suggests that for correlational or experimental research, 30 cases per group or more are required; and for descriptive and survey research, ten percent of the accessible population. This study, therefore, employed a sampling fraction of 30% of the target population (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2005) the sample size is represented in Table 3.2

Table 3. 2: Sampling Frame

Sub-county	Sample size Principals	Deputy principals	BOM Chairpersons	Support staff	Total
Nyamira North	13	13	13	77	116
Nyamira South	13	13	13	79	118
Masaba North	10	10	10	58	88
Manga	8	8	8	50	74
Borabu	7	7	7	42	63
Total	n=51	n=51	n=51	n=306	459

From table 3.2, this study had a target population of 1532 which comprised of 170 Principals, 172 Deputy Principals, 170 Boards of Management chairpersons and a support staff of 1020. Using the sampling fraction of 30%, the sample size comprised of 51 Principals, 51 Deputy Principals, 51 BOM Chairpersons, and a support staff of 306, making a total sample size of 459. The sample elements were selected through stratified sampling, simple random sampling, and purposive sampling.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the analysis of the test of the hypothesis. The study used one null hypothesis related to support staff level of motivation and principals' leadership styles. To do this, Chi-Square and a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was computed to test each hypothesis, with scores on leadership style as the

independent variable and support staff level of motivation as the dependent variable. The scores of the variables were computed from the frequency of responses from the support staff questionnaire and converted into continuous scaled data by computing mean responses per respondents, where high scale ratings implied high perceived motivation and high usage of the leadership style and vice versa. The p-value was set at .05, the null hypothesis was rejected when the p-value was less than .05, but it was accepted when the p-value obtained was greater than .05.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools.

The study was interested in establishing the principals' autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools. To achieve this, the principals were required to indicate the autocratic leadership style in a contingency table and analysed by chi-square test. Their responses are summarized in Tables 4.20 and 4.21

Table 4.20: The relationship between principals' autocratic leadership styles and motivation of support staff (using data from principals)

Count	VLM	LM	AM	HM	VHM	Total
Disagree	0	2	10	26	1	39
Neutral	0	0	2	7	0	9
Agree	0	0	2	1	0	3
Total	0	2	14	34	1	51

Source: Field Data

As the first step used in the study to arrive at chi-square test which was used to test the set hypothesis was Table 4.20 which was contingency table showing cross tabulation between principal's autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff. The study found the majority (27) of the principals disagreed that the support staff was highly motivated, 10 disagreed that the staff was averagely motivated, 7 principals were neutral on the staff were highly motivated compared to 2 principals who were both neutral and also agreed that the staff was averagely motivated.

Table 4.21: Chi-square test on the relationship between principals' autocratic leadership styles and motivation of support staff (using principals' data)

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	145.99a	97.00	0.62
Likelihood Ratio	115.78	97.00	0.99
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.58	1.00	0.45
N of Valid Cases	51.00		

a 81 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.

Source: Field Data

The χ^2 results of 145.99, df 97, $p < 0.05$ indicated that the null hypothesis was rejected and therefore implying the existence of a significant relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary and the alternate hypothesis (H_{a1}) was accepted. The study was also interested in establishing the relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools. To achieve this, the support staff members were required to indicate the autocratic

leadership style in a contingency table and analysed by chi-square test. Their responses are summarized in Tables 4.22 and 4.23

Table 4.22: The relationship between principals' autocratic leadership styles and motivation of support staff (using data from support staff)

COUNT	VLM	LM	AM	HM	VHM	TOTAL
Disagree	0	12	60	156	6	234
Neutral	0	0	12	42	0	54
Agree	0	0	12	6	0	18
Total	0	12	84	204	6	306

Source: Field Data

As the first step used in the study to arrive at chi-square test which was used to test the set hypothesis was Table 4.22 which was contingency table showing cross tabulation between principal's autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff using data from support staff. The study found that the majority (156) of the support staff disagreed that the support staff were highly motivated, 60 disagreed that the staff were averagely motivated, 42 support staff were neutral on the fact that the staff were highly motivated compared to 12 support staff who were both neutral and also agreed that the staff were averagely and highly motivated respectively.

Table 4.23: Chi-square test on the relationship between principals' autocratic leadership styles and motivation of support staff (using support staff data)

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	264.174a	165	0.73
Likelihood Ratio	215.79	165	0.99
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.64	1	0.49
N of Valid Cases	306		0.73

a 81 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.

Source: Field Data

The χ^2 results of 264.174a, df 165, $p < 0.05$ indicate that the null hypothesis is rejected and therefore implying the presence of a significant relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary and the alternate hypothesis (H_{a1}) is accepted. Furthermore, to test the hypothesis, a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis was done, with scores on principals' level of autocratic leadership style used as the independent variable and support staff level of motivation as the dependent variable. Table 4.24 shows the SPSS output on correlation analysis results on the relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff.

Table 4.24: Relationship between Autocratic Leadership Style and Motivation of Support Staff

		Autocratic Leadership	Support Staff Motivation
Autocratic Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	-.231**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	306	306
Support Staff Motivation	Pearson Correlation	-.231**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	306	306

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

The finding of the study shows that there was statistically significant, though weak, negative correlation ($r = -.231$, $n=306$, $p<.05$) between principals' autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools, with high autocratic tendencies of the principals resulting in to low motivation level among the support staff members in secondary schools and vice-versa. Given that the relationship was statistically significant, the hypothesis that "there is no statistically significant relationship between the principals' autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools." was rejected. It was therefore concluded that high-level autocracy in leadership demotivates support staff members.

To estimate the level of relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and support staff motivation, a coefficient of determination was computed. This was done using regression analysis, and the results were as shown in Table 4.25.

Table 4.25: Model Summary on Regression Analysis of Influence Principals' Autocratic Leadership on Motivation

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.231 ^a	.053	.050	.42847	1.759

a. Predictors: (Constant), Autocratic Leadership

b. Dependent Variable: Support Staff Motivation

The model shows that principals' autocratic leadership orientation accounted for 5.3% (as signified by coefficient $R^2 = .053$) of the variation in motivation among support staff workers in the secondary schools in Nyamira County. However, to determine whether principals' autocratic leadership orientation was a significant predictor of motivation among the support staff workers, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was computed as Table 4.26

Table 4.26: ANOVA –Influence of Principals' Autocratic Leadership Orientation

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	3.138	1	3.138	17.095	.000 ^b
1	Residual	55.811	304	.184		
	Total	58.949	305			

a. Dependent Variable: Support Staff Motivation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Autocratic Leadership

From Table 4.26, it is evident that principals' autocratic leadership orientation was a significant predictor of motivation among the support staff workers [$F(1, 304) = 17.095$, $p<.05$] in secondary schools. This further confirms that principals' autocratic leadership orientation significantly influences motivation among support staff.

However, linear regression was generated to find the actual relationship between principals' autocratic leadership orientation and motivation of support staff workers, as shown in Table 4.27.

Table 4.27: Coefficients of Linear Regression: Principals' Autocratic Leadership Orientation

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.637	.218		16.692	.000
	Autocratic Leadership	-.254	.061	-.231	-4.135	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Support Staff Motivation

$$Y = B_0 + B_1X + e$$

$$Y = 3.637 - 0.254X_1 + e$$

Where Y = Adjustment

$$B_0 + B_1 = \text{Constant}$$

X = Level of Autocratic Leadership Style

It is evident from Table 4.27 that if the level of autocratic leadership style was increased by one standard deviation, then perceived scores in the level of motivation of support staff workers would drop by .231 standard deviation units. This is a substantial effect from one independent variable.

The deputy principals maintained during interviews that support staff members with more work experience were not allowing the use of an autocratic leadership style which was preferred by principals as such they were clashing with the principals. The deputy principals added that most principals preferred to work with less experienced support staff members who could easily be intimidated so that they don't speak their minds. One Deputy Principal explained that:

Principals do initiate sacking of support staff member who had long-term work experience because such support staff members do not support their leadership styles (D/P 15)

Most BOM chairpersons on their part maintained that most support staff members in the school setups were hired by Board of Management and were aware of the rights to demand good leadership styles. One BOM Chairperson noted that:

Some principals are using authoritarian leadership style on support staff members, and in such instances, the board normally come to the rescue of the support staff and recommend the transfer of the principals (BOMC 13)

The finding is supported by Warrick (2007) who found out that an autocratic leader puts a high emphasis on performance and a low emphasis on people. This coincides with the finding related to principals autocratic practices including; forcing deadlines and productivity on support staff without minding a personal relationship with them.

5. Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The finding of the study established that there is a statistically significant negative relationship ($r = -.231$, $n=306$, $p<.05$) between principals' autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff. The principals' autocratic leadership orientation accounted for 5.3% (as signified by coefficient $R^2 = .053$) of the variation in motivation among support staff workers and principals' autocratic leadership orientation was a significant predictor of motivation among the support staff workers [$F(1, 304) = 17.095$, $p<.05$] in secondary schools. If the level of autocratic leadership style was increased by one standard deviation, then perceived scores in the level of motivation of support staff workers would drop by .231 standard deviation units.

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and support staff motivation, the study came up with the following conclusion; principal setting deadlines to be met by support staff as an element of autocratic leadership style by the principals contributed as a much more towards support staff motivation in public secondary schools in Nyamira County.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made with the view of improving the relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools:

- 1) In-service courses and other appraisal courses to enhance quality leadership should be provided.
- 2) This study recommends that the principals see the value of mixed leadership styles applied to manage staff in schools.

- 3) Support staff members should be allowed to evaluate and recommend the leadership styles of the principals.
- 4) Ministry of Education should design relevant and regular in-service courses and other appraisal courses for support staff members and principals to minimize the challenges faced. Such training should emphasize human resource management and interpersonal relations at the workplace. The training should also emphasize the accountability of the workers on their responsibilities.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

The study did not exhaust all issues pertaining to the relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools in Nyamira County, Kenya. Other issues emanated from the study that require further investigation are as follows:

- The relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and discipline of students.
- The relationship between principals' autocratic leadership style and motivation of teachers.

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