



Relationship between Support Staff Recognition Efforts and Learners' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author HBO designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol, wrote the first draft of the manuscript, managed the analyses of the study and the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between support staff recognition efforts and learners' academic performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya. The Concurrent Triangulation design was used. The study population consisted of 544 participants consisting of 68 principals, a total of 68 head of security officers, 68 laboratory assistants, 68 Board of management chairpersons, 68 Director of Studies, 68 head of sectaries and 68 head of kitchen departments and 68 bursars. The major instruments used for data collection for this study included questionnaires and interviews schedules. Quantitative data from closed ended sections of the questionnaire were analysed by use of descriptive statistics and also inferential statistics such as Pearson Correlation. Qualitative data collected by open ended sections of the questionnaire and interviews was analyzed on content on the on-going process as themes as sub-themes emerged. It is evident that although there was some positive relationship between support staff effort recognition and learners' academic performance, the relationship was not statistically significant ($r=.181$, $n=88$, $p=.092$). The themes from qualitative results were positive verbal or written expressions of appreciation, use of written appreciation, use of cash awards recognition on support staff, use of group recognition by the school principals use of public recognition and use of salutation by school principals. There is need for the Board of Management to employ systems that would identify recognition efforts that elicit high productivity, create good working good relationships and other recognition efforts that would maximize productivity among specific departments support staff cadres.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is seen as a prime mover for socio-economic development and accounts for almost one quarter of the Gross National Product in developing countries. This is because education from observation improves the productive value of human being by impacting knowledge, skills, attitude and behaviour traits required in producing goods and services. Kreitner and Kimcki [1] defines motivation as the psychological process that gives behaviour purpose and direction, its interests like in determining what activates human behaviour and what directs the behaviour towards a particular goal and how the behaviour can be sustained. Higgins [2], defines motivation as an internal drive to satisfy an unsatisfied need. Staff motivational practices were developed during the period of industrial revolution by early management authorities and their philosophy was that, people's behaviour in an organization depends on how they were treated [3]. Workers in particular profession can easily join other professions they feel offer adequate staff motivation practices that give them job satisfaction. For example, U.S.A. has experienced high rate of teacher changing careers after a short time or do not enjoy their work which is a consequence of poor staff motivational practices like low pay, lack of support from educational bureaucracy and passive isolation. Spain and Canada have equally experienced staff turnover to other careers after a short time. A parliamentary commission set to form an inquiry into the practice of changing career in both countries has established that it is partly due to the motivational practices offered by different learning institutions.

There are several ways to recognize or show that you value the work that your employees do. These include greetings, attach in thanks in their paychecks and acknowledge employees' milestone and holding celebration for success [4]. Managers should understand basic theories of motivation to help them understand how to motivate employees, Judge and Church [5]. Sharma [6] observes that any fringe benefit attached either to official or extra work or a sign of recognition has majorly the effect of causing the individual sacrifice towards work. Sharma [6] observes that recognition causes one to sacrifice

towards work. This can also apply to support staff e.g. lab assistants and secretaries can sacrifice their time in the exam office to process revision materials or extend up to late evening possibly due to recognition efforts offered to them and this will go a long way in improving learners' academic performance. Welch [7] observed that money, recognition, training, workers qualification, attitudes and experiences are the basic tools required to motivate and retain top performance. This is further pointed out by Olayo [8] who suggests that to maximize employees output, they need to be comfortable both at work and home so as to minimize stress and stressors. According to Thomson [9], trust is one of the most vital element in the recognition/development and maintenance of a productive work environment. Thomson [9] maintains that trust stimulates security and confidence and that it is also a prerequisite to innovation, creativity and good communication system.

Olembo [10] in his study of management of education in Tanzania asserted that the performance or productivity of workers towards achieving the common objectives and goals of the institution will increase if the popular welfare practices like free meals to staff are put in place. In Uganda, Semugenyi [11] in his study of staff management practices ascertain that every institution primarily needs committed and dedicated staff that will help the institutions to meet its objectives, however, for the staff to be committed a conclusive and a satisfactory working environment is a necessity. In his findings, he emphasized that provision of welfare services to employees is one of the practices that provide a satisfactory working environment. Motivation of teachers and its influence on performance has widely been studied, on the other hand, if there are some studies on support staff Motivation in this background of the study, they are not linked to learners academic performance, therefore, gaps still exist regarding the influence of support staff motivational practices on or its linkages to learners academic performance in Public Secondary Schools. Support staff plays a vital role in making schools achieve their objectives and a lot of resources go towards their motivation as well. In Kisumu West and Seme Sub Counties, 80% of secondary schools use extra resources to organize for bonding trips, increase

salaries, offer accommodation and gives various psychological motivational practices to support staff [12].

1.1 Literature Review

The theoretical framework of this study was adapted from Fredrick Herzberg's two factor theory [13] who postulates that there are two job factors which when combined can result into job satisfaction, motivation or dissatisfaction. According to Herzberg [13] there are some job factors that result in satisfaction while there are other job factors that prevent satisfaction. The first group of the factors are; Hygiene factors; they included bonding trips and salary structure in the study. He also refers to them as maintenance factors as they are required to avoid dissatisfaction among employees. The factors are extrinsic to work, they describe the job environment/scenario and symbolized the physiological needs which an individual wanted and expected to be fulfilled.

Shazia Khan, Tayyaba Zarif and Bilqees Khan [14] found that when recognition based rewards are increased it creates positive impact on employees' performance. When recognition efforts to support staff are increased, they can frequently help the students, hence learners can improve their academic performance. Shariful, Alshahani, Ahmed, Saceed, Sahabuddin and Akter [15] showed that the relationship between employee contribution and appreciation is significant with $\beta=0.597(p=0.001)$. The result further indicates that the direction of the associations is positive in which it implies that the more the appreciation is given to the employees, the possibility of them to perceive of recognition will be higher. Quresh, Zaman and Shah [16] in their Pakistan in cement industry found that there is a direct relationship between extrinsic rewards, intrinsic rewards and the employees' performance. The study also found that recognition techniques (approaches) used in cement factories are good for the maximum performance of employee's. Aktar, Sachu and Ali [17] found that each factor within both extrinsic and intrinsic reward was a highly significant factor which affects employees' performance. In contrast, the study conducted by Yasmeen, Farooq and Asghar [18] on the impact of rewards on organizational performance in Pakistan revealed that there exists insignificant and weak relationship between salary, bonus and organization performance. However it found that there exists moderate to strong relationship

between promotion and organization performance.

Bradler, Dur, Neckermann, and Arjan [19] reported that the provision of recognition to all workers in a group increases subsequent performance. In contrast, scarce recognition that is only provided to the best performers in a group raises subsequent performance substantially. Remarkably, workers who did not receive recognition were responsible for this performance increase. In Nigeria, according to Ademokoya [20], recognition, trust, training and motivation are prerequisite in a congenial working environment and that school creates a working environment that stimulates productivity by constantly giving proper recognition to support staff for proper working environment. In Malawi, Mulwa [21] conducted a study on behavior of workers in an institution in the country and the findings revealed that workers would be more ready to give a second thought and cooperate with those who promised some kind of immediate materials or fringe benefits including recognitions than those who promised them some better future. Olembo [10] in his study on management of Education in Tanzania asserted that the performance or productivity of workers towards achieving the common objectives and goals of the institution will increase if the popular welfare practices like free meals to staff and recognition efforts are put in place. In Uganda, Semugenyi [11], in his study on staff management practices, ascertained that every institution primarily needs committed and dedication staff that will help the institution meet its objectives, however for the staff to be committed, a conclusive and satisfactory working environment is a necessity. In his findings, he emphasized that provision of welfare service to employees is one of the practices that provide a satisfactory working environment.

In Kenya, Onyango [12] noted that appraisal system would motivate teachers if it's rating result to reward like salary adjustment to teachers. The study further revealed that teachers service commission (TSC) was not using Appraisal system process for the purpose it had intended like transfers, placement pay change, promotion, separation and reprimand of teachers, therefore view appraisal system as a mere formality whose undertaking had no consequences in relation to their profession. Another study in Kenya by Njoroge [22] concludes that the ministries use non-monetary rewards, monetary rewards and performance

contingent rewards. The study deduced that the ministries use salary increment and promotion which are fairly applied to all employees. The study also concludes that rewards affect motivation of employee and hence the performance of the ministries and foster co-operation within a ministry hence improved performance.

There are several factors which could lead to most schools registering the grade of C- and below, for example, inadequate resources and poor motivation of teachers and support staff; however, little attention on motivational practices of support staff can also contribute to poor learners academic performance and vice-versa because the contribution of support staff in an institution influences the academic performance. Little study has been carried out on influence of support motivational practices on learners' academic performance in Seme and Kisumu West Sub-counties. In all the studies mentioned in this statement of the problem and background of the study, various issues only on teachers' welfare practices on productivity, work performance and job satisfaction in general have been addressed and there is nothing on influence of support staff motivational practices on learners' academic performance in particular. In cases where support staff motivational practices are addressed, they are not linked to learners' academic performance directly of the institutions sampled for the studies. The same studies have not been carried out in Seme or Kisumu West Sub Counties but elsewhere. This study therefore focused on influence of support staff motivational practices on learners' academic performance in Public Secondary schools in Seme and Kisumu West Sub Counties of Kenya.

1.2 The Present Study

The study examined the relationship between support staff recognition efforts and learners' academic performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

For the present study, the Concurrent Triangulation design was used. Triangulation refers to a combination of methodologies in a study of the same phenomenon [23]. In this design therefore, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed at the same time of the research study. The researcher therefore

gave equal priority to both components. This involves quantitative and qualitative data collected phases where priority should be equal but can be given to their approach.

2.2 Participants

There are 68 public secondary schools in Kisumu West and Seme sub-counties. The study population consisted of 544 participants consisting of 68 principals, a total of 68 head of security officers, 68 laboratory assistants, 68 Board of management chairpersons, 68 Director of Studies, 68 head of secretaries and 68 head of kitchen departments and 68 bursars.

2.3 Tools

The major instruments used for data collection for this study included questionnaires and interviews schedules. Each questionnaire comprised of open-ended and closed – ended questions. Open ended questions also enabled the researcher to get information on preference and beliefs of the respondents. To ensure validity of the tools, the researcher presented the data collection instruments to two experts in the Department of Educational Administration and Management, JOOUST for perusal to establish the content construct and face validity of the instruments. The suggestion or advices of the experts were incorporated to produce the final documents. Feedback from the pilot study also informed the researcher on which questions to drop or re-state/reframe to collect valid data.

2.4 Procedure

The researcher obtained authority from Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Board of Post Graduate studies. The researcher did also seek permission from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovations (NACOSTI). The researcher did also seek an introductory letter from the two sub-county Directors of Education offices. The researcher then visited the sampled schools to deliver questionnaires. The researcher used one aid assistant under his supervision to undertake data collection with questionnaires (data collection tools). The respondents were required to fill the questionnaire within 1 – 3 weeks. The questionnaires were then collected for analysis. The interviews were conducted using audio tapes at the time of collecting filled in questionnaires. The respondents were also given a consent form. The consent form was discussed and steps taken to protect the

respondents from harm and ways were outlined to the respondents in which that data was kept confidential and anonymous.

2.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from closed ended sections of the questionnaire were analysed by use of descriptive statistics and also inferential statistics such as Pearson Correlation. The descriptive statistics consisted of the use frequency counts, percentages and means. The findings of the data analysis were presented using tables, bar graphs and pie-charts. Quantitative data was analysed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21.0. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient which is Inferential Statistical Test was used to ascertain the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. Qualitative data collected by open ended sections of the questionnaire and interviews was analyzed on content on the on-going process as themes as sub-themes emerged.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to investigate the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The results in Table 1 shows the information on gender and age of the respondents in the study.

The results in Table 1 indicate that there was a glaring imbalance in secondary school leadership in terms of gender, with males taking the larger proportion of school leadership positions (principals and director of studies). This was reflected by the demographic analysis results which showed that more than three out of five (62.5%) of principals and over nine out of ten (91.7%) of the directors of studies in the secondary schools which were sampled for the

survey were males. On the other hand, although the gender disparity was narrower among the support staffs, it was evident that majority (51.1%) of the support staff in Public Secondary Schools in Kisumu West and Seme Sub-counties were females. On their ages, it was established from the results of the survey that a significant majority (87.5%) of the principals are above forty years. This was not surprising because principals' positions are usually given to teachers based on their accumulated years of experience in the profession. On the contrary, most of the support of the staff and director of studies are still in their youthful ages (under 40 years). In fact, close to a fifth (19.3%) of the support staff are under thirty years of age.

The study examined the influence of support staff recognition efforts on learners' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kisumu West and Seme Sub-counties of Kenya. The study explored the level of support staff recognition efforts by the administration and an inferential statistics was used to establish whether the support staff recognition efforts has statistical significant influence on learners academic performance in secondary school. To establish whether there is any statistical significant relationship between support staff recognition efforts and academic performance in secondary schools, the null hypothesis was tested. A Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis was used, with scores on the support staff effort recognition as the independent variable and learners' academic performance as dependent variable. The support staff recognition efforts variable was calculated from frequency of responses and changed into continuous scale, where high scale ratings implied high perceived support staff effort recognition and vice-versa. Learners academic

Table 1. Personal bio-data of the respondents

Bio-data of respondents	Support staff (n=88)		Principals (n=24)		Director of studies (n=24)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Gender						
Male	43	48.9	15	62.5	22	91.7
Female	45	51.1	9	37.5	2	8.3
Total	88	100.0	24	100.0	24	100.0
Age in years						
30 and below	17	19.3	0	0.0	2	8.3
31-40	51	58.0	3	12.5	14	58.3
41-50	19	21.6	17	70.8	6	25.0
51-60	1	1.1	4	16.7	2	8.3
Total	88	100.0	24	100.0	24	100.0

performance was taken as average mean of school KCSE scores for the last four years. The significant level (p-value) was set at .05, such that a p-value less than 0.05 means the null hypothesis would be rejected and conclusion reached that there is statistically significant relationship between the variables. However, a p-value larger than 0.05 would be concluded that a significant relationship does not exist. Table 2 shows the correlation analysis results in SPSS output.

H₀1: There is no statistically significant relationship of support staff recognition efforts and learners' academic performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kisumu West and Some Sub-counties.

From Table 2, it is evident that although there was some positive relationship between support staff effort recognition and learners academic performance, the relationship was not statistically significant ($r=.181$, $n=88$, $p=.092$). Given that p-value was greater 0.05 there was no sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis that, "there is no statistically significant relationship between support staff effort recognition and learners academic performance." Therefore, it was concluded that although there is some positive relationship between support staff recognition efforts and learners' academic performance, the relationship is not statistically significant. However, a coefficient of determination (R Square) was computed using of regression analysis to further estimate the level of influence of support staff effort recognition on learners' academic performance and the result was as shown in Table 3.

The model summary in Table 3 shows that only about 3% of variation in Learners Academic Performance was accounted for by Support Staff Effort Recognition, as indicated by coefficient $R^2=.033$. This finding means that variation in the Support Staff Effort Recognition explains about

3% ($R^2=.033$) of the variability in learners academic performance, which is statistically insignificant. Nevertheless, it is notable that at least there are some positive influence of support staff effort recognition on learners' academic performance. This therefore it indicates the importance of support staff effort recognition on learners' academic performance, meaning that it cannot be totally ignored. In agreement, Shariful et al. [15] who reported that the relationship between employee contribution and appreciation is significant. The result further indicates that the direction of the associations is positive in which it implies that the more the more appreciation is given to the employees, the possibility of them to perceive of recognition will be higher.

From qualitative findings, one theme which emerged was verbal appreciation. This language involves positive verbal or written expressions of appreciation. Most respondents reported that verbal appreciation was commonly used by school principals on support staff. Some respondents reported that:

Yes. This is very common in school since in most cases, the principal commends support staff who work well in their respective areas. He would encourage the staff to continue working harder and be more diligent in the respective areas of operations to increase school efficiency. The secretary and the staff involved in processing exams and instructional materials sometimes come to school on week ends to work so that such materials are ready in time for students simply because they have been recognized in the past and expect more recognitions (Directors of Studies, 4).

Yes. This happens a lot in our school since the principal always enhances interpersonal relationship with the support staff by giving verbal praises and comments for any work done in a better way (Bursar, 8).

Table 2. Relationship between support staff effort recognition and learners academic performance

		Staff recognition efforts	Learners academic performance
Staff recognition efforts	Pearson Correlation	1	.181
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.092
	N	88	88
Learners academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.181	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.092	
	N	88	88

Table 3. Model summary on regression analysis of influence of support staff effort recognition on learners academic performance

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.181 ^a	.033	.021	1.10708	1.956

a. Predictors: (Constant), Staff Recognition Efforts
 b. Dependent Variable: Learners Academic Performance

From the interview excerpts, it can be concluded that verbal appreciation enhances the motivation of support staff which eventually affects their commitment to student matters in school.

Another theme which emerged from qualitative findings was the use of written appreciation. It was reported that most principals utilized written appreciation to motivate their support staff especially during the school functions. Some respondents reported that:

The headmaster of the school and Board of management recognizes the position of support staff in school by giving us certificates of commendation for a good job done in the year hence we work hard to maintain this always. This enhances academic performance of the students because those entrusted directly with duties related to implementation on academic programs like laboratory technicians and support staff in academic office strive to meet the targets set for them for timely implementation of academic programs (bursar, 9).

The principal always recognizes the role of support staff and appreciates their hard work by giving certificates of commendations. This boosts the self-esteem of support staff and hence they work harder in their departments (Directors of Studies, 10).

From the qualitative findings, it was reported that the use of written appreciation was well perceived by the support staff and it motivated them. In agreement, Mulwa [21] revealed that workers would be more ready to give a second thought and cooperate with those who promised some kind of immediate materials or fringe benefits including recognitions than those who promised them some better future.

Another theme which emerged from qualitative findings was the use of cash awards recognition on support staff. This involved appreciation of

support staff using cash tokens. This was practiced by most school principals. Some respondents reported that:

During the annual general meetings, we give the support staff cash awards in recognition of the work done in the previous year. The support staff are shown that they are important to the school performance as well, kitchen staff are recognized because they help save time for timely and maximum lesson attendance by preparing meals in time (Directors of Studies, 6).

The use of cash awards is usually done during the school prize giving days where the support staff are appreciated for a job well done in their respective areas. The most diligent staff are rewarded and this motivates them to assist in their various areas hence support academic efforts by teachers (BOM Chair, 19).

From the interview excerpts, it can be concluded that the use of cash awards recognition enhanced motivation among support staff and this made them to be more committed in serving students. This finding is supported by Njoroge [22] who revealed that the ministries use social rewards, internal equity, individual equity and external equity all of which have a great effect on employee motivation.

Another theme which emerged from qualitative findings was the use of public recognition. This is when the support staff are recognized by the principal in public gatherings on various areas where they have excelled. This enhances motivation among support staff. Some respondents reported that:

Yes...this happens a lot in our school where our support staff are recognized by the principal in public in cases where one does an exemplary job that is unique and thus the worker becomes an example to the rest of the students who are always also encouraged to work hard like the recognized support staff (Directors of Studies, 8).

During the annual general meetings, the support staff are given envelopes by the school principal and this enhances team work among them. They are encouraged to work extra hard in their departments and this eventually enhances academic achievement among students (Directors of Studies, 5).

From the interview excerpts, it can be concluded that the use of public recognition was very essential and commonly used by principals to encourage other support staff by giving relevant examples from exemplary workers. This finding is supported by Olurotimi et al. [24] who reiterated that every human being like to be recognized and appreciated because it is an innate aspiration. From the qualitative findings above it can be concluded that the use of group recognition was commonly and frequently used by the school principals and it enhanced staff motivation which eventually enhanced learners' academic achievement among students. This finding agrees with Mbah et al. [25] who reported that that some non-financial rewards of employee recognition, conducive work environment and staff development are positively and significantly related to employee performance in civil service.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study examined the relationship between support staff recognition efforts and learners' academic performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya. These findings indicated a weak positive relationship between support staff effort recognition and learners' academic performance, though it was not statistically significant ($r=.181$, $n=88$, $p=.092$). The model summary shows that only about 3% of variation in Learners' Academic Performance was accounted for by Support Staff Effort Recognition Efforts as indicated by coefficient $R^2=.033$. This finding means that variation in the Support Staff Recognition Efforts explains about 3% ($R^2=.033$) of the variability in learners' academic performance, which is statistically insignificant. From qualitative findings, the themes which emerged were verbal appreciation. This language involves positive verbal or written expressions of appreciation, use of written appreciation, use of cash awards recognition on support staff, use of group recognition by the school principals, use of public recognition and use of Salutation by school principals. 4. It is evident that recognition efforts by the administration are average. Greetings and group recognitions are on the lead

according to respondents' rating. It is also evident that there is a correlation between recognition efforts and learners' academic performance, but among the selected independent variables in this study, recognition efforts contribute the least (3%) in terms of its influence on learners' academic performance. There is need for the Board of Management to employ systems that would identify recognition efforts that elicit high productivity, create good working good relationships and other recognition efforts that would maximize productivity among specific departments support staff cadres. The management should lay emphasis as well as vary the recognition efforts that are popular with support staff. This would maximize productivity and job satisfaction per support staff cadre hence positive influence on academic performance.

CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

The researcher did also seek permission from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovations (NACOSTI). The consent was reviewed with participants prior to starting the interview and each participant was given opportunity to ask questions about the study procedures.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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