



The Influence of School Heads on Teachers' Commitment in Public Secondary Schools in Kagera Region, Tanzania

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Teachers' commitment plays a pivotal role in the success of any education system and the leadership provided by heads of schools is instrumental in shaping this commitment. Empirical research has consistently demonstrated a strong connection between instructional leadership and teachers' commitment. In the context of Kagera Region, Tanzania, which has witnessed a decline in various aspects of education and human development, this study built upon transformational leadership theory and employed quantitative research approach, with a cross-sectional design to investigate the relationship between supervisory practices of heads of schools and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools. The study collected quantitative data from a sample of 240 teachers in the Kagera Region. The quantitative data were collected using two instruments: The Leadership Scale adapted from Carless, Wearing, and Mann (2000) and the Employee

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Commitment Scale adapted from Mwamatandala and Muneja (2020). The primary hypothesis posited that supervisory practices of heads of schools significantly impact teachers' commitment. The results revealed a substantial significant relationship between heads of schools and teachers' commitment, demonstrating the importance of instructional leadership in shaping teaching commitment in schools. The study also revealed an average level of teachers' commitment in performing their duties in schools. This finding raises important questions regarding teacher efficacy and leadership efficacy within Kagera Region's public secondary schools. The results underline the need for targeted interventions aimed at improving instructional leadership practices to boost teachers' commitment. Pedagogically, the results implicate that qualitative data can provide a deeper understanding about which and how leadership practices influence teachers' commitment.

Keywords: Teacher commitment; instructional leadership; teacher efficacy; leadership efficacy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies in organizational behaviours have posited the important role of leadership in enhancing employees' counterproductive behaviours in work organizations. Ngirwa [1] advanced the unique contribution of leadership behaviours in promoting change acceptance. Leadership revealed to have influence in making employees perform their duties eagerly [2-4]. In the dynamic landscape of education, the commitment and effectiveness of teachers stand as cornerstones for the achievement of educational goals. Teachers who are deeply committed to their profession and students are more likely to excel in delivering quality education, thereby positively impacting the overall learning experience. Consequently, the role of school leaders particularly heads of schools, becomes pivotal in fostering teachers' commitment and, in turn, the success of the educational system.

Kagera Region of Tanzania like many other regions globally, has witnessed complex challenges in its educational sphere. The consequences of these challenges have been far-reaching with adverse effects on both educational outcomes and human development indicators, contributing to increased poverty levels. Among these challenges, the commitment of teachers plays a fundamental role in shaping the path of education within the region.

This paper embarks on a quantitative case study to explore the critical connection between the leadership practices of heads of schools and teachers' commitment within public secondary schools in the Kagera Region, Tanzania. The study investigated two primary research objectives: first, to identify the various methods employed by school heads to supervise teaching activities in these schools and second, to assess

the levels of teacher commitment within the region.

Understanding the mechanisms employed by school leaders in supervising teaching activities is essential in comprehending the factors that influence teachers' commitment. Effective instructional leadership can inspire and empower educators, finally enhancing their commitment to their profession and students. Therefore, by investigating the supervisory practices of heads of schools, we seek to shed light on the ways in which school leadership can impact the commitment of teachers in Kagera Region's public secondary schools. Furthermore, assessing the levels of teachers' commitment is essential in discerning the current state of the educational ecosystem within the region. It provides valuable insights into the efficacy of the existing educational structures and practices, while also highlighting areas that may require targeted interventions. The commitment of teachers serves as a indicator for the overall health of the education system, making it an essential side to explore in our study. Leaders play a significant role in motivating employees to work effectively and improve the organizations' performance [5]. Studies show that leadership entails the ability to influence subordinates so that they can willingly perform organizational activities to achieve common goals (Collins, 2002); [6]. The current research aimed to examine the influence of school heads in promoting teachers' commitment to teaching activities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Leadership

Leadership refers to the process of influencing activities of an organized group towards goal setting and goal accomplishment [7]. Leaders

should have some essential attributes such as vision, integrity, trust, selflessness, commitment, creative ability, toughness, communication ability, risk taking and management, and visibility. Leadership sets directions and develops the vision and the strategic plans. Likewise, it achieves partnership that understands and accepts the vision. It motivates and inspires as a way of energizing employees to overcome barriers. Literally, leaders take high risk approach toward problem solving.

2.2 School Leadership

The school leadership plays a crucial role in achieving intended education goals. It refers to a process whereby the head of school influences both the educational curricular and extra-curricular activities that seek to improve student learning outcomes [8]. School leaders feel a considerable pressure to demonstrate the contribution of their work to school improvement, which has resulted in the creation of a wide range of literature that addresses leadership in the context of school improvement [9]. As such, the proper implementation of educational programmes and policy plans always depends on the nature of the school leadership. School existence very much depends on the good governance of the head of school [10]. How the school leader behaves and the ways through which he or she chooses to supervise others have an impact on how they react in turn, in terms of commitment to the teaching profession [11-13]

2.3 Work Commitment

Commitment is a complex and multi-faceted construct that can take different forms. Work commitment has been defined as the relative importance and value an individual holds towards work and oneself [14]. It is viewed as being the person's adherence to work ethics; a career or profession, or job involvement and organization [15]. An individual can feel committed to an organization, top management, supervisors, or a particular workgroup [16]. Employees who are engaged in their work and committed to their organizations give companies crucial competitive advantage including higher productivity and lower employee turnovers [17].

Commitment in work organizations has been analysed as the energy and loyalty that social actors are willing to give to a social system [14]. Since the concept entails components such as

having a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, the willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong work ethic applied to the employing organization can be identified as behavioural investment in the organization [18].

In education sector, teachers' commitment refers to the state of being dedicated to teaching. It can also be understood as an obligation that restricts freedom for other actions (e.g., a highly committed teachers' may lack time for his/her family [18]. Moreover, Michael et al. [18] emphasized:

"The phenomenon of commitment is a cornerstone of human social life. Commitments make individuals' behavior predictable in the face of fluctuations in their desires and interests, thereby facilitating the planning and coordination of joint actions involving multiple agents" (p. 1).

Teachers make up a significant resource in education sector for the attainment of educational goals. As such, teachers in public secondary schools need to be committed in order to carry out their teaching tasks with enthusiastic willingness. Accordingly, teacher commitment is a very important element in successful teaching [19]. Mart emphasized that motivated and passionate teachers are distinguished by their commitment to their students' achievement. Accordingly, committed teachers recognize and aspire to fulfill their responsibilities. Furthermore, Mart emphasizes: *"The degree of loyalty committed teachers have, toward their profession is one of their distinguished characters"* (p. 437). In contrast, Firestone and Pennell [20] explained that low teacher commitment reduces student achievement.

Accordingly, committed teachers like working with their students and care about their development. These teachers profoundly struggle for efficiency and effectiveness in teaching and learning through employing different pedagogical approaches. Without indestructible love for the profession, teaching cannot be conducted effectively and efficiently [21].

2.4 School Leadership and Teachers' Commitment

School leadership is a fundamental aspect in any education system because it plays crucial roles in the deliverance of education in schools in

attempt to achieve national educational goals. School leadership is a vital process through which the school leader can influence school curricular and extracurricular activities aimed at improving students' learning [22]. This important process, yet, is highly driven by teachers. For their noble duties, teachers are often referred to as national builders. Accordingly, whatever success expected from any education system is mostly built upon teachers' devotion to the teaching endeavours [23].

Vaillant [23] maintained that teachers' commitment leads to students' brighter future; with committed teachers, students are guaranteed a strong foundation, which is a product of a quality education. In any school setting, teacher commitment is essential; it plays a significant role in any scholastic achievement. Better student learning outcomes strongly depend on teacher commitment [24]. In the school context, teacher commitment is critical because there is no student success without teacher commitment.

Committed teachers have a strong belief in the goals or purposes associated with their teaching. The authors asserted that teachers must be willing to devote considerable time and effort in the pursuit of learners' excellence [2]. Teacher commitment includes performing extra work, and adhering to shared values and goals of the school. As such, teachers must make sacrifices in terms of their time for the sake of learners! The school teachers must exhibit professional morals and behaviours even outside work hours. If school heads can consider teachers to be pleased with their work and doing it passionately without the need to be reminded of their obligations; it can be evident that teachers are firmly influenced by their willingness and self-determination to make a great deal of sacrifice for their professional career and the students they serve.

According to Day et al. [25], the critical elements of school leadership include developing and communicating a clear school vision by articulating specific goals and priorities; maintaining high performance expectations; and creating a structure that fosters genuine participation in the school's decision-making process. Moreover, relevant inventors of these qualities tend to leave them to the growth and development benefits of the organization members. Literally, this includes the overall enhancements of their commitment through

elevating their goals. Ngirwa et al. [1] illustrated that leadership behaviours have been the source of employees' wellbeing, motivation, and commitment to organizational tasks. As such, Cansoy et al. [26] have established that empirically, there is a strong relationship between instructional leadership and teacher commitment.

Lack of teachers' commitment aggravates the poor situation, which in fact, results from fragile or inadequate school leadership. There is a high demand for school heads to ensure that teachers deliver on their mandates, particularly, quality curriculum delivery [27].

2.5 Transformational Leadership Theory and Teacher Commitment

Transformational leadership theory [28] involves the element of an individual's consideration in terms of intellectual stimulation, inspiration, motivation, and idealized influence [5]. Transformational leaders are among leaders who can identify and articulate a vision, provide an appropriate role model, foster the acceptance of group goals, and set high-performance expectations. The following behaviours encompass the concept of transformational leadership: Communicating a clear vision, developing staff, providing support, empowering staff, being innovative, leading by example, and being charismatic (Podsakoff et al., 1990).

Transformational leadership in education refers to a type of leadership whereby the school leader influences his/her followers by specifying a vision and mission in determining educational goals. Also, such a school leader develops friendship with teachers, motivates them at work, and makes working environment become pleasant and conducive for teaching activities. This type of a leader, however, is expected to put challenge on the teachers' ability and skills, innovativeness, and creativity. Moreover, a transformational school leader is one who considers teachers' needs, feelings, status, and individual goals [29].

3. METHODS

3.1 Design

This study employed quantitative approach and cross-sectional research design. The design was selected to collect data at a single point in time [30]. offering a picture of the relationship between the supervisory practices of heads of

schools and teacher commitment in public secondary schools within the Kagera Region, Tanzania. Cross-sectional studies are generally more time-efficient and cost-effective than longitudinal designs, making them suitable for researchers with limited resources and time constraints [31]. In this context, it provides insights into the current status of teacher commitment and supervisory practices.

The use of cross-sectional research designs in educational research remains prevalent today due to their practicality and suitability for various research questions. Researchers continue to employ cross-sectional studies to investigate educational issues, assess students' performance, teachers' practices, student outcomes, the impact of educational policies and explore the factors affecting teaching and learning in diverse contexts [32]. In the context of Tanzania, educational research is vital for enhancing effectiveness in education system.

3.2 Sample

stratified random sampling technique was employed. This approach involved dividing the population of interest (teachers in public secondary schools in the Kagera Region) into strata based on specific characteristics, such as school location or size. Samples were then randomly selected from each stratum ensuring representation from various schools within the region. This methodological choice helps enhance the generalizability of the findings to the broader population. The sample of this study consisted of 240 teachers working in a total of 80 public secondary schools in the Kagera Region, Tanzania.

3.3 Data Collection

The data collection process occurred during a specific timeframe, ensuring that all participating teachers responded to the survey during the same period. This simultaneity minimized the risk of external factors or changes affecting the study's results. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires administered to the selected teachers. The survey included questions related to supervisory practices of school heads and measures of teachers' commitment.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of the survey instrument, a thorough review of existing literature on instructional leadership and teacher commitment

was conducted, and experts in the field were consulted for feedback. The survey's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded values of over 0.934 for supervisory practices and 0.923 for teachers' commitment, indicating high internal consistency.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 indicates the demographic information of respondents.

In this study, among teachers, both genders were well-represented, with 77 (32.1%) being female and 163 (67.9%) male. Moreover, the age distribution varied, with 25.42% falling in the 21-30 age range, 53.33% in the 31-40 range, and 21.25% in the 41-50 range. Remarkably, there were no teachers below the age of 20 or above the age of 50 in the sample. Years of experience in education were also examined. 31.3% of teachers, had 0-5 years of experience, 29.2% had 6-10 years, 24.2% had 11-15 years, and 15.3% had 16 or more years.

The educational qualifications of the teachers were also examined. the majority held bachelor's degrees (73.75%), followed by diploma holders (16.25%), and a smaller percentage held master's degrees (10%). Understanding these characteristics was essential as they may influence how individuals perceive and respond to the study's focus on the influence of school heads on teachers' commitment.

4.1 Interpretation of the Results

From the model summary in Table 1, the "R" value represents the correlation coefficient which measures the strength and direction of the relationship between the predictor variable (HoS Practices - supervisory practices of school heads) and the outcome variable (teacher commitment). In this study, the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.724. A positive value for R (in this case, 0.724) indicates a positive correlation. It suggests that there is a strong positive relationship between the way school heads supervise teaching activities (HoS Practices) and teacher commitment. As the quality of supervisory practices increases, teacher commitment also tends to increase. R-squared is a measure of the proportion of the variance in the outcome variable (teacher commitment) that is explained by the predictor variable (HoS Practices). In this study, R-squared is 0.525 (52.5%). R-squared tells us that approximately

52.5% of the variation in teacher commitment can be explained by the way school heads supervise teaching activities (HoS Practices). This is a substantial proportion indicating that supervisory practices have a significant impact on teacher commitment.

Table 1. Demographic information of respondents

Categories		Teachers	Total
Gender	Female	77	93
		32.1%	28.35%
	Male	163	235
		67.9%	71.65%
Total		240	328
		100%	100%
Age	Below 20	0	0
		0%	0%
	21-30	61	69
		25.42%	21.03%
	31-40	128	161
		53.33%	49.09%
	41-50	51	90
	21.25%	27.44%	
Above 50	0	8	
	0%	2.44%	
Total		240	328
		100%	100%
Experience	0-5	75	78
		31.3%	23.78%
	6-10	70	87
		29.2%	26.52%
	11-15	58	81
		24.2%	24.7%
16+	37	82	
	15.3%	25%	
Total		240	328
		100%	100%
Educational Level	Form Four	0	0
		0%	0%
	Diploma	39	39
		16.25%	11.89%
	Bachelor's Degree	177	248
		73.75%	75.61%
Master's Degree	24	41	
	10%	12.5%	
Total		240	328
		100%	100%
Grand Total		240	328
		100%	100%

Source: Field data (2023).

Table 2. Regression model summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.724 ^a	.525	.523	.52959

a. Predictors: (Constant), Heads of schools practices

Source: Field data, (2023)

Table 3. Practices of heads of schools and teachers' commitment

SN	Sub-scale	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Min	Max	Mean Score	Std
1	Practices of head of school in enhancing teacher commitment	14	0.934	1.29	5.00	3.9536	0.7399
2	Teacher perceptions about commitment to teach	7	0.923	1.29	5.00	4.1589	0.76647

Source: Field data, (2023)

Table 4. The Influence of school heads' practices on teachers' commitment

Coefficients ^a		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.193	.186		6.404	.000
	HoS Practices	.750	.046	.724	16.205	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers' Commitment

Source: Field data, 2023

The adjusted R-squared value accounts for the number of predictors in the model and adjusts R-squared accordingly. In this study, the adjusted R-squared is 0.523. The adjusted R-squared value takes into account the model's complexity and the number of predictors. It is still quite high at 0.523, reinforcing the idea that the supervisory practices of school heads (HoS Practices) are a strong predictor of teacher commitment. The Std. Error of the Estimate is a measure of the variability or dispersion of the data points around the regression line. In this study, the standard error of the estimate is 0.52959. The findings of study suggest several important implications: **Strong Positive Relationship:** The significant and positive correlation coefficient ($R = 0.724$) indicates that effective supervisory practices by school heads have a strong positive impact on teacher commitment. When school heads are more effective in their supervisory roles, teachers are more likely to be committed to their work.

Substantial Explained Variance: The R-squared value of 52.5% means that more than half of the variation in teacher commitment can be attributed to the way school heads supervise teaching activities. This underlines the importance of school leadership in shaping teacher commitment levels.

Table 2 indicate the relationship between practices of heads of schools in enhancing teachers' commitment and teachers' perceptions about commitment to teach.

The survey revealed two subscales: one measuring school head practices in enhancing teachers' commitment and the other assessing teachers' perceptions about their commitment to teaching. Both sub-scales demonstrated good internal consistency, with high Cronbach's Alpha values, indicating the reliability of the survey instrument. Respondents reported moderate effectiveness (mean score around the midpoint) for school head practices in enhancing teachers' commitment, suggesting room for improvement in leadership practices. Teachers, on average, held a strong perception of their commitment to teaching, which is a positive aspect of the study's context. These findings contribute to understanding the study's main objective of examining the influence of school heads on teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in the Kagera Region. Table 3 indicates the regression coefficients for the influence of school heads' practices on teachers' commitment.

Table 3 presents the results of a regression analysis examining the influence of practices of heads of schools in enhancing teachers' commitment. Teachers' Commitment is the variable being predicted or explained by the independent variable "heads of schools in enhancing teachers' commitment." The "Constant" represents the intercept of the regression equation which is the expected value of the dependent variable when all independent variables are set to zero. In this case, the constant is 1.193, and its standard error is 0.186.

Heads of schools practices is the coefficient for the independent variable "heads of schools practices," which measures the change in the dependent variable (teachers' commitment) for a one-unit change in heads of schools practices. The unstandardized coefficient (B) is 0.750 and its standard error is 0.046. The standardized coefficient (Beta) provides a measure of the strength and direction of the relationship between the independent variable (heads of schools practices) and the dependent variable (Teachers' Commitment) after scaling both variables. In this case, Beta is 0.724. The T-statistic measures the significance of the relationship between the independent variable (HoS Practices) and the dependent variable (Teacher Commitment). In this analysis, the T-statistic is 16.205 and its associated significance level (Sig.) is 0.000 ($p < 0.001$), indicating a highly significant relationship.

The results from this regression analysis indicate a significant and positive relationship between "HoS Practices" (practices of head of school in enhancing teacher commitment) and "Teacher Commitment." Specifically, the unstandardized coefficient (B) of 0.750 suggests that for every one-unit increase in HoS Practices, Teacher Commitment is expected to increase by 0.750 units. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.724 indicates that there is a strong positive relationship between heads of schools practices and teachers' commitment. This means that as the quality of supervisory practices by school heads improves, teachers' commitment tends to increase significantly. The highly significant T-statistic (16.205) with a p-value of less than 0.001 indicates that this relationship is not due to random chance but is indeed statistically significant.

Previous research indicates that through behaviours and practices, leadership plays a significant role in influencing employees' commitment to organizational tasks [13,33]. The

results of the current study revealed that leadership practices influenced teachers' commitment at an average level.

Moreover, previous research also indicates that beyond school leadership behaviours and practices, teacher commitment can also be influenced by other various factors such as teachers' competence, the ability to fulfil their duties independently, confidently, effectively and efficiently without close supervision [34]; teacher ethics or misconduct absenteeism, sexual abuse, drunkenness, examination frauds, and unethical dressing [35,36]; job satisfaction [37]; and teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession; beliefs about students' learning; value systems; and the school culture [38,39]. The results of this study concurred. Only 52.5% of teacher commitment was influenced by heads of schools practices. Thus, other factors also influence of teachers' commitment. Therefore, further research is important to investigate such factors and determine how they interact with leadership practices [40-43].

Generally, the results suggest that the practices of school heads have a substantial and positive impact on teachers' commitment in the context of the study, aligning with the study's objective of investigating the influence of school heads on teacher commitment in public secondary schools in the Kagera Region.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study investigated the influence of school head practices on teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in the Kagera Region, Tanzania. The findings revealed a significant and positive relationship between school heads' practices and teachers' commitment. This implies that the way school heads supervise school activities significantly influence teachers' devotion to teaching activities. Additionally, the practices of school heads were perceived as moderately effecting teachers' commitment, while teachers, on average, held perceptions of their commitment to teaching. Basing to these findings, the study recommends the following:

Enhancing School Leadership Training: Schools should invest in training programs for school heads to improve their leadership and supervisory skills. Effective leadership practices play a crucial role in fostering teacher commitment.

Promoting Supportive School Environments:

Creating a supportive and collaborative school environment where teachers feel valued and motivated can enhance teacher commitment. School leaders should foster a culture of respect and appreciation.

Continuous Monitoring and Feedback: School heads should implement regular teacher evaluations and provide constructive feedback. This helps in identifying areas for improvement and enhancing teacher commitment.

Strengthening Teacher Professional Development: Offering ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers can boost their commitment to teaching. This can include workshops, seminars and opportunities for career advancement.

Policy and Practice Implications: These findings have practical implications for educational policymakers and school administrators. They suggest that investing in training and support for school heads to enhance their supervisory practices can lead to increased teacher commitment, which, in turn, can contribute to improved educational outcomes.

Further Research: Generally, effective school leadership practices revealed a significant role in influencing teachers' commitment. This seemed important in promoting schools success as teaching is key to educational effectiveness. The current study examined the influence of school head practices on teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in the Kagera Region, Tanzania. Future research should explore additional factors influencing teachers' commitment and consider a broader range of schools and regions to gain more comprehensive understanding of this issue in Tanzanian context.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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