Effect Of Transformational Leadership Style On Employee Engagement In Public Secondary Schools, Murang'a County, Kenya

Monah Maundu
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT),
Nairobi Kenya

Prof. Gregory S. Namusonge
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT),
Nairobi Kenya

Dr. Alice N. Simiyu
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT),
Nairobi Kenya

ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine the effect of employee transformational leadership style on employee engagement in public secondary schools of Murang'a County in Kenya. A survey research design was employed. The target population was 3,860 teachers. Systematic random sampling followed by use of random numbers were applied to sample 368 respondents in 306 Public Secondary Schools. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistical methods that provide measures of central tendency like the mean, standard deviation and percentages to describe the characteristics of the variables of interest in the study. The inferential statistical tools applied in this research were correlation analysis and linear regression. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS) version 23 was used to assist in data analysis. The result showed that transformational leadership had a positive significant effect on employee engagement and its dimensions. Based on the findings of this study, it was established that using transformational leadership style could enhance employee engagement.

Key Words: Transformational Leadership, Employee Engagement, Teachers, Principals, Secondary Schools

INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement is a matter of concern for leaders and managers in organizations across the globe as they recognize that it is a vital element affecting organizational effectiveness, innovation and competitiveness [36]. Employee engagement is a strategic approach for driving improvement and encouraging organizational change [29]. 'Engaged' employees are more productive, engender greater levels of customer satisfaction, are more likely to lead to organizational success and are key to ensuring that an organization wins the customer loyalty [12].

According to [13], engaged workplaces can also boost economies but the sad reality is that only 13 percent of employees worldwide are engaged in their jobs and the vast majority of employees worldwide, are emotionally disconnected from their workplace and are less likely to be productive. Other similar studies by the Gallup Organization have reported that about

20% of U.S. employees are disengaged, 54% are neutral about their work, and 26% are actively engaged [15]. [35] found similar engagement behavior, with 19% of U.S. workers categorized as disengaged, 54% as moderately engaged, and only 17% as highly engaged. This low rate of engagement has continued to be found on many other surveys conducted in the last decade and represents a global crisis in productivity and worker well-being [2].

Management practices have shifted so that the old maxim: 'when an employee sells his labour , he also sells his promise to obey commands' no longer holds true [12]. [10] state that traditional models of hierarchical and legitimate power practices are being challenged as a new generation of workers enters into the workplace. Employees have higher expectations about participating in organizational decision making, pursuing dynamic involvement in organizational activities, and actively seeking work contexts where they believe they are treated with respect and fairness [10]. According to [31]. Leading this new and evolving workforce requires new perspectives of leadership as well as new scaffolding for understanding the complexities of leadership development in an evolving landscape. Employees now have more choice in where and how they work. As a result, the demands of leadership have evolved [1] and must be viewed from this new perspective and context if they are to match the dynamics of the emerging workplace.

One of the seven principles in the ISO 9001:2015 standard is employee engagement. In the ISO 9001:2008 standard, which is the predecessor of ISO 9001:2015, the same principle was referred to as employee involvement. It implies that there is need for organizations to move from mere employee involvement and embrace employee engagement which is associated with enhanced employee outcomes for the benefit of the employees, the organization and all other stakeholders.

Thus the challenge for business today is not just on satisfying employees and getting them to stay with the organization but to create the environment where they want to and do give discretionary effort to go above and beyond what is written in their job description [12]. This is in agreement with [8], who argues that today's competitive work environment requires organizations to move beyond just motivating their employees and towards creating an environment of engagement

The teacher is a very important resource in the education system. This means that, efficient teacher management and utilization is critical to the quality of learning outcomes. As leaders of their schools, principals are charged with the responsibility of developing an educational environment that ensures satisfaction and raises organizational commitment [4]. Attempts to raise employee engagement levels are to founder unless there is a willingness and energy at a senior level in any organization to take a holistic and long-term approach to building commitment to the organization [12]. Companies that focus on building engaging leaders will see an exponential impact on employee engagement [18].

When supervisors exhibit more relationship related behaviours towards employees, a higher level of engagement is observed in them [5]. There is a strong need for organizations and managers to therefore focus on 'employee engagement' and leadership behaviours that need to be calibrated often to keep employees engaged. Appropriate leadership styles and human resource practices that drive employee engagement need to be put in place in organizations to drive performance [28]. However, there is a discrepancy between the perceived importance of employee engagement and the level of engagement that exists in Public Schools and other organizations today, posing a big gap that is critical in influencing institutional performance.

Statement of the problem

School leaders should always work consciously toward creating congruency between organizational and individual needs fulfillment for improved productivity [37] in an effort to increase the level of teacher engagement. Despite efforts by the government of Kenya to increase teachers' salaries, train teachers, provide bursaries through Ministry of Education and Constituency Development Funds to improve access, participation, and performance of students in national examinations, reports on teacher absenteeism, teacher dissatisfaction and high turnover, and poor performance in national examinations are common and these could be indicators of low levels of teacher engagement. Disengaged teachers will produce a low number of matriculation grades and high numbers of form four graduates who are not able to further their education given the current Commission for University Education (CUE) entry requirements to colleges and universities, implying a high wastage rate. This is likely increase the level of unemployment in Kenya due to lack of necessary and relevant education and skills. Unemployment is likely to lead to increased levels of crime, drug abuse and slow economic growth. Leadership style has been linked to teacher dissatisfaction [4] and is also a predictor of employee engagement [28]. According to the researcher, not much has been done to study teacher engagement in public schools in Kenya. This study was therefore to determine the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement in public secondary schools of Murang'a County, Kenya.

Research Objective

The objective of this study was to determine the effect of transformational leadership style on teacher engagement in public secondary schools of Murang'a County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The transformational leadership theory was first introduced by [11] who differentiated between ordinary (*transactional*) leaders, who exchanged tangible rewards for the work and loyalty of followers, and extraordinary (*transformational*) leaders who engaged with followers, focused on higher order intrinsic needs, and increased the alertness about the significance of specific outcomes and new ways in which those outcomes might be achieved [19]. Transformational leaders take a real interest in the well-being of their employees [22]. Transformational leaders have four distinguishing characteristics; idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration [7].

Idealized influence represents the strong vision and mission determination of a transformational leader. It deals with building confidence and trust in the followers. Leaders with idealized influence usually place followers' needs over their own needs, share risks with followers, and demonstrate devotion to a set of underlying principles and values, which is likely to encourage employee engagement. This makes such leaders to be role models for followers to emulate [3]. Inspirational motivation involves motivating and inspiring followers by providing meaning, mutual understanding, and challenge to their work through communication of an appealing vision of the future. They use of symbols to articulate this vision [17]. The leader identifies high goals, provides meaning into their tasks, creates a team spirit, enthusiasm and constantly motivates his followers, thus encouraging engagement of employees.

Intellectual stimulation is concerned with encouraging followers to question assumptions and thus approaching old problems in new ways creative ways [6] without fear of punishment or ridicule [33]. Transformational leaders motivate their followers to be innovative and analytical, take initiative and be independence in handling issues leading to higher engagement levels. Individualized consideration involves treating people individually and differently on the

basis of their talents and knowledge [30] and with the intention of allowing them to reach higher levels of achievement that might otherwise have not been achieved [33]. Such leaders respond to the specific and unique needs of followers to ensure they are included in the transformation process of the organization [32]. The leader has a special interest of each follower, takes into account individual differences, acknowledges followers' feelings and emotions and their need to grow and develop themselves [17]. The transformational leader must also comprehend those things that motivate followers individually [32] thus leading to individual engagement to their work and commitment to their organizations. Individualized consideration therefore is the degree to which the leader attends to each follower's needs, acts as their mentor or coach and listens to his or her concerns and needs.

Employee engagement is a heightened level of ownership where each employee wants to do whatever they can for the benefit of their customers, both internal and external, and for the success of the organization as a whole [26]. It is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. The following conceptual frame is developed form the literature review.
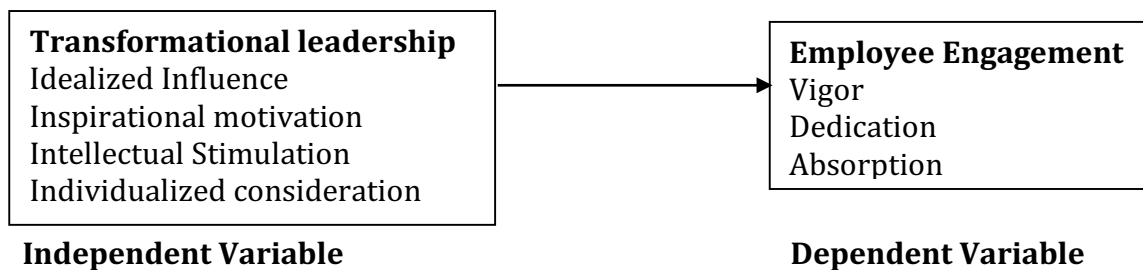
Conceptual framework

Transformational leadership		Employee Engagement
Idealized Influence	→	Vigor
Inspirational motivation		Dedication
Intellectual Stimulation		Absorption
Individualized consideration		
Independent Variable		**Dependent Variable**

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopted quantitative approach because the data collected through questionnaires from respondents was analyzable using the standard statistical tools. Multistage sampling design was applied so as to first sample the schools (clusters). Cluster sampling technique guarantees that each cluster is represented in the sample and is thus reflects the characteristics of the population with some level of accuracy [21]. Out the 306 schools in the county, 92 schools were selected, representing the 30% recommended by [24]. Random numbers were then used to sample 368 respondents. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between employees' perceptions of their leaders' transformational leadership and employee engagement. A statistical significance test (at a level of significance of 0.05) was performed to determine if the correlation arrived at was significant or was due to chance in the form of random sampling error by testing hypotheses. Regression analysis was applied to explain the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. F statistic was used to test the significance of the regression model.

Measurement of variables

Transformational leadership was measured using eleven items from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X rater form) on a Likert 5 point scale. The computed cronbach's alpha coefficient for the variable was 0.905. Where the computed alpha coefficient is greater than 0.80, it is considered as an acceptable level of internal reliability [9]. Employee engagement was measured using a self-report questionnaire containing 9 items from Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) on a Likert 5 point scale. It had a computed Cronbach's alpha

coefficient value of 0.897 which was acceptable because it indicated a high internal consistency of the scale used.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive Statistics on Employee Engagement

In this study, any mean score above 3.0 indicated that the respondents agreed with the item on employee engagement under consideration while any mean score below 3.0 showed disagreement. The results in Table 1 show that all the items had mean scores above 3.0 implying that the respondents were positive and generally agreed with the items studied. There was an aggregate score of over 50% for agree and strongly agree from all the respondents. This implies that most of the respondents were engaged in their work.

Table 1: Opinions of Respondents on Employee Engagement

Leadership Item	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std.dev
At my work, I feel bursting with energy	10(3.4)	38(12.8)	102(34.5)	116(39.2)	30(10.1)	3.40	0.95
At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	5(1.7)	25(8.4)	67(22.6)	150(50.7)	49(16.6)	3.72	0.898
I am enthusiastic about my job	5(1.7)	17(5.7)	50(16.9)	154(52.0)	70(23.6)	3.90	0.883
My job inspires me.	5(1.7)	19(6.4)	52(17.6)	147(49.7)	73(24.7)	3.89	0.907
When I get up in the morning, Ifeel like going to work	6(2.0)	18(6.7)	69(23.3)	143(48.3)	60(20.3)	3.79	0.905
I feel happy when I am working intensely	5(1.7)	16(5.4)	75(25.5)	154(52.0)	49(15.5)	3.74	0.845
I am proud of the work that I do	2(0.7)	11(3.7)	38(12.8)	155(52.4)	90(30.4)	4.08	0.798
I am immersed in my work.	15(1.7)	26(8.8)	95(32.7)	127(42.9)	43(14.5)	3.60	0.900
I get carried away when I am working	22(7.4)	74(25.0)	98(33.1)	73(24.7)	29(9.8)	3.04	1.090

Source: Field Study, 2018. n=296, Cronbach's Alpha=0.897, SD=Strongly disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree.

Descriptive Statistics on Transformational Leadership

The results in Table 2 show that all the items had a mean score of above 3.0 meaning the respondents were positive and agreed or strongly agreed with the items. There was an aggregate score of over 50% for agree and strongly agree from all the respondents. This implies that the schools principals were practicing transformational leadership.

Table 2: Opinions of Respondents on Transformational Leadership Items

Transformational Leadership Item	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std.dev.
Goes beyond self - interest for the good of others	11(3.7)	30(10.1)	57(19.3)	139(47.0)	59(19.9)	3.69	1.02
Respected	4(1.4)	32(10.8)	75(25.3)	125(42.2)	60(20.3)	3.69	0.959
Display sense of power and confidence, willing to take risk	6(2.0)	32(10.8)	50(16.9)	138(46.6)	70(23.6)	3.79	0.99
Talks about values and beliefs	4(1.4)	16(5.4)	47(15.9)	137(46.3)	92(31.1)	4.0	0.9
Talks optimistically about the future	7(2.4)	15(5.1)	45(15.2)	128(43.2)	101(34.1)	4.02	0.95
Motivate and inspire people around	13(4.4)	32(10.8)	53(17.9)	109(36.8)	89(30.1)	3.77	1.123
Does no public criticism	25(8.4)	51(17.2)	67(22.6)	111(37.5)	42(14.2)	3.32	1.165
Spends time mentoring and teaching	19(6.4)	48(16.2)	66(22.3)	108(36.5)	55(18.6)	3.45	1.154
Considers every employee as having different needs, aspiration and abilities	12(4.1)	26(8.8)	82(27.7)	105(35.5)	71(24.0)	3.67	1.061
Develops employees into Leaders	19(6.4)	41(13.9)	88(29.7)	100(33.8)	48(16.2)	3.40	1.109
Interaction with employees are personalized	22(7.4)	45(15.2)	86(29.1)	94(31.8)	49(16.6)	3.35	1.146

Source: Field Study, 2018. n=296, Cronbach's Alpha=0.905, SD=Strongly disagree. D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree, Std. dev.= Standard deviation.

Correlation analysis

The findings indicated that there was a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.432; p-value <0.001) between transformational leadership and employee engagement. This implies that an increase in the practice of transformational leadership dimensions will result in an increase in employee engagement.

Table 3: Pearson's Correlation between Transformational Leadership and Employee Engagement

Items		Transformational	Employee Engagement
Transformational	Pearson Correlation	1	.432**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	296	296
Employee Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.432**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	296	296

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

Table 4: Pearson's Correlation between the Dimensions of Employee Engagement and Transformational Leadership

Dimensions of Transformational Leadership	
Vigor	0.480**
Dedication	0.386**
Absorption	0.224**

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

The results in Table 4 indicate that there is a statistically significant and direct correlation between vigor and transformational leadership (r=.480, p<0.01). Similarly, there is a statistically significant positive relationship between dedication and transformational leadership (r=.386, p<0.01). There is also a statistically significant relationship between absorption and transformational leadership (r=.224, p<0.01). Similar results were obtained by [26, 23].

Regression Analysis
Ho1: There is no significant effect of transformational leadership on teacher engagement in public secondary schools of Murang'a County.

Regression analysis was conducted to empirically determine whether transformational leadership was a significant determinant of teacher engagement in public secondary schools of Murang'a County in Kenya. An R squared of 0.432 shows that 18.7 of the variations in teacher engagement are explained by transformational leadership as indicated in Table 5. It therefore implies that 81.3% of the unexplained variations in teacher engagement is accounted for by other factors. These findings support other findings by [14,27,34,38]. However, the results disagree with those of [25].

Table 5: Regression Results of Transformational Leadership on Employee Engagement

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	20.619	1	20.619	67.497	.000[b]
Residual	89.812	294	.305		
Total	110.431	295			
R= 0.432 R^2=0.187		ΔR^2= 0.184			

From Table 5, it can be deduced that the model was found to be valid (F (1,294) =67.497, p-value<0.001). These results have the implication that the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement is significant and not by chance. In determining the significance of the variables, standardized beta coefficients are used. As shown in Table 6, the fitted model equation is Y= $0.432X_1$.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients of Transformational Leadership on Employment Engagement

| Model | Unstandardized coefficients | | Standardized coefficients | | |
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	2.409	.159		15.186	.000
Transformational leadership	.350	.043	.432	8.216	.000

The fitted model equation shows that standardized employment engagement will increase by 0.432 units with one unit increase in standardized transformational leadership style. The model indicates that transformational leadership is significantly explaining the variation in the dependent variable (employment engagement). Therefore, hypothesis Ho1: there is no significant effect of transformational leadership style on employment engagement is rejected and the conclusion is that transformational leadership style has a significant effect on employment engagement. The high residual sum of squares (89.812) in Table 5 indicates that the model does not explain a lot of the variations in the dependent variable implying that there are other factors that account for a higher proportion of the variation in the dependent variable.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study established that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement. Transformational leadership explains 18.7% variation in employee engagement. The results also show that the standardized employment engagement will increase by 0.432 units with one unit increase in standardized transformational leadership style. Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that transformational leadership is a significant determinant of employee engagement in public secondary schools of Murang'a County. This study contributes to the general understanding of leadership behaviors that are significant in encouraging employee engagement to both practicing and aspiring school leaders and teachers, and professional educator preparation programs. Transformational leadership is necessary if we really want to improve schools [16].

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that 18.7% of teacher engagement was explained by transformational leadership. It is therefore recommended that there is need for the Teachers Service Commission to plan and strategize at the National and County levels on how to train school principals on transformational leadership skills including other teachers that aspire to take leadership positions.

To ensure continued practice of the transformational leadership is schools, it necessary that the Teachers Service Commission through the Ministry of Education puts in place organized evaluation strategies that give school principals the opportunity to assess their performance on a regular basis. The '360 degree' feedback system if applied will give the principals a complete knowledge of their skills and strengths as viewed by themselves and others, and thus provide them with an opportunity to become more aware of themselves and keep them on track in practicing appropriate leadership behaviours.

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