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Original Article

Assessing Organisational Factors' Influence on Work Engagement of Primary School Teachers in the Acholi Sub-Region of Northern Uganda

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Keywords:

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This paper presents the influence of organisational factors on the work engagement of primary school teachers in selected primary schools in four districts of northern Uganda. In the cross-sectional survey research design, the study employed qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, focusing on quantitative approaches. Data were systematically collected from a sample of 326 participants using a self-administered questionnaire. The findings revealed that teacher absorption was as high as the personal self-efficacy of teachers, but teacher dedication and teacher vigour were moderate. In addition, organisational factors, leadership support and social support were fair. However, moderation analysis revealed that organisational factors had no clear moderating role in the influence of individual characteristics of the work engagement of teachers. It was concluded that organisational factors in the form of leadership and social support were essential for the engagement of teachers. Therefore, it was highly recommended that headteachers, education officers, and other stakeholders involved in the management of schools should consider providing leadership support and promoting social support in schools. It was also recommended that organisational factors should be emphasised in all the primary schools to promote effective work engagement of teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

Engaged teachers bring their full potential to their jobs and have the motivation to concentrate exclusively on the tasks at hand in the schools (Zhang et al., 2021). Perceived Organisational Support comes in various forms such as supportive leadership, social support, and recognition for good performance (Eisenberger et al., 2020). Effectively engaged teachers are contented with their work and more likely to employ creative teaching methods and display organisational citizenship behaviours leading to teaching effectiveness (Zhang et al., 2021). To promote the productive engagement of teachers, the government of Uganda has trained teachers, paid staff salaries promptly, and procured teaching and learning materials with improved working conditions (Poro et al., 2019).

In many schools in the sub-region, teachers do not comply with school standards and procedures (Poro et al., 2019; World Bank, 2020). Many teachers were involved in drinking alcohol instead of concentrating on their learners. Some teachers in the region had been arrested for being involved in drinking alcohol during work hours (Ayugi & Openytho, 2023). The teachers were dissatisfied with 59 percent regretting why they joined the teaching profession, and only 16 percent hoped to continue teaching for a few more years (Kamonges, 2021). The specific objective was to assess the influence of organisational factors on the work engagement of primary school teachers in the Acholi sub-region. The conceptual framework was developed based on ideas obtained from Akinbode (2011), Chen et al. (2001), Eisenberger et al. (2020), and Schaufeli et al. (2006). For the moderating variable of organisational factors, the framework shows that it covers leadership and social support.

The Acholi sub-region in the North was the geography of the study. This part of Uganda covers the four districts of Gulu, Amuru, Nwoya, and Omoro that were selected for the study. The work engagement of teachers was studied in terms of absorption, dedication, and vigour. Organisational factors were studied in terms of leadership and social support.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The social identity theory (SIT) and perceived organisational support theory (POST) underpinned this study. POST indicates that POS largely originates from employees' perceptions regarding the sentiments of the organisation to enhance the quality of their lives (Eisenberger et al., 2017). Perceived Organisational Support comes in various forms such as supportive leadership, social support, and recognition for good performance (Eisenberger et al., 2020). Guided by POST, the influence of organisational support in terms of organisational leadership and social support on the work engagement of teachers was studied.

Organisational support pertains to the key characteristics of a supportive work environment that can be modified by managers. Organisational support includes beneficial treatment, incentives, and equity provided to employees that lead to favourable outcomes such as high levels of job fulfilment, lower turnover rates, increased devotion, pleasant feelings, and work engagement. Employee support strengthens their faith and conviction that the organisation recognises and rewards their struggles to achieve outstanding outcomes, generating favourable workplace dispositions (Maan et al., 2020).

In their empirical analysis, Wang et al. (2023) tested the impact of leadership on employee work engagement using Chinese workers and their managers in a variety of Chinese organizations. The findings divulged that leadership positively influenced employee work engagement. The results showed that there was a favourable connection between leadership and workforce engagement. However, this study was done in universities, posing a population gap as university employees have different work dynamics from those of primary schools, hence this study.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a cross-section survey design backed by mixed quantitative and qualitative data collection methods carried out in the selected four districts of the Acholi sub-region in Uganda. The population for this study involved primary school teachers in the Acholi sub-region from both government and private primary schools. The population of teachers was 3764 primary school teachers from the four districts of Gulu, Amuru, Omoro, and Nwoya (MOES, 2018). These districts were selected because of the continued poor performance of the teachers in the Acholi subregion. Using the table for sample determination by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the sample size was determined. A sample size of 352 respondents was employed. The selection of the sample involved multistage sampling. To determine the number of teachers to be selected from each distinct two types of schools involved, proportionate sampling was employed.

Data Collection Procedure

The government schools had about twice the number of teachers in primary schools in each of the study districts; two-thirds (59) of the teachers were selected from government schools, and one-third (29) of them were selected from private schools. A stratified random sampling approach was adopted to

select respondents from the study schools. This gave equal opportunity to all the potential respondents to be fairly selected to participate in the process. This method also helped to reduce the chances of bias when collecting data, as well as to increase the validity of the process with its subsequent results. The stratification process that ensued was based on the participants' work experience, gender, and educational levels. Out of the 352 questionnaires that were given out, 326 were returned fully completed and were the ones considered for analysis. This made the actual study sample 326 respondents, giving a response rate of 92.6%.

Sampling Techniques

The study adopted the proportionate sampling method to select the number of districts and schools that participated in the process. The teachers from each study school were randomly selected. The teachers were selected at random as recommended by simple random sampling, based on the sampling frame that contained their names (Fricker, 2017). The simple random selection was used to gather objective data that was typical of the entire teachers. This helped to collect more broadly applicable and generalizable data for the study. The research effectively used questionnaire survey forms to collect primary data based on the previously designed instruments that were pilot-tested and approved for the research, since the reliability of the variables had been confirmed by the earlier assessment tools to be valid.

Data Collection and Quality Control

A Self-Administered questionnaire (SAQ) was the data collection instrument used to collect data. This was because the study was mainly quantitative data. The questionnaire comprised a title, cover letter, and three sections that are A, B, and C. Section A was on work engagement of teachers, section B was on individual characteristics, and on organisational factors. Apart from the questions on individual demographic characteristics, which were nominal, the rest of the questions were based on the ordinal

scale that is applied in the five-point Likert Scale from one (1) (strongly disagree) to five (5) (Strongly agree). Data quality assurance involved ensuring that the data collected was valid and reliable. The validity and reliability of quantitative data were attained by carrying out a pilot study of 50 teachers from the primary schools outside the studied schools.

Validity and Reliability

The extent to which a tool measures precisely what it is supposed to assess is known as its validity (de Souza et al., 2017). By ensuring that the indicators on the primary variables (independent and dependent variables) in the instruments adhered to the study's conceptual framework, the researcher established the content validity of the instruments. The question indicators were validated, and the supervisors' opinions regarding the instruments' indicator applicability, phrasing, and clarity were solicited. SPSS was then used to compute Exploratory Factor Analysis to determine the construct validity for the pilot and the final data. Indicators loading highly, that is, above 0.50, were considered valid, while indicators indicating low loading and those with split loading, that is, those loading highly more than once, were discarded. This was because indicators loading low were considered while split-loading weak, indicators were considered complex (Taherdoost et al., 2022). This helped in attaining the validity of the instruments. Reliability is a measure of the consistency of the indicators of the data collection instrument (Mohajan, 2017). Using the Cronbach's Alpha (α) method offered by SPSS, the reliabilities of the indicators in the different constructs were examined. At the benchmark of $\alpha = 0.70$ and above, reliability was achieved for the indicators in the various constructs (Viladrich et al., 2017).

Data Processing and Presentation.

Data management involves processing and analysing the data collected. The data were processed to ascertain their accuracy, while analysis

enabled the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the results. The data collected was fed into the computer using SPSS Version 26.0. Thereafter, there was the detection and treatment of missing data, outliers, and carrying out diagnostic tests. Diagnostic tests included normality tests and linearity.

Ethical Considerations

The study sought ethical approval from the Gulu University Research Ethics Committee (GUREC), and then the study was also registered with the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology (UNCST). After obtaining the above clearance, the researcher got a letter of introduction from the graduate school, Kyambogo University, to seek permission to allow the researcher to have access to the respondents. The views of each respondent were treated with utmost confidentiality, and the instruments were anonymous. The researcher collected information from respondents after their informed consent to participate in the study. They obtained advance permission from the relevant District Education Officers and the head teachers. However, the respondents were assured that any information provided would be used only for academic purposes. In general, a high level of transparency or openness regarding the procedure. purpose, and nature of the research was observed by the researcher. The overall participation in the study was purely voluntary, confidential, and anonymous.

RESULTS

Organisational factors are the moderating variable that was measured using two constructs, namely organisational leadership support and psychosocial factors. The results of the Organisational leadership support, which was conceived as the first organisational factor, were studied using eight indicators. First, the findings on whether the early career teachers often shared ideas on effective teaching resources with their senior counterparts to enable them to perform better, a majority (63.1%) agreed with the question, while 28.8% disagreed,

and 8.0% said they were not sure. When asked if the school management had always provided resources to help teachers achieve their professional goals, a majority (70.0%) agreed. While 24.8% disagreed, and 23.2% said they were not sure.

In another question, the participants were asked if their heads of departments gave teachers professional career development opportunities to improve their effectiveness as primary school teachers, a majority (68.4%) agreed, while 19.5% disagreed, and 12.1% were not sure. The next issue was whether the school management had often provided teachers with practical methods of effectively engaging their pupils for better learning outputs, a small majority (54.5%) agreed, while 29.4% disagreed, and 7.1% were not sure. The early case respondents were asked if they had received some training from senior colleagues on how to provide quality classroom instruction; a small majority (52.3%) agreed, 30.1% disagreed, and 17.6% said they were not sure.

Another issue put to the respondents was whether the school had provided any recognition appreciation) (allowances, after successful completion of teaching tasks, most of them (68.4%) agreed, 20.1%) disagreed, and (11.5%) were not sure. Asked if their school management had provided written feedback on how to improve their pedagogical practices, more respondents (63.5%) agreed, (29.4%) disagreed, and (7.1%) were not sure. When asked if their more experienced senior colleagues in the department had always given them (early career teachers) any oral feedback on how they could motivate learners to achieve better, a few (30.0%) agreed, a majority (52.3%) disagreed, and (17.6%) were not sure.

Another question was asked if the school management would show teachers how to manage their regular teaching challenges, less than half of them (49.5%) agreed, (27.5%) disagreed, and (22.9%) were not sure. Concerning teachers getting regular training on effective ways of managing themselves, less than half (40.2%) agreed, (34.7%)

disagreed, and (25.1%) were not sure. As to whether senior teachers in the school usually gave junior teachers techniques to improve their well-being, a small majority (57.7%) agreed, (23.8%) disagreed, and (19.5%) were not sure. The high mean (3.39) implied that senior teachers in the school usually gave teachers techniques to improve their wellbeing.

Asked if the school management had always discussed with teachers how to solve work-related problems, half of them (50.1%) agreed, a few (27.5%) disagreed, and fewer (22.3%0 said they were not sure. At the same time, the respondents were asked if their heads of department had often given them any reassurance during financial hardships; less than half (40.9%) agreed, a few of them (34.7%) disagreed, and 24.5% reported that they were not sure. In their responses to the issue of teachers being perceived to feel very valued members of the school communities, the majority (57.3%) agreed, very few (23.9%) disagreed, and too few (18.9%) reported that they were not sure at all.

DISCUSSION

Regarding the issue of organisational factors' influence on the work engagement of the primary school teachers in the study area, the findings established that organisational factors, specifically leadership and supervisory support with employee engagement, had a lot of influence on the participants.

Additionally, in the same vein, Rakthin et al. (2021) divulged that organisational factors, including remuneration and leadership, positively influenced employee engagement. Wang et al. (2023) findings divulged that leadership was positive employee work engagement. Further, Zhou et al. (2022) showed that there was a favourable connection between leadership and workforce engagement. Studies by Zhang and Guo (2023) indicated that perceived social support had a discernible impact on work engagement.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, organisational factors in the form of leadership and social support are essential for the engagement of teachers. This is when supervisors, administrators, and superiors in schools provide mentorship, professional development opportunities and offer recognition to teachers upon successful teaching. In addition, this is when management leaders and senior colleagues enable teachers to come up with more effective ways of managing difficult pupils, senior teachers offer junior ones techniques to improve their wellbeing, and teachers should be valued by the members of the school's communities.

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