Analysis Of Working Conditions Of Support Staff In Public Secondary Schools In Nyamira County, Kenya.

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Abstract

Secondary school support staffs are less satisfied with their posts in general, their contracts and conditions of employment, working arrangements for their post, training and development opportunities available to them are always demoralizing them. Going by the foresaid conditions of work, this study was set to analyze of working conditions of support staff in public secondary schools in Nyamira County, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey design.   The specific objective of the study was to: examine the working conditions of the support staff in public secondary schools. The study population consisted of 170 public secondary schools, 170 principals, 172 deputy principals and 170 BOM chairpersons with 1020 support staff, totaling to 1532. Simple random and stratified sampling techniques were used to select 16 secondary schools, out of which one principal, six support staff, one deputy principal and the BOM chairperson from each of the sampled schools were selected, making a total sample of 144 respondents for the study. The study established that support staff in Nyamira County work under very poor conditions. The findings reveals that support staff motivation depends on the working conditions set by the principal in a school also influence workers motivation to work. The study recommended that there should be salary increase to support staffs and that the yearly increment should be effected considering the fact that they were few and were doing too much work. Principals should avail adequate working tools.

Key words: Analysis, Public Secondary School, Staff Motivation and Support Staff

Introduction

Secondary school principals are charged with the responsibility of running schools by addressing themselves to curriculum and instruction, school community relationship, finance and business administration, staff personnel, pupils and school plant tasks (Nakpodia 2006). Hoy and Miskeel (1992), maintain that at the building level, the principal is usually the key figure in fostering shared governance within the school. Principals not only have increased responsibility and authority in school programmed curriculum and personnel decisions, but

also increased accountability for a student and program success, while doing this the principal should work on ways of motivating the workers to enable them to perform their jobs.

The main tasks of the school principal are to interpret national policies, execute curriculum programs, comment on students, teachers and support staffs' welfare, equipping physical facilities and finances, inducting and retaining school community relations (Mwaoria 1993). For the smooth and effective running of a school, the principal needs to gain the support and commitment of both professional and support staff (Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, 1999). Principals should motivate and encourage all staff to feel they are part of a team with a common mission. Welch (2006) observed that money, recognition, training, worker qualification, attitude and experience are the basic tools required to motivate and retain top performance. Welch further observed that it is easier to manage the financial and material components of any organization than to manage the human component. They insinuate that "it is easier to manage even animals than to manage human beings" (Nakpodia, 2006; Peretomode, 1991; Peretomode, 2001; Ubogu, 2004; Emore, 2005; Ukoshi, 2004). Thus, in the school system, the school principal, is confronted with numerous problems posed by teaching staff, support staff and students.

In England and Wales, secondary school support staff were less satisfied with their posts in general, their contracts and conditions of employment, working arrangements for their post, training and development they had received in their role, and training and development opportunities available to them (Martin, 2008). Nakpodia (2010), revealed in his study on human resources in schools in Nigeria that conditions of work impact positively on performance of support staff.

Sagimo (2002) maintained that employees and managers have to work in harmony, better cooperation and understanding in order to increase their productivity. It is therefore worth noting that every teaching institution needs not only the teaching staff, but also a motivated support staff to assist in running other services at the school (Bakhda, 2004). Republic of Kenya (2006), asserts that to ensure staff satisfaction and effective utilization of the available human resources for increased productivity, the working environment and conditions of service must be conducive and attractive.

In Kenya employees who are skilled and semi skilled end up securing employment in secondary schools however, poor terms and conditions of service lead to poor morale (Republic of Kenya 1999).

Olayo (2011) maintained that to maximize employees output; they need to be comfortable both at work and home so as to minimize stress and stressors. Every person has the right to fair labour practices including fair remuneration, reasonable working conditions, a right to form, join or participate in the activities and programmes of a trade union and a right to go on strike (Republic of Kenya, 2010). Though researches on principals has been studied and proposals made, a gap still exists regarding the leadership styles and motivation of support staff that play pivotal role in making schools achieve their objectives. Support staffs in Nyamira Sub-county's public secondary schools are reluctantly playing their pivotal role compared to their counterparts in Kisii and Gucha sub-counties (Nyamira District Education office, 2012). It is therefore necessary to assess the relationship between the principals' leadership styles and motivation among support staff in public secondary schools in Nyamira County, Kenya.

The quality of environment in work place determines the level of employees' motivation, subsequent performance and productivity Leblebici (2009). Ademokoya (2006) carried out a study on influence of working conditions on the performance of sign language interpreters and teachers of deaf students in Oyo state, Nigeria. Findings showed that poor working conditions such as delay in promotion and salary payment and unattractive office accommodation have significant adverse influence on working performance of both teachers and interpreters. Hours expected to work, annual wage and job insecurity play a vital role in the association between health- and work –related performance for both work attendance and self reported work performance in Australian working conditions (Holden, 2000).

Lavy (2002) found that rewarding Israel teachers and support staff based on school average performance rather than individual performance increased test scores and participation in motivation examinations. Kahya (2007),

in a study on the effects of job characteristics and working conditions on job performance showed that there were substantial relationships between employee performances with both job grade and environmental conditions. Poor work place conditions result in decreasing employee performance. This was supported by Nyangori and Nyonje (2010), who revealed in their study that education and training are needed to successfully run micro and small enterprises as the entrepreneurs with more education and training performed better than those with lower levels of education.

Ngala and Odebero (2010), study on motivation of teachers by head teachers in Eldoret Municipality revealed that there exists a positive relationship between teacher- motivation practice and pupil achievement in Eldoret Municipality. Deci (2000), in his findings revealed that motivation of teachers influence their performance at various levels. When their motivation level is low, their performance declines and when their morale is high, their ability to perform is also high. There was a gap here which needed to be filled since they looked only at motivation of teachers and not on support staff by principals. Wohner (2010) observed in a study that rewarding employees make them feel appreciated and give them a sense of value. In addition rewarding employees gives them motivation to keep their level of performance.

Gogo (2010), argued that pay package is a critical component of staff development. Good pay may mean low staff turnover which may result in improved services. Many employees believe in good salary and allowances such as house, transport and medical. Research studies indicate that fringe benefits such as subsidized meals, housing, transport and assistance with school fees can greatly increase teacher loyalty and job performance (Simatwa, 2010). Promotion plays a critical role in staff development, motivation and in enhancing performance. Promotion in any organization is aimed at influencing the achievement level as people work effectively and efficiently to be promoted (Jabuya, 2011).The study concurs with that of Vail (2005) as cited in (Jabuya, 2011) whose findings on the influence of promotion on performance concluded that support staff appreciate a professional career that allows them to grow.

While the literature studied underscore the importance of training and motivation, none of them looked at the influences of principals' leadership styles and motivation among support staff in public secondary schools. The respondents in the reviewed studies were teachers while the current study had included support staff as its respondents.

In the school system, the principal is accountable for the management and motivation of the support staff within the school. However most of the workers are not motivated to work because whenever their schools performs well, it is only the teachers who are congratulated, taken for trips, given awards for good job done and being appreciated. Support staff members are minimally recognized not only by stakeholders but even by their school principals. Support staff members are faced with poor working environment such as delayed salaries especially during the third term of the school calendar as the school management claims they had run short of funds. Support staff members also suffer lack of medical cover, lack of working tools and protective gears when at work. In addition support staff also lack training opportunities, receive less sick leave than teachers although they are exposed to similar health risks at work, not sure of pay progression, not being paid during school holidays. As a result of poor working conditions most support staff are not motivated to work yet they are expected to come to work very early, be innovative at work place, they are also expected to love their jobs and to improve their school performance. This study sought to analysis of working conditions of support staff in public secondary schools in Nyamira County, Kenya.

Objective Of The Study

This study focused on achieving the following objective: to analyze the working conditions of support staff in public secondary schools.

Research Methodology

The study used descriptive survey research design. The major purpose of descriptive research was description of the state of affairs as they exist (Kombo& Tromp, 2006). Orodho(2003) defines descriptive survey as collection of information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals. It is used to gather data from a large population at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing situations. It can be used when collecting information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education or social issues (Orodho&Okombo, 2002).

Kothari and Garg (2014) define descriptive research studies as those studies which are concerned with describing the existing characteristics with specific predications, with narration of facts of a particular individual, or of a group or situation. Descriptive survey design was chosen for this study because it gave the opportunity to assess the relationship between the principals' leadership styles and motivation among support staff in public secondary schools in Nyamira County, Kenya.

The locale of this study was in Nyamira County. The Latitude and Longitude Nyamira County is 0º56′S34º93′E respectively.

The target population comprised of the 170 secondary schools in Nyamira County, 1020 support staff, 170 principals, 172 deputy principals, 170 BOM chairpersons, making a total target population of 1532. This was the total population of support staff members, principals, deputy principals and BOM Chairpersons in the Nyamira County.

Kerlinger (1973) indicated that a sample size, 10% of the target population is large so long as it allows for reliable data analysis by cross tabulation, provides desired level of accuracy in estimates of the large population and allows for testing for significance of differences between estimates. Kothari et al (2014) observed that the size of the sample should be determined by a researcher keeping in view the nature of the universe. Universe may either be homogenous or heterogeneous in nature. If the items in the universe are homogenous a small sample can serve the purpose. This study therefore used 10% of the population because of the large number of the study population.

Stratified and simple random sampling as in table 1 below was used to select 16 secondary schools, of which a principal, six support staff, a deputy principal and BOM chairpersons comprised the sample. In total, there were 144 respondents for the study. The BOM chairpersons are active participants in the school culture, are currently involved in school management, they have adequate time and this research is based on the principles of positivism.

Sub-County	Total Public Sec Schs	Sample Size	Total H/T	Sample Size	Total DH/T	Sample Size	Total BOM Chairpersons	Sample Size	Total Support Staff	Sample Size
Nyamira North	43	4	43	4	44	4	43	4	258	24
Nyamira South	44	4	44	4	44	4	44	4	264	24
Masaba North	32	3	32	3	32	3	32	3	192	18
Manga	28	3	28	3	29	3	28	3	168	18
Borabu	23	2	23	2	23	2	23	2	138	12
Total	N=170	n=16	N=170	n=16	N=172	n=16	N=170	n=16	N=1020	n=96

Table 1: Sampling Frame

Results And Discussion

According to the objective of establishing the working conditions of the support staff in public secondary schools, the distribution of responses is as summarized in Table 2.

Working Conditions of Support Staff	Principals		Support Staff	
	f	%	f	%
Lack of concern for individual needs by management	14	88	96	100
Lack of terms of service and job descriptions	13	81	96	100
Too much work allocation	13	81	92	96
Poor relations among workers	10	63	90	94
Non membership of trade unions	9	56	86	90
Lack of staff development	8	50	83	86
Lack of team work	6	38	68	71
Lack of commuter allowances	6	38	66	69
Threats from principals	5	31	61	64

Table 2 **Showing Working Conditions of Support Staff as Reported by Principals (n= 16), Support Staff (n= 96)**

Figure 1: shows varied responses from the principals and support staff concerning the conditions of work that prevails in secondary schools. Lack of concern for individual needs by management was established as major working condition affecting work performance of support staff by most (88%) principals and all support staff. Most support staff lack terms of service as reported by most (81%) principals and all support staff. Too much work allocation was also established from (81%) principals and (96%) support staff.
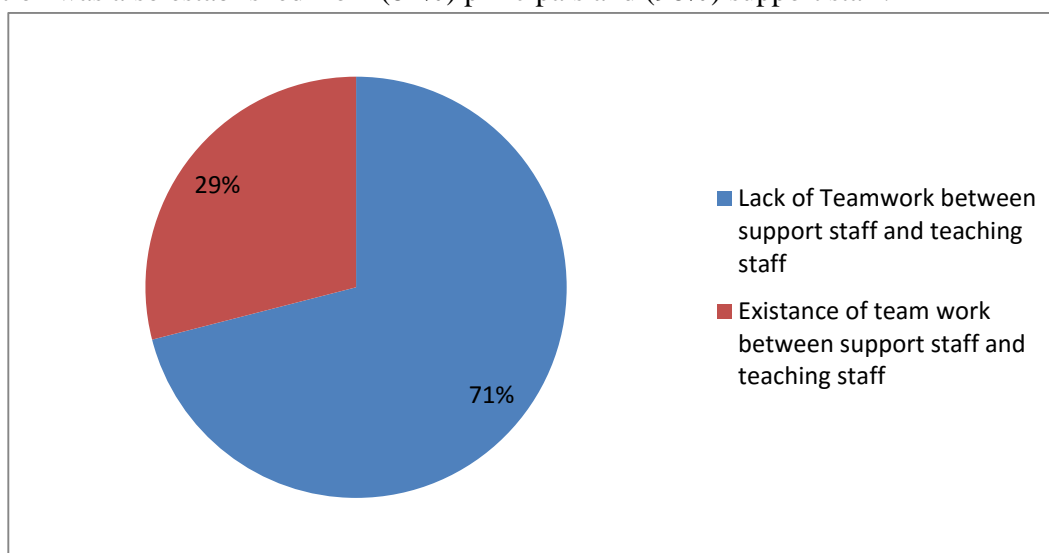

Figure 1: Support Staff Response on Teamwork among Workers in School (n =96)

The study further established that there were poor relations among workers in secondary schools from some (63%) principals and most (94%) support staff. Most support staffs were not members of trade unions as established from (56%) principals most (90%) support staff. Lack of staff development was also established from (50%) principals and some (86%) support staff. Lack of team work was established as not of high

magnitude among principals as only (38%) mentioned its existence in schools but was vastly noted by (71%) support staff. Equally lack of commuter allowances and inadequate house allowances was given by 38% of the principals. This implies that most of the principals may have not seen this as a problem affecting the staff working conditions. On the other hand most (69%) of the support staff indicated it lack of allowances as a factor affecting their working conditions.

The study also established that there were threats from the principals to support staff as mentioned by some (64%) of the support staff.
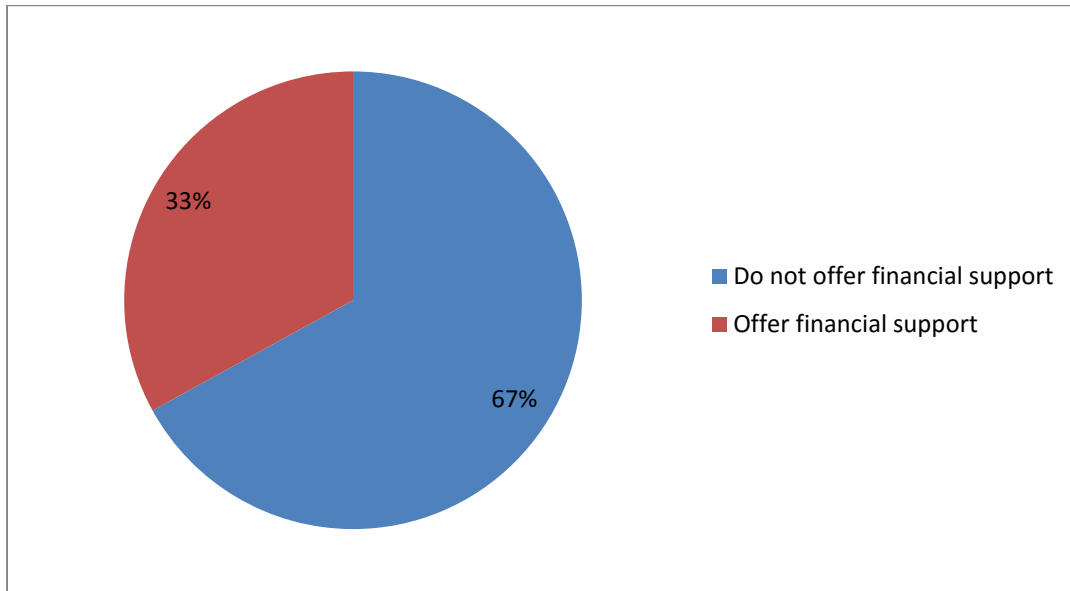

Figure 2: Principal's Response on the Financial Support Staff   (n =16)

The study further established through interviews that most of the principals were not bothered about the welfare of the support staff under them. The principals who participated in the study maintained that some of the support staffs were not genuine with the cases they were presenting and when the principals realized that, they developed laxity in tackling personal issues brought by the support staff. Some principals mentioned how they had been cheated by support staff so as to get money from the school. This they said made the principals to develop an indifferent attitude towards the problems of support staff.

During interviews with the BOM Chairpersons, study established some principals were not showing concern to the plight of the support staff. This they argue was not motivating support staff to perform. One BOM Chairperson stated that;
I have received a number of complaints from support staff in my school that whenever they have problems, the principal was always reluctant to support them especially in cases of funerals and sickness.

The support staff on the other hand during the interview maintained that principals were inhuman and were never having them at heart yet they were the most important part of the schools engine. Some (75%) support staff noted various occasions when they had pressing issues but were denied permission from their places of work to attend to those problems. Equally other support staff mentioned how they were denied financial support by the principals when they were in dire need.
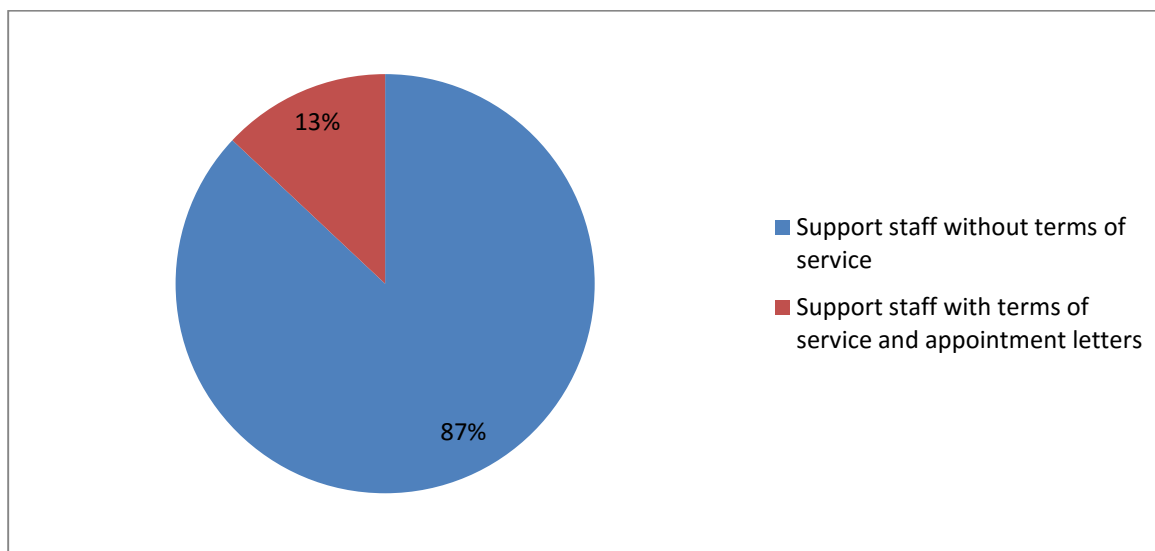
Figure 3: Showing Support Staffs' Terms of Service   (n =96)

The study also established that most of the support staff in secondary schools were lacking terms of service and that majority were working as casual workers or on contract without letters affirming them to such positions. Most (81%) principals indicated they were engaging most support staff on casual basis terms because the government money through Free Secondary Education (FSE) was limiting the number of support staff to be employed yet there was need for more manpower. They further reiterated that the principals were using Parents Teachers Association Development Funds (PTADF) to engage some support staff. Most (98%) principals noted that the principals intentionally avoided giving most support staff terms of service so as to make them accept to do any duty assigned to them by the school administration. As one support staff during the interview stated that:

I don't know terms of service or even my job descriptions as I'm assigned duties on daily basis and I'm constantly being moved from one job area to another. I'm disappointment that I'm always kept in the dark of where I will be transferred to next

Some support staff were semi-literate and could not see the importance of being given job description so long as they were on employment the other issues were not relevant. Some support staffs were of the opinion that they were neglected by trade unions and the government and left at the mercy of the principals.

Too much work allocation to the support staff was also established during interviews with principals. Most (97%) agreed that they were giving too much work to the support staff. They were however quick to explain that this was due manpower shortage in schools. Some (89%) principals also noted that most of their support staffs were on contract and were to be made use of to the maximum because it would not be wise to employ other people to work for them. Some (79%) principals also noted that most of the people they were employing were not complaining of too much work as such they were not aware that they were giving them a lot of work. Also too much work allocation to the support staff was also established during interviews with BOM Chairpersons. Most (97%) agreed that the principals were giving too much work to the support staff. They were however quick to explain that this was due manpower shortage in schools. Some BOM chairpersons also noted that most of their support staffs were on contract and were to be made use of to the maximum because it would not be wise to employ other people to work for them. Some BOM chairpersons also noted that most of the people they were employing were not complaining of too much work as such they were not aware that they were giving them a lot of work

Furthermore, too much work allocation to the support staff was also established during interviews with deputy principals. Most agreed that the principals were giving too much work to the support staff. They were however quick to explain that this was due manpower shortage in schools. Some deputy principals also noted that most of their support staffs were on contract and were to be made use of to the maximum because it would not be

wise to employ other people to work for them. Some deputy principals also noted that most of the people they were employing were not complaining of too much work as such they were not aware that they were giving them a lot of work

Most support staff maintained that they were being made a jack of all trade but master of none. As such they could not perform their duties diligently. One support staff who was employed as a watch man in secondary school explained how he was being overworked at night when he is a watch man at the gate at the same time was expected to cook overnight. Another grounds man claimed that he was expected to be cleaning the compound at the same time being school farm attendance thus feeding cows, milking and taking full control of chicken.

The study further established from the support staff that principals were not taking any action whenever they requested that new workers be added to ease their much work. Some noted that they were suffering certain diseases due to much work they were constantly engaged in. Another support staff maintained that they did not have time for leisure activities because they were working from morning to evening and daily without taking weekends into consideration.

Some principals agreed that they were witnessing poor relations among the workers. They further explained that teachers and support staff were not in good terms and even among support staff themselves. Other principals explained how they had been struggling to ensure unity among the workers within their schools.

Also a majority of the BOM Chairpersons agreed that they were witnessing poor relations among the workers. They further explained that teachers and support staff were not in good terms and even among support staff themselves. Other BOM chairpersons explained how they had been struggling to ensure unity among the workers within their schools.

Furthermore, some deputy principals agreed that they were witnessing poor relations among the workers. They further explained that teachers and support staff were not in good terms and even among support staff themselves. Other (67%) deputy principals explained how they had been struggling to ensure unity among the workers within their schools.

All support staff agreed that they had differences among themselves and this was affecting smooth working environment. They instead blamed their principals for the scenario in their schools as they claim that some of the causes were because of lack of job description. Some also blamed the administration for causing poor relations as they were using divide and rule tactics. These support staff further blamed the principals in their schools for siding with other group of workers against another group. Some (90%) support staffs were blaming poor relations in schools for lack of self-discipline among the workers which constantly leads to conflict among the workers.

Most (90%) principals agreed that all their support staff were not members of trade unions. This they noted was due to many support staff being employed either on casual terms or on contract. The principals also blamed the support staff and trade unions for being reluctant to register members from schools. The support staffs were also not expecting school administrations to force them to register with their trade union (KUDHEIHA) which is their advocate against the employer.
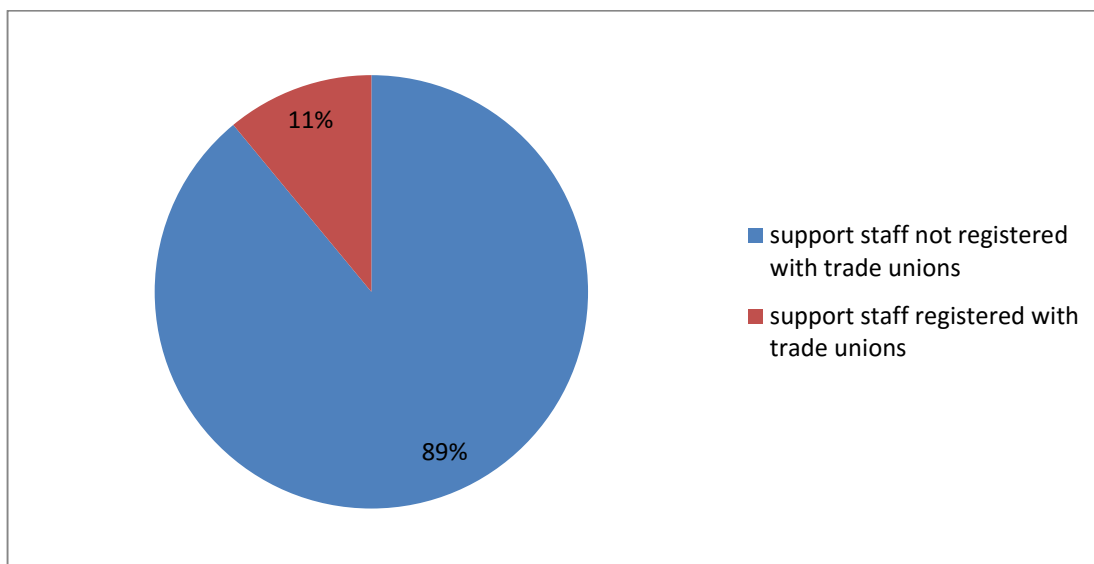
Figure 4: Principal's Response on the Support Staff Membership with Trade Unions (n =16)

On their part, all support staff concurred with principals that they were not registered members of their trade union. This they blamed on the laxity from their trade union offices which had not realized that they were having members in secondary schools. Most support staff blamed their counterparts who were ignorant and illiterate hence were not aware of the existence of trade union and what it stands for. The support staff finally blamed the principals whom they claim do not fully induct their new employees on the existence and importance of trade unions. Most (90%) support staff noted that working conditions were not favorable without trade unions as they had nowhere to turn to when facing high handedness from the school administration. This they noted was leading to high turnover rate of support staff in schools.

Most (50%) principals revealed that they were occasionally taking their support staffs for workshops to enable them improve new skills in their work. Some principals however noted that most support staff does evade workshops even after being sponsored by their schools. The principals further indicated that in some areas like grounds men, they were organizing internal workshops so as to inform them of what they were expected to do. The study also established from the support staff that staff development was lacking in secondary schools and that the principals were not willing to sponsor somebody for well-organized workshops or for further training. They also noted that they were hardly getting internal promotions as such all were stagnant. Some (86%) support staff noted that in their schools staff development was in practice as their principals were constantly talking of lack of funds to sponsor people for further training.
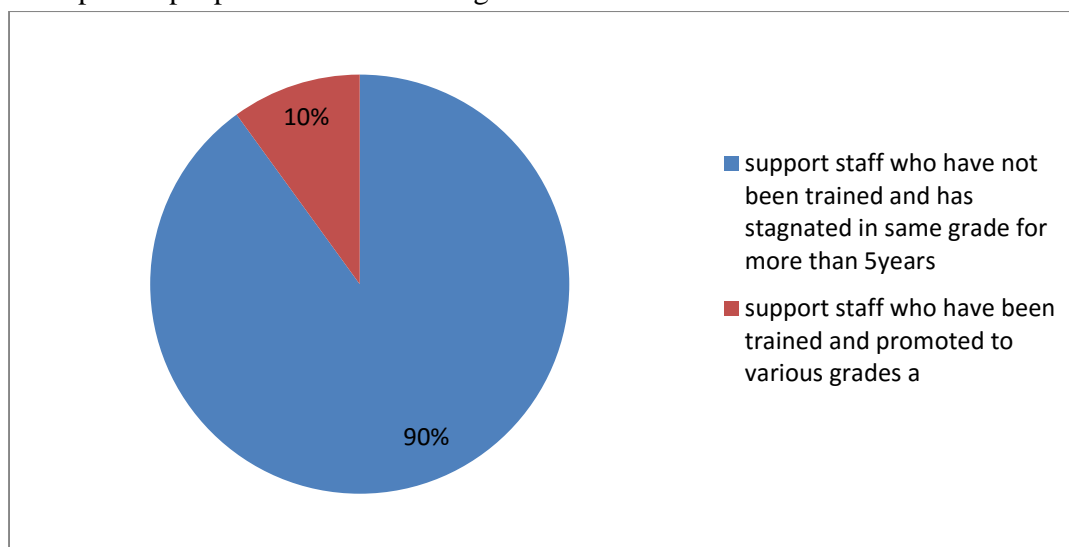

Figure 5: Support Staff Response on the Staff Development (n =96)

Lack of team work among support staff was also established by the study to be in existence among the workers in secondary schools. Most (38%) principals noted that most of them were from the surrounding communities and were carrying village differences to their workplace. The principals also maintained that most of the support staff were having very poor academic achievements and were not seeing the need for team work. Some principals explained how they had made attempts to make the support staff work as a team but they were not successful.

Most (71%) support staff blamed their principals for not being able to create team work in their schools. They further revealed that working was not easy in schools as in most cases people never cared about other persons' duty. They gave examples of security officers in some schools who were leaving school compound when their time reached without waiting for their counterparts so as to hand over. Lack of team work they noted was making it impossible for unity to prevail in schools as such their work was constantly marred with accusations and counter accusations.

Lack of commuter allowances and inadequate house allowances was noted by some (38%) principals. They noted that it was due to inadequate amount being sent by the government to schools. The principals however noted that many times schools were employing the local people who were staying in the villages nearer to the school compound as such there was no need for commuter allowance or housing.

Most (69%) support staff was not in agreement with their principals as they noted that it was the duty of the employer to provide the employee with shelter and transport. Some noted that their morale was low as they were denied their rights while principals and teachers were getting their allowances from the government no matter where they were staying. The support staff noted that with the absence of commuter allowances they ended up feeling tired after walking or riding a bicycle for longer distance.
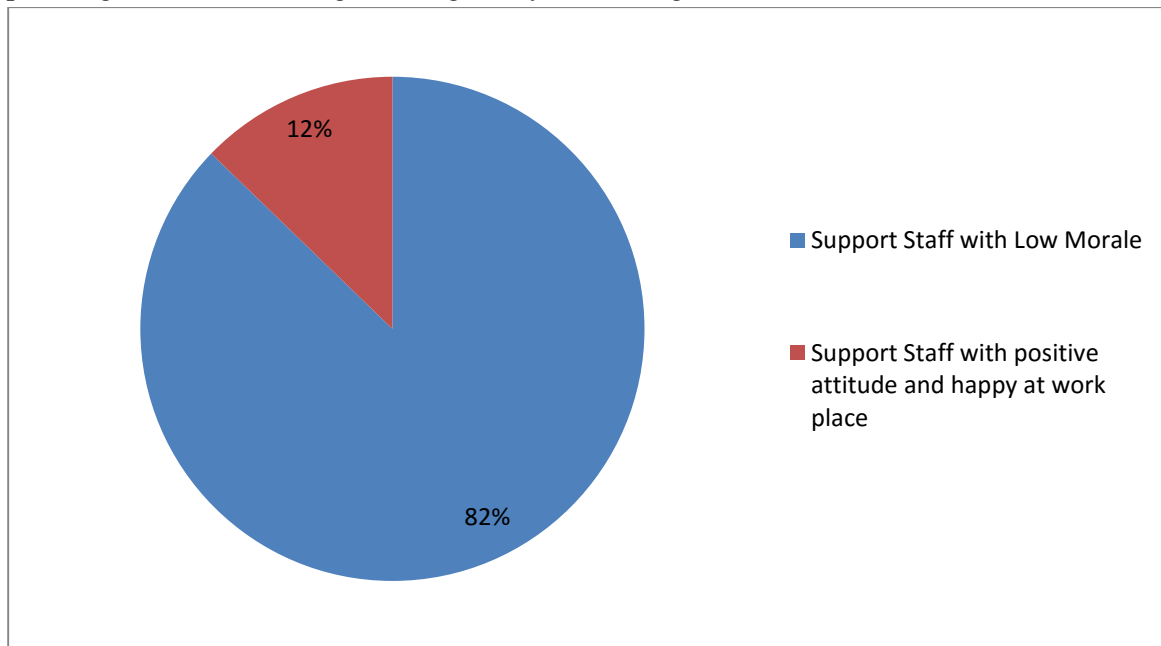

Figure 6: Support Staff Response on their Morale at Work (n =96)

Some support staff agreed that threats from principals were used to make the support staff work whenever they were seen being reluctant to work. Most (31%) principals however denied that the use of threats existed in their schools. Those who identified existence of threats were quick to note that threats were making support staff not to perform their duties willingly. They maintained that such workers were not productive in the absence of the principals.

Most (64%) support staff were feeling threatened by their principals. They maintained that it was hard for support staff to work well because of fear of being quarreled when they fail to satisfy the demands of principals.

The support staff however maintained that little work was being done in the absence of the school administration. Support staff also noted poor workmanship as they were not working to meet the institutional goals or towards attaining job satisfaction.

Summary, Conclusions And Recommendations

This chapter presents a summary of the research findings, conclusions and recommendations. The study was necessitated by the need to analysis of working conditions of support staff in public secondary schools in Nyamira County, Kenya. The following summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations were made:

The study established that support staff in Nyamira County work under very poor conditions such as inadequate working tools, low salary and low motivation. Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions were made: Support staff in Nyamira County work under very poor conditions such as lack of training, inadequate working tools, low salary and low motivational programs from their principals. Most motivation were given to teachers and not on the support staff who are equally contributing to the overall school performance. Working conditions affect work performance of support staff and should be checked by the principals because it lowers the workers morale. Whenever a leadership style is being employed, there should be a consideration on how it will affect the morale of the staff. Based on the findings and the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made: The study recommends that there should be salary increase to support staffs and that the yearly increment should be effected considering the fact that they were few and were doing too much work. Principals should avail adequate working tools such as gumboots, torches, rain coats, utensils and equipment. Schools should put up houses for support staffs or urge the government to pay them house allowances as a way of motivating them. Principals should provide the conducive working conditions of support staffs to enable them perform their work more effectively and efficiently. The principals should not only buy tools but also improve communication and working environment in the school.

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