



Analysis of the Challenges Faced by Principals in the Management 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 determine the challenges faced by principals in the management 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: determine the challenges faced by principals in the management of 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. Lateness, laziness, Lack of team work and absenteeism by support staff were major challenges. Ministry of Education should design relevant in-service courses for support staffs and principals to minimize challenges faced. Such training should emphasize on human resource management and interpersonal relations at work place. The training should also emphasize on the accountability of the workers on their responsibilities.

Keywords:- Public Secondary School, Staff Motivation and Support Staff

I. INTRODUCTION

Beesam (2003), argue that majority of principals in schools lack initial training, and that is a major barrier to professional development. Briar (2010) contended that principals need opportunities for training and career development to enable them to progress and further contribute to school improvement.

Despite the enormous roles and functions of a school principal, research done in some developed countries like USA, UK and Australia unravels various challenges faced by principals in management (Kitavi and Westhuizen, 2007). For instance, they experience problems related to instructional programs, students, personnel, financial resources, community relations and transportation (Hale and Hunter, 2003). In America, one of the core challenges principals face is improvement of students' academic achievement (Goldring et al., 2006).

In 2001, the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education and the Commonwealth Secretariat of Education Program jointly organized a workshop on Teacher Management in Kadoma, Zimbabwe. Neither of these focused on challenges faced by new heads nor skills they require for becoming effective and efficient managers (Kitavi and Westhuizer, 2007). According to Makura (2010), the greatest source of problems confronting female primary school heads in Zimbabwe were the subordinate staff. Zimbabwean culture is highly patriarchal. As

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such, women were not readily being accepted as leaders, a confirmation of studies by Dorsey (1989) and Marshal (1985).

Irungu (2002) established that principals work with incompetent bursars/clerks who have low professional qualifications. This he pointed out was affecting their work delivery. Bush and Oduro (2006) also established that principals face serious problems created by non-payment of school fees as they could not provide the working tools which was much needed by the staff. While Leu and Byren (2005), who did a study in six sub-Saharan countries namely, Ghana, Guinea, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda and Madagascar found out that parents are reluctant to pay fees and again it is the principals who must ensure that the fees is paid. Principals were quoted saying that *“Incompetent clerks and bursars with low professional qualifications contributed to poor budgeting which impacted negatively on school management”*. According to this finding, absenteeism amongst support staff was caused by the poor morale to do their work which eventually makes them leave the job for greener pastures.

In Kenya, principals face challenges characterized by issues such as; inadequate teaching and learning resources, support staff absenteeism, non-committed staff, financial constraints and support staff shortage (Ministry of Education, 2009). This finding was also supported by a study conducted by Bush and Oduro, (2006) who also established that some of the challenges that faced principals are as a result of working in poorly equipped buildings with inadequately trained staff, this was is one of the characteristics similar to majority of the schools in Bondo District. Principals in public secondary schools face challenges in the management of students, teachers, support-staff, finances, and those that arise from parental involvement in school activities. While the literature studied underscore the importance of training and motivation, none of them looked at the challenges faced by principals in the management of 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.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study focused on achieving the following objective: To determine the challenges faced by principals in the management of support staff in public secondary schools.

III. 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 & Kombo, 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 determine the challenges faced by principals in the management of support staff in public secondary schools in Nyamira County, Kenya.

The locale of this study was in Nyamira County. The Latitude and Longitude of Nyamira County is 0°56' S 34°93' 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.

A sample is a small portion of a study population. Sampling means selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population as representative of that population. Any statements made about the sample should also be true of the population (Orodho, 2004). Nwana (1982), commenting on sample size observed that there are certain non-definite practices among social workers that the beginner can adopt. One such practice suggest that if the population is a few hundreds, a 40 percent or more sample will do, if many hundreds a 20 percent will do, if a few thousands a 10 percent sample will do and if several thousands a 5 percent or less will do.

Kerlinger (1973) indicated that a sample size of 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 3.1 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.

Table 3.1: Sampling Frame

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

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study collected and analyzed data on the challenges faced by principals in the management of support staff in public secondary schools. The findings are as summarized in responses were as Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Challenges Faced by Principals in the Management of Support Staff in Public Secondary Schools as Reported by Principals (n=16) and Support Staff (n=96)

Challenges faced by principals	Principals		Support Staff	
	f	%	f	%
Late coming at work place	14	88	96	100
Laziness	14	88	96	100
Lack of team work	13	81	96	100
Absenteeism	12	75	92	96
Insubordination	9	56	90	94
Lack of proper skills and knowledge	8	50	89	93
Mismanagement of school facilities under their care	8	50	87	91
Laxity at work place	7	44	87	91
Incitement on other staff	5	31	76	79

From Table 4.1, the study established that principals are faced with the major challenge of late coming at work place as it was reported by 88% of principals and all support staff. Laziness was also established as a major challenge as was reported by most (88%) principals and all support staff. Lack of team work was equally reported by most (81%) principals and all support staff. Absenteeism was also reported as a major challenge by most (75%) principals and most (96%) support staff. Some (56%) principals and most (94%) support staff also reported insubordination as one of the major challenge to their duties.

From Table 4.1 the study further established that according to principals' lack of proper skills and knowledge was a minor challenge to the work performance of the support staff as only (50%) noted the challenge while to support staff it was a major challenge as (94%) identified that it was a problem. Mismanagement of school facilities under their care was also seen by principals as a major challenge to the support staff work performance since only (50%) principals identified the problem, on the other hand it was a major problem according to most (91%) support staff.

The study also established among the principals that laxity at work place was another problem as noted by some (44%) principals, it was a major challenge as only (91%) support staff considered it as a challenge. During interviews the study established that support staff were faced with very many challenges that needed to be addressed in order to enable them perform their role in the schools perfectly. Inadequate working tools were reported by most (67%) principals who maintained that this was due to poor storage. The principals however

maintained that their schools do buy enough working tools which were being stolen by the support staff who were supposed to be using them. Some (67%) further blamed the support staff for being careless in handling the tools and machines given to them after such machines were broken down then they blamed the administration for not buying them working tools. The principals sited cases of the secretaries whom they blamed for not handling computers well making them to breakdown every now and again.

On their part, the support staff during interviews all support staff maintained that they were forced to work with outdated tools like type writers and duplicating machines instead of computers and printers. The grounds men were made to use slashers instead of lawnmowers. This they noted was making their work difficult as they were forced to take longer time doing what they would have completed in shorter period. Some (78%) support staff also blamed the principals for not being ready to repair their machines in time and instead forcing them to use the broken down machines claiming that the schools were not having money and that the machines could still serve despite the broken parts.

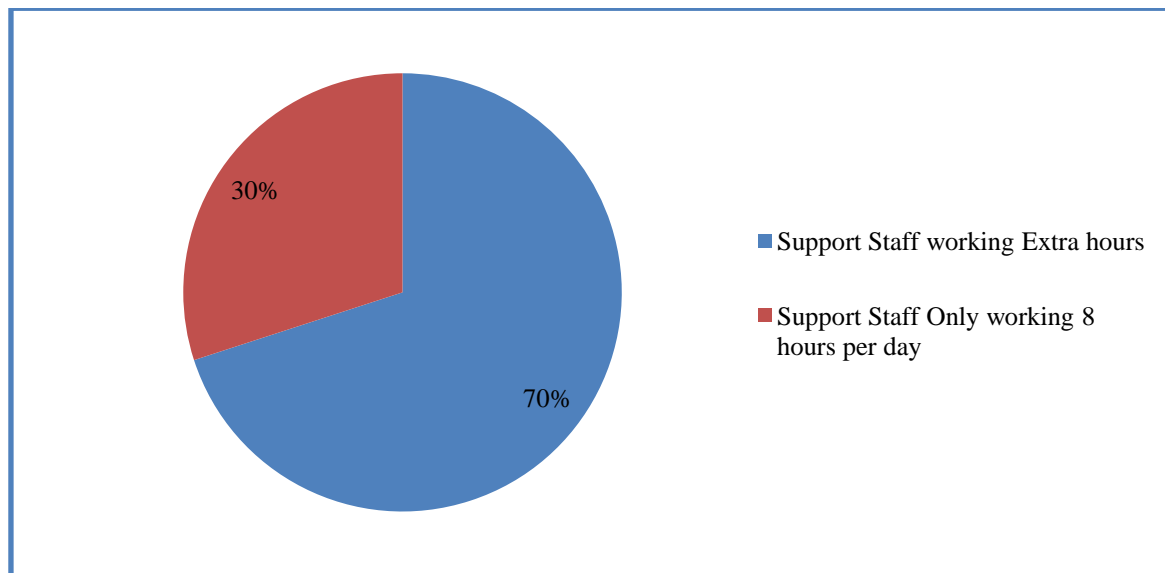


Figure 4.1: Principal's Response on the Extra Working Hours by Support Staff (n =16)

The study also established during interviews that the support staffs were working past official hours. Most (70%) principals attributed this to lack of enough personnel as schools had no money to employ more people. The principals further maintained that the extra hours were not paid for or compensated because the school was not a profit making organization and that anybody working in a school was supposed to volunteer as they were helping the young people to come up. The principals further blamed the support staff for being laxity most of the office hours which caused them to work past official hours.

All support staff attributed working longer hours to lack of organization by the school administration. They further noted that despite working for longer hours they were being summoned by the administration whenever they were late not considering the extra hours they were serving the school. Some (78%) support staff noted that their schools had clock in-clock out record book which was only taken serious on the part of clock in but their principals were quiet over the hours of clock out as long as it was past the working hours. This situation they noted was demoralizing to the support staff as they felt being over exploited without appreciation. The other challenge established by the study was low salaries given to support staff. This was noted to be lowering the morale of support staff by some (56%) principals. The principals however attributed this to the less amount located by the government towards personal emolument vote head. Some (74%) principals also noted that most support staffs who were complaining were either semi-skilled or untrained and were falling in the lowest cadre of the government scale job group. These principals therefore confirmed that the support staff deserved the salary scale they were earning and had no grounds for complaining.

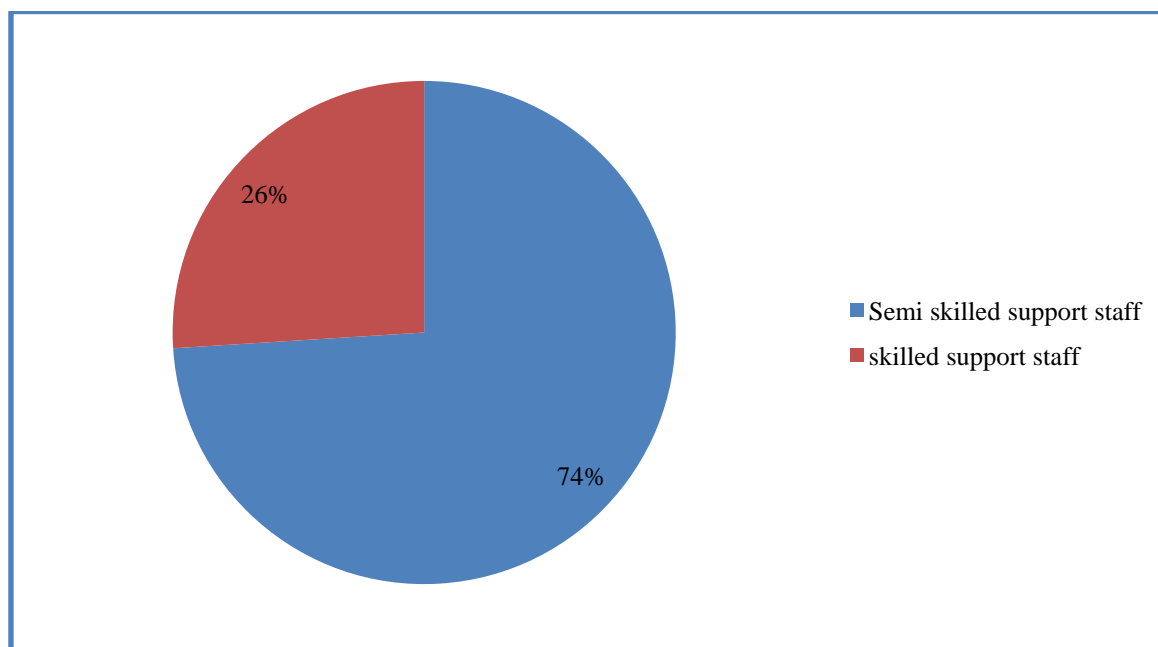


Figure 4.2: Principal's Response on the Low Pay to Support Staff (n=16)

All support staffs during interviews were not satisfied with the salaries they were earning. They argued that their counterparts in the parastatals and private sectors were earning higher than them yet they are expected to do similar jobs like them. Some (67%) support staff felt that they were trained and were entitled to earn higher than they were earning, this they noted was lowering their morale for hard work. They also noted that their salaries were always deducted when clock in records were checked for the number of days they failed to report on duties despite the genuine reasons they had for their absence. These findings of the study are also similar to that of Mureithi (2011) who reported that the non-teaching staff had been ignored and were grossly under paid.

Support staffs were also faced with the challenge of doing undesigned duties which were never paid. They also maintained that despite the extra duties, they were always quarreled by the administration whenever they delayed on doing their routine duties. Some of them were not happy at work place as they were being tossed left and right by their bosses starting from the principals, deputy principals and other teachers. This was making support staff feel frustrated as they were to obey all of them and each was giving them extra duties and orders.

Too much workload was established by the study to be another challenge facing support staff. Most (80%) principals, attributed this to challenge to the few number of support staff stipulated by ministry to be employed per the number of students a school has. As much as the principals acknowledged that it was leading to poor work performance, they maintained that they had no otherwise but had to go by the government policy. Some principals also attributed too much work load to work back log carried forward by the support staff due to laxity from doing the right thing at the right time and at the right manner.

On their part, support staff noted that they were not motivated to work because the principals were not supporting them when in problems but were quick to assist the teachers whenever they had similar problems. Further interviews with the BOM Chairperson revealed that support staff had too much work which they attributed to fewer workers as stipulated on the Interim Guideline for Free Secondary Education which restricted the number of support staff a school should employ depending on the streams of that school. The BOM Chairperson noted that the support staffs were overworked and acknowledged that it was demotivating to the support staff, as one BOM Chairperson stated;

I know they are suffering with too much work but there is nothing we can do because this is a government directive and we do not have extra money to employ more people with.

During interviews, the study also established that there was poor interpersonal relations among support staff. According to the deputy principals, this was due to poor leadership style which has failed to unite the workers together. The support staff also supported this sentiment when they maintain that principals were using poor leadership styles which were favouring only a section of the workers.

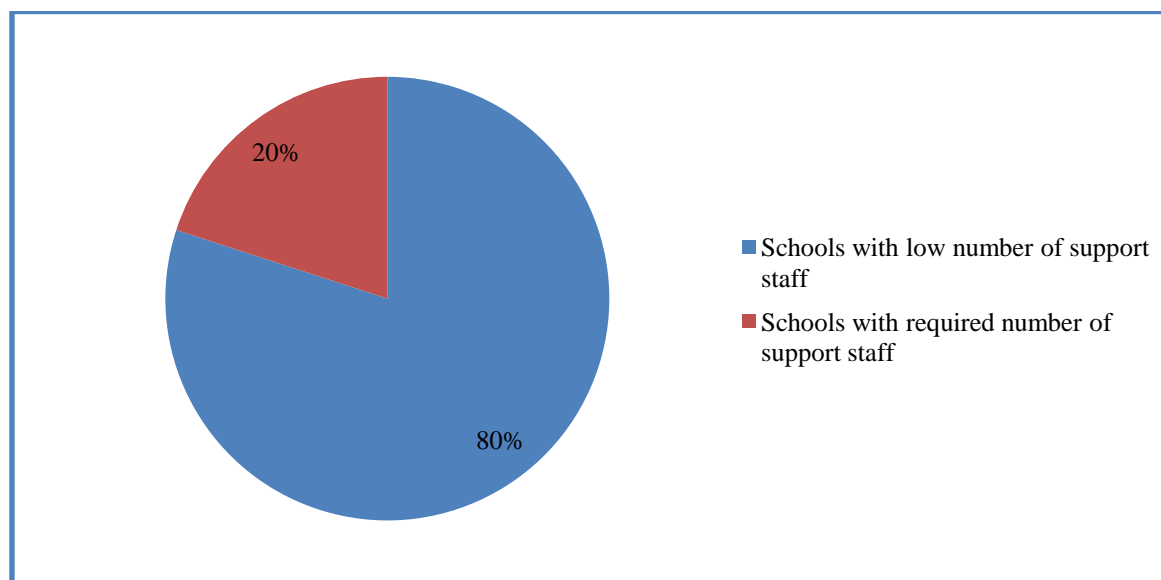


Figure 4.3: Principal's Response on the Low Number of Financial Support Staff (n =16)

Support staff members felt that their services were not recognized as they had too much work to do and they kept on piling as the year progresses. This they say was making them to lose interest in their job as nobody was appreciating the work they were doing but only blaming them for the undone work. Another (56%) support staff blamed the school administration for piling work in their offices and when they were released, they were given deadline to complete them. The support staff further blamed the school administration for not allocating them duties in good time, such they say was making most of them sick, confused on where to start and when they delay, they were receiving memos of disciplinary action. Such kind of situation was interfering with the work performance of the support staff.

Interference from local community was also established as another challenge to the work performance of the support staff. Some (74%) principals noted the interference to the fact that support staff were from within their locality as such they had personal problems with support staff. They were however quick to admit that some support staff from other communities were being affected due to nepotism that the communities were practicing. Some support staff they maintained were generally scared without any cause or interference and were raising alarm for no reasons.

Some (67%) support staff noted that their efforts to serve the schools were being jeopardized by the interference from the local communities. They cited the cases of school watchmen who were being harassed by the local community at night while on duty. They equally cited the cases of bursars who were being harassed for being too strict on fee payment issues. Such kind of interference was noted by support staff to be affecting their work performance and lower their morale to perform their duties diligently.

This study finding can be supported by the Republic of Kenya (2006) report contended that members of support staff in public universities have over the years served under difficult circumstances such as political interferences, poor remuneration and challenging working conditions. The report adds that the rapid increase in student numbers has not been commensurate with staff numbers, making the support staff take additional loads every successive year.

Most support staffs were not housed by the schools where they were working and this made them to be demoralized as was pointed by most (85%) principals. They further maintained that support staffs were the first people in the school compound as some arrive as early as 4.am and leave as late as 10pm. These support staff were finding it difficult to perform their duties well for being away from their houses and being tired after travelling to workplace the principals maintained. The principals attributed lack of housing in schools to poor priority of the Board of Management in schools.

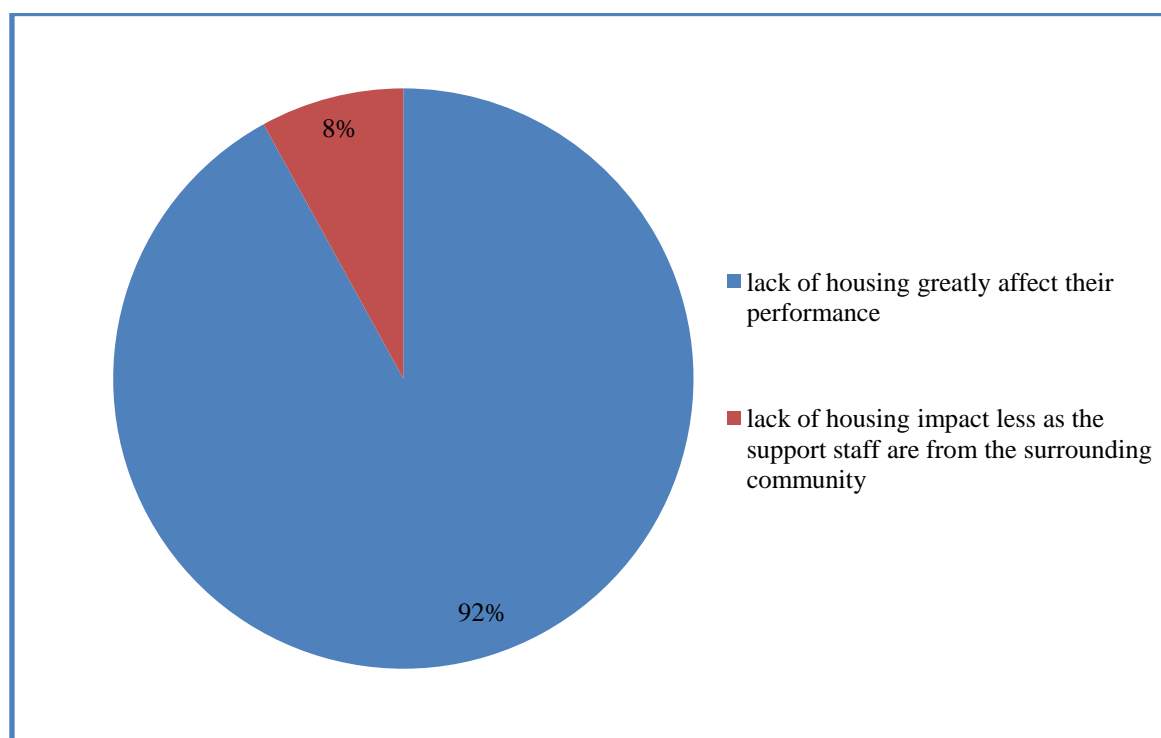


Figure 4.4: Support Staffs' Response on the Effects of the Housing Facilities (n=96)

Most (92%) support staff noted that lack of housing was affecting their work performance as they were expected to be in schools before the students and the teachers. They further noted that their security was not ensured as such they were not relaxed even when at work especially during odd hours. Some (45%) support staffs were not happy that they were not given risk allowances as much as they were risking their life to their work place. Most (92%) support staffs were not happy with their institutions because they were not housed while teachers were being housed yet teachers relied on them.

Delayed salary was also a challenge noted by some (56%) principals. The principals noted that when the government allocation to schools was delayed, the salaries of support staff were also subsequently delayed and this was making the staff to slow their working pace. The support staff also does see the school administration as not willing to pay their salaries. This often led to conflict between the staff and administration which in turn was affecting work performance of the support staff.

According to most (87%) support staff, salary delay was making them to look for alternatives to survival for their families which in turn means slowing the pace of their work performance. Delayance in salary was also seen by support staff as lack of recognition of their contributions to the schools as the principals could borrow money from other vote heads to pay their salaries. They also maintained that most of the support staff were not being paid during the third term of the year and were only being given lump sum at the beginning of first term. During which period they were expected to survive without pay and this affecting their work performance. This study finding concurs with that of the report by Republic of Kenya (2011) revealed that salaries have remained low for a long time and at times salaries delay by one or two months. This has impacted negatively on the performance of the support staff in the civil service.

Nonpayment of yearly increment was another challenge that was affecting the work performance of the support staff. Most (77%) support staff pointed out during interviews that their salaries had not been increased for the past two years as their principals were pointing out that the money being sent by the government was only taking into account the number of support staff who were supposed to be in school but not increase in their salaries. The study also established that most (75%) support staffs were stagnant on the same salary scale and this was lowering their work performance.

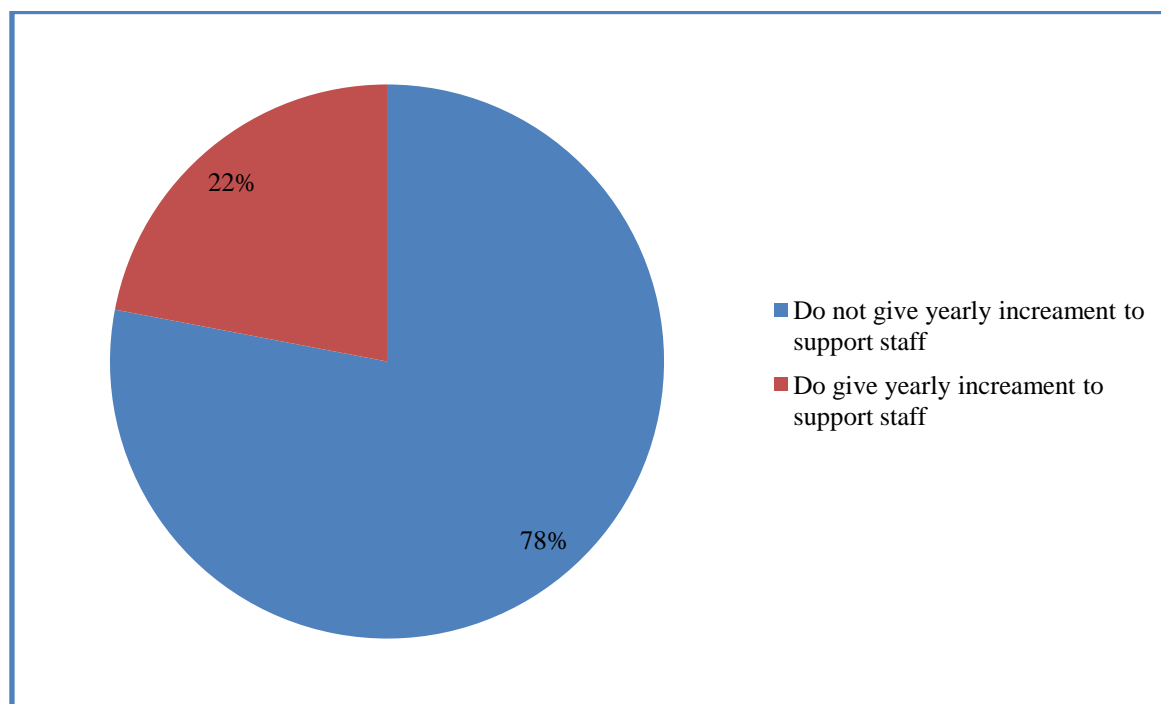


Figure 4.5: Principal's Response on the Support Staff Yearly Increment (n =16)

According to most (78%) principals, on payment of yearly increment was not their own making as the government money being sent to schools were having its allocation and does not give room for virement from other vote heads. The principals however acknowledged that work performance of the workers was being affected when their salary was not increased. Some (66%) principals noted that support staff were always on go slow whenever their salaries were not increased.

The study established that nonpayment of extra work done was affecting support staffs' work performance. This was noted by all support staff during interviews. They pointed out that teachers were always paid for extra lessons or during remedial but to them the schools had no provisions for such pay. This they maintained was making most support staff to resist doing extra work or were doing them carelessly.

Support staffs also were feeling that schools do not value their roles in the operations of the schools as such they were in most cases reluctant to take up some of their responsibilities. This kind of treatment was bringing ill feelings among the support staff as they were also using skills and energy like teachers to enable the schools run. According to some (32%) principals, support staff were not being paid for extra work because they were always relieved during the holidays when schools closes yet they are paid for the duration. The principals however maintained that the support staffs were always given some token though they want equivalent of what teachers were getting.

The study established that support staffs were not being given imprest even when in financial need. According to all principals, it was a directive from the ministry of education that schools were not to give imprest not only to support staff but also to teachers. The principals however maintained that they were occasionally on trust do give some amount to the workers whenever they had financial problems. The principals also pointed out that they were not giving such monies to those who had failed to refund them as was agreed earlier.

On their part most (81%) support staff noted that they were not able to carry on with their duties whenever they had problems and their schools were not ready to give them financial support. They also pointed out that they had no other place which could trust them more than their employers yet when turned down, they had to stop working as they think of alternatives.

The study findings in this section were similar to those of Briar (2010) that support staff face a number of challenges such as low pay, are demoralized by the public and politicians who assume that their skills and values are of little meaning, lack of training opportunities, receive less sick leave than teachers although they are exposed to similar health risks at work, not sure of pay progression, lack of job security and description and not being paid during school holidays. The study finding in this section also concurred with the results of the study by Research Division in

New Zealand (2011) that support staff face challenges such as work load issues- including too many competing demands which interfered with their ability to effectively complete tasks, lack of time to tackle the

amount of work and /or insufficient back up. Their ideas not being sought or listened to, insufficient training /professional development, irregular/inadequate support, lack of induction and being left outside the communication networks in the school.

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the research findings, conclusions and recommendations. The study was necessitated by the need to determine the challenges faced by principals in the management 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 principals in Nyamira County face the following challenges:

Late coming at work place by support staff was a major challenge since they were coming from the village.

There was also laziness on the part of the workers and most of the staff members were not working whenever their principals were away from school.

Lack of team work was reported among the workers. This was attributed to poor leadership style that does not unite the workers.

The study also established the absenteeism among the staff was rampant which was a pointer of a staff that is not motivated

Insubordination from the staff to the principals was also noted. This was attributed to leadership style that was autocratic.

Conclusions were as follows:

The main challenges faced by support staffs were low salaries, inadequate working tools, being over-worked, late payment of salaries, lack of housing and walking long distance to school. The principals should look for ways of minimizing the challenges so as to motivate the workers.

Based on the findings and the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made:

Ministry of Education should design relevant in-service courses for support staffs and principals to minimize challenges faced. Such training should emphasize on human resource management and interpersonal relations at work place. The training should also emphasize on the accountability of the workers on their responsibilities.

Recommendations were as follows:

The study did not exhaust all the challenges faced by principals in the management of support staff in public secondary schools. Other issues emanated from the study that require further investigation are as follows:

A study should be carried out in Nyamira County to investigate the challenges that principals face in the management of support staff. The study is necessary because challenges such as inadequate teachers, insufficient funds, delay in release of funds by M.O.E and shortage in physical facilities and learning materials may have compromised quality of secondary education.

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TABLES

Table 3.1 Sampling Frame

Table 4.1 Showing Challenges Faced by Principals in the Management of Support Staff

FIGURES

Figure 4.1: Principal's Response on the Extra Working Hours by Support Staff

Figure 4.2: Principal's Response on the Low Pay to Support Staff

Figure 4.3: Showing Principal's Response on the Low Number of Financial Support Staff

Figure 4.4: Support Staffs' Response on the Effects of the Housing Facilities

Figure 4.5: Principal's Response on the Support Staff Yearly Increment