

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

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine the effect of employee authentic 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 authentic leadership had a positive significant effect on employee engagement and its dimensions. Based on the findings of this study, it was established that using authentic leadership style could enhance employee engagement. 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.

Key Words: Authentic, 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 [28]. Employee engagement is a strategic approach for driving improvement and encouraging organizational change [23]. '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 [9].

According to [10], 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 [13]. [25] 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 [9]. [8] 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 [8]. According to [24], 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 [9]. This is in agreement with [6], 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 [9]. Companies that focus on building engaging leaders will see an exponential impact on employee engagement [15].

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 [22]. 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 [29] 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 [29]. 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 authentic leadership style on teacher engagement in public secondary schools of Murang'a County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Authentic leadership is inspiring, motivational, compassionate, service-oriented and visionary [12]. It combines ethical and transformational leadership qualities. Authentic leadership is a pattern of leader behavior that is characterised by self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency [26]. Self-awareness refers to the ability to show an understanding of how one derives and makes meaning of the world and how this influences the way one views himself or herself over time. It also shows that a leader understands his/her strengths and weaknesses and the multifaceted nature of the self through exposure to others, and being cognizant of one's impact on other people [17].

Relational transparency refers to presenting one's authentic self (not a fake or distorted self) to others. Such behavior promotes trust explained by openly sharing information and expressions of one's true thoughts and feelings while at the same time trying to control display of inappropriate emotions [17]. Balanced processing implies that a leader will objectively analyze all relevant data before making a decision. Balanced processing of information, transparency in relationships, and consistency between values, words, and deeds exhibited by authentic leaders instill elevated levels of commitment, willingness to perform extra-role behaviors like citizenship, and satisfaction with the supervisor among followers (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008) and can thus increase employee engagement levels [14]. Internalized moral perspective refers to internalized self-regulation which is guided by internal moral standards and values versus group, organizational, and societal pressures. Internalized moral perspective results in expressed decision making and behavior that is consistent with these internalized values [3,14]. Research on the relation between authentic leadership and follower work attitudes and behaviors is still scarce due to the novelty of the construct. From this literature, the following conceptual frame is developed.

Conceptual framework

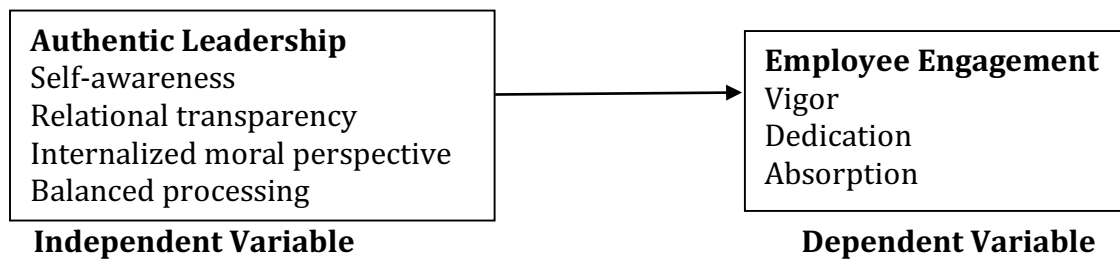


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

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 [18]. Out the 306 schools in the county, 92 schools were selected, representing the 30% recommended by [20]. Random numbers were then used to sample 368 respondents. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between employees' perceptions of their leaders' authentic leadership 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

Authentic leadership was measured using the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ), which is a 16-item theory-driven survey instrument [26] on a likert 5 point scale. The computed Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the variable was 0.918, which means it is an acceptable level of internal reliability because it is greater than 0.80 [7]. 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, I feel 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, Std. Dev.=Standard Deviation.

Descriptive Statistics on Authentic Leadership

The results in Table 2 show that all the studied items had a mean of above 3.0 except 'He/she admits his/her mistakes to others', which had a mean of 2.84. This meant that the responses were positive and the respondents agreed with the items. This implies that school the schools principals were practicing authentic leadership.

Table 2: Opinions of Respondents on Authentic Leadership

Leadership Item	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	MN	SD
Is aware of his/her greatest weaknesses	24(8.1)	40(13.5)	125(42.2)	75(25.3)	32(10.8)	3.1	1.05
Is aware of his/her greatest strengths	7(2.4)	25(8.4)	93(31.4)	119(40.2)	52(17.6)	3.62	0.942
Seeks feedback as a way of understanding who he/she really is as a person.	34(11.5)	65(22.0)	85(28.7)	86(29.1)	26(8.8)	3.02	1.151
Accepts the feelings he/she has about him/her self	14(4.7)	46(15.5)	107(36.1)	102(34.5)	27(9.1)	3.28	0.990
His/her actions reflect his/her core values	8(2.7)	37(12.5)	63(21.3)	146(49.3)	42(14.2)	3.60	0.969
He/she does not allow group pressure to control him/her.	8(7.7)	25(8.4)	68(23.0)	136(45.9)	59(19.9)	3.72	0.967
Other people know where he/she stands on controversial issues.	15(5.1)	33(11.1)	97(32.8)	118(39.9)	33(11.1)	3.41	0.998
His/her morals guides what he/she does as a leader	9(3.0)	23(7.8)	62(20.9)	129(43.6)	73(24.7)	3.79	1.00
He/she seeks others' opinions before making up his/her own mind.	35(11.8)	41(13.9)	66(22.3)	109(36.8)	45(15.2)	3.30	1.227
He/she listens closely to the ideas of those who disagree with him/her.	40(13.5)	56(18.9)	66(22.3)	101(34.1)	33(11.1)	3.10	1.229
Does not emphasize his/her own point of view at the expense of others.	36(12.2)	52(17.6)	76(36.1)	107(36.1)	25(8.4)	3.11	1.163
Listens very carefully to the ideas of others before making decisions.	33(11.1)	43(14.5)	57(19.3)	113(38.2)	50(16.9)	3.35	1.237
Openly shares his/her feelings with others.	22(7.4)	44(14.9)	60(20.3)	135(45.6)	35(11.8)	3.40	1.106
He/she lets others know who he/she truly is as a person.	20(8.8)	53(17.9)	99(33.4)	89(30.1)	35(11.8)	3.22	1.085
He/she says exactly what he or she means	23(7.8)	31(10.5)	71(24.0)	121(40.9)	50(16.9)	3.49	1.126
He/she admits his/her mistakes to others.	54(18.2)	62(20.9)	83(28.0)	72(24.3)	25(8.4)	2.84	1.224

Source: Field Study, 2018, n=296 Cronbach's Alpha=0.918, SD=Strongly Disagree D=Disagree N=Neutral A=Agree SA=Strongly Agree, MN=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation.

Correlation analysis

The results in Table 3 show that there is a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.431$; p -value < 0.001) between authentic leadership and employee engagement. This implies that 18.57 % (0.431^2) of variation in employee engagement in secondary schools in Murang'a country is explained by authentic leadership of their principals. [27] found similar results. It also implies that an increase in the practice of authentic leadership dimensions will lead to an increase in employee engagement.

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

Items	Employee Engagement	Transactional Leadership
Employee Engagement	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.431**
	N	.000
		296
Transactional	Pearson Correlation	.431**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1
	N	.000
		296

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

The results in Table 4 show that there is a statistically significant correlation between vigor and authentic leadership ($r=.440$, $p<0.01$). There is also a statistically significant positive correlation between dedication and authentic leadership ($r=.436$, $p<0.01$). There is a statistically significant and relationship between absorption and authentic leadership ($r=.209$, $p<0.01$). Similar results were obtained by [27] except that their study showed that there was no significant relationship between absorption and authentic leadership.

Table 4: Correlation between the Dimensions of Employee Engagement and Authentic Leadership

	Authentic Leadership
Vigor	0.440**
Dedication	0.436**
Absorption	0.209**

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

Regression Analysis

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

Regression analysis was conducted to empirically determine whether authentic leadership was a significant determinant of teacher engagement in public secondary schools of Murang'a County in Kenya. An R squared of 0.431 shows that 18.57% 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 Authentic Leadership on Employee Engagement

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	20.510	1	20.510	67.059	.000
Residual	89.920	294	.306		
Total	110.431	295			
R=0.431	R ² =0.186	R ² = 0.183			



The model was found to be valid ($F (1,274) =67.059$, $p\text{-value}<0.001$) as shown in Table .This large F statistic shows that the regression model is robust. These results have the implication that the relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement is significant and not by chance. In determining the significance of the variables, standardized beta coefficients are used. The fitted model equation is $Y= 0.359X_1$.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients of Authentic Leadership on Employment Engagement

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	2.488	.150		16.624	.000
Authentic leadership	.359	.044	.431**	8.189	.000

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

The fitted model equation shows that employee engagement will increase by 0.359 units with one unit increase in standardized authentic leadership style. The model indicates that authentic leadership is significantly explaining the variation in the dependent variable. Therefore, hypothesis H₀₁: there is no significant effect of authentic leadership style on employment engagement is rejected and the conclusion is that authentic leadership style has a significant effect on employment engagement. The high residual sum of squares (89.920) 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 authentic leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement. Authentic leadership explains 18.57% variation in employee engagement. The results also show that the standardized employment engagement will increase by 0.359 units with one unit increase in standardized authentic leadership style. Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that authentic leadership is a significant determinant of employee engagement in public secondary schools. 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that 18.57% of teacher engagement was explained by authentic leadership in this study. 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 authentic leadership skills including other teachers that aspire to take leadership positions. To ensure continued practice of the transformational leadership in schools, it is 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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