SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THEIR MORALE AND COMMITMENT TO WORK: A CASE OF NAKURU DISTRICT

Anne W. Kabutu Kariuki, M. Ndirangu, Antony K. Sang, and Evelyn Mongina Okao

Departments of Curriculum, Instructions and Educational Management,
Faculty of Education and Community Studies,
Egerton University, Kenya

ABSTRACT: This study investigated teachers' perceptions of the factors that influenced their morale and commitment to work in public secondary schools. The target population consisted of teachers in public secondary schools in Nakuru District. A sample of 172 teachers was randomly selected for the study. The research design adopted in this study was descriptive survey. Teachers' questionnaires and head teachers' interview schedules were used to collect information on the respondents' perceptions on factors that influenced their morale. The instruments were based on a 5 point Likert scale. The reliability coefficient was computed using Cronbach alpha and stood at 0.86. This was deemed adequate for the study. Pearson Moments Correlation was used to establish whether there was a statistically significant relationship between teachers' characteristics and morale and commitment to work. The study established that teachers perceived remuneration, opportunity for further training, responsibility, social status, a sense of belonging and job security as impacting on the level of morale and commitment to their duties. The study found out no statistically significant relationship between teachers' gender, age, and experience and commitment to work. However, there was statistically significant relationship between the professional qualifications and commitment to work. The study also established no statistically significant relationship between teachers' characteristics and perception of the factors that influenced their morale and commitment to work. In all cases alpha coefficient was equal to 0.05.

KEYWORDS: Teachers Motivation, Job Satisfaction and Job Performance.

1   INTRODUCTION

Many teachers face the constant frustration of knowing that they are giving their professional best efforts yet they do not receive adequate compensation, a fact Mwai (2000) noted was particularly demoralizing to graduate teachers. This cadre of teachers feel that their pay is too low compared to their counterparts in other professions, thus, resulting to the teaching profession suffering great attrition. In demanding for an increase in their pay and improvement of terms of service, teachers were accused of using pupils as pawns and bait in their bid to force the government to implement the 150-200% salary increments awarded in 1997. This was viewed as having eroded public sympathy and respect not only for the teacher but also for the teaching profession. In this case the role of the teacher seemed to have been misunderstood and undervalued both by the public and the government. The government's declaration of free primary and secondary education is a further manifestation of the centrality of formal schooling in Kenya's quest for its human and economic development. This declaration has opened the floodgates to over-enrollment leading to very large class sizes. This has further led to the increase of the teachers' responsibilities and expectations. In addition to all these, teachers are being expected to deal with broader social problems that find their way into the classroom, such as family problems, drug abuse, truancy, teenage pregnancies and absenteeism (Linda, 1998). Despite this, the society is not ready now as it was not even earlier to pay or recompense the teacher proportionately to his/her usefulness as evidenced by the government's reluctance to honour its pledge for higher salaries and continued struggle by teachers (East African Standard Team, 1998; Castle, 1970).

Teachers are the most important resource in the school and quality of the school depends on the teacher professionalism and commitment. The government of Kenya concurs with this observation and contends that the professional growth of teachers must be ensured to enhance quality at all levels of educational programs. However, many times teachers are often treated like subordinates not as professionals who offer essential service to the society (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). They continue to argue that teaching being such a difficult and demanding job and with the current increased responsibilities vested on teachers, it is very easy for teachers to be discouraged and demoralised. Sergiovanni as cited in Yong (1999) argued that teacher motivation and work commitment are the most important factors that affect school effectiveness therefore there is need to enhance them. Motivated teachers are more likely to motivate students to be participative in the classroom and consequently perform better.

Motivated teachers are more likely to meet the institutional goals and objectives since they are willing to exert their effort to achieve them. In order to boost academic excellence in our secondary schools, factors that enhance teachers motivation hence commitment to work must be identified. Studies have been carried out in Kenya on teachers' perceptions on the relationship between their feeling of professional competence and degree of morale. However, no systematic study has been carried out to determine the range of factors perceived by teachers as important in influencing their morale and commitment to work. An investigation which reveals the factors that affect teacher motivation and ways in which it can be enhanced would be beneficial to the Kenyan Government and educational system as a whole. This study therefore was aimed at identifying such factors that would improve teachers working conditions in order to enhance their morale and work commitment.

2   LITERATURE

2.1   THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The educational system is one of the most important social institutions in any given society. According to Australian Association for Education (AARE, 2004) the effectiveness and efficiency of an educational organization is measured in terms of how well social expectations and needs are met. Teachers have to commit themselves to their schools, students, teaching activities, occupation, colleagues and the community.

It is known that human resource is the most important input of any organization. For any country to achieve the desired economic growth targets and social development, it must place attention on the development of human resource through education and training. Kenya's human resource is central to the country's attaining its goal of industrial development and technical advancement. The maximum productivity of an organization may not be realized unless the human resources responsible for effective and efficient performance are taken into consideration (Davies & Newstrom, 1989; James, 1996; Okumbe, 1999).

The main objective of the teacher as a 'process' is to inculcate values, skills and knowledge to the students as the 'input' (Oluoch, 1982). It is to ensure that learners fit in to 'social' world and acquire adequate knowledge and skills to enable them earn a living (RoK, 2004). Teachers are responsible for arranging the learning experiences whereby the learners can interact effectively with the external conditions in the environment (Tyler, as cited by Shiundu & Omulando, 1992). Teachers are also responsible in preparing the learners to fit in to the society and contribute towards the well being of society and to fit into the world of work. However, the existence of the proper working conditions that can motivate teachers to perform the task of arranging the learning experiences in an institution is the main challenge (AARE, 2004; RoK 2004). Teachers' interests and attitudes towards the students in working environment are determined by the individual teacher's level of work commitment. Organizational commitment consists of the factors such as the workers' belief and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, the employee willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to keep up membership in the organization (Davies & Newstrom, 1989). The extrinsic rewards that the organization supplies and the internal rewards that are supplied by the worker are the most important conditions that encourage workers' professional performance. Consequently, internal rewards are more important in the teaching profession than in any other. The most significant sources of internal reward for teachers are social esteem, job satisfaction, materials and the students' aims and values. Indeed, the question of how to provide teacher motivation and enhance their commitment to the occupation and teaching- learning process is still a problem.

Teachers are primarily motivated by intrinsic rewards such as self-respect, responsibility, advancement, promotion, recognition and a sense of accomplishment (Owens, 1998). He continues to argue that advancement is a force that motivates teachers to lift their performance and utilize their potential fully. Herzberg (1959) argued that advancement and promotion are motivational factors. In his two factor theory these are referred to as motivators, which are associated with

job itself and they tend to lead to job satisfaction. They fulfill individuals' need for psychological growth and even lead to long-term changes (Okumbe, 1999). Teachers are not satisfied with promotion prospects because opportunities for career advancements is only to be a head of department, deputy headmaster or headmaster and such chances are limited considering the number of schools that are in certain country. The hygiene/maintenance/extrinsic factors which include; company policies, administration, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations and working conditions do not lead to job satisfaction but they are prerequisite to motivation. Pager's study (1996) revealed that very few teachers cited salary as an important motivator; however Hoy and Miskel (1996) argue that teachers are motivated by the opportunity to earn more money. Steers and Porter (1991) had earlier reported that money is not an effective motivator. Owen (1995) had also argued that low salary may generate dissatisfaction and teachers may not respond to opportunities for achievement or professional growth. Teachers in England felt that low status, minimal chances for promotion low pay, job security, and low motivational investment resulted in low levels of job satisfaction and low morale. Sergiovanni as cited in Webb and Greev (1987) found out that factors such as advancement and work itself were not significant motivators for teachers; however, Wickstrom (1971) revealed that the top ranking satisfiers for teachers were inter alia; work itself, sense of achievement, good personal relations with subordinates and responsibilities. Pickle (1991) borrowing from Herzberg theory also agreed that teachers are more motivated by factors that include achievement, recognition, work itself responsibility advancement and growth. Nhundu (1994) in his study on perception of the factors that Zimbabwean teachers concerning aspects of their work and employment conditions found out that working condition emerged as the greatest area of dissatisfaction for teachers. Teachers in this study were dissatisfied with low salaries, prospects of promotion, poor accommodation and insufficient resources. However they were satisfied with school holidays, job security, relationship with colleagues and freedom of choosing teaching methods. Abdo (2000) later also reported that poor working conditions pushed teachers from the profession. Kusereka (2003) found out the same, that working conditions impinged on the motivation and satisfaction of teachers. He cited salary, inadequate teaching materials, work load and classroom conditions as some of the factors that demoralized teachers. Theory X and Y posits that one of the most

In the name of professionalism, teachers have been induced to accept poor working conditions and poor salaries writes (Bessant, 1972). Duke (1990) pointed out that one of the criteria of a profession is high earnings. Katz and Khan (1978) had identified salary benefit as one of the drives that motivated workers. Castle, (1970), Ezewu, (1992) and Shiundu and Omulando, (1992) contend that a profession is not marked by remuneration alone but also by exclusiveness of prestigious salaries. Social esteem is measured in terms not only of membership to a recognized professional body but also in terms of remuneration. Ezewu (1992) argues that a characteristic of a professional is that members of the profession have to be seen by the public as enjoying a prestigious salary comparable to other professions. Teachers therefore should secure the esteem of people whose opinion they respect by being paid at least as much as men and women with similar qualifications who play an important role in the society.

In Kenya joining Kenya Union of Teachers (KNUT) is voluntary and not compulsory, that is, members can enter and exit as they wish. The union is not autonomous this means that it is not self-governing and cannot discipline its errant members. The TSC has the responsibility of employment and disciplining members. KNUT members should be free to exercise their judgment in matters relating to their professional expertise and to accept responsibility for the consequences of their judgment, however this is not so.

Teachers in Kenya schools are not free to exercise their own judgment in matters relating to their professional expertise and the classroom. Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E.) develops the curriculum and even though there are teachers in the various subject panels, the curriculum has to be approved by administrators in Ministry of Education who are not necessarily teachers. The K.I.E. also comes up with prescribed syllabuses, which even have outlined teaching methods and objectives. Teachers seldom have control over even number of children to be admitted, teachers in some instances are even told which subject to teach. This is especially so in primary schools where teachers are trained to teach all primary school subjects irrespective of interest or ability.

Morale and achievement are also related; where morale is high in schools it leads to an increase in students' achievement (Mwangi & Mwai, 2002). Low morale lead to a decrease in teacher's productivity, quality and achievement. High intrinsic motivation, work satisfaction, and high-quality performance depend on three important factors as advanced by Vroom in his Expectancy theory. These include valence, expectancy and instrumentality. This means that people expect that their effort will lead to an outcome such as a reward, that their efforts will be lead to a particular performance and that they will be successful thus obtain the desired reward. The worker is responsible for outcomes and knowledge of results, thus enhancing and maximizing motivation is critical in facilitating workers morale (Githua, 2002).
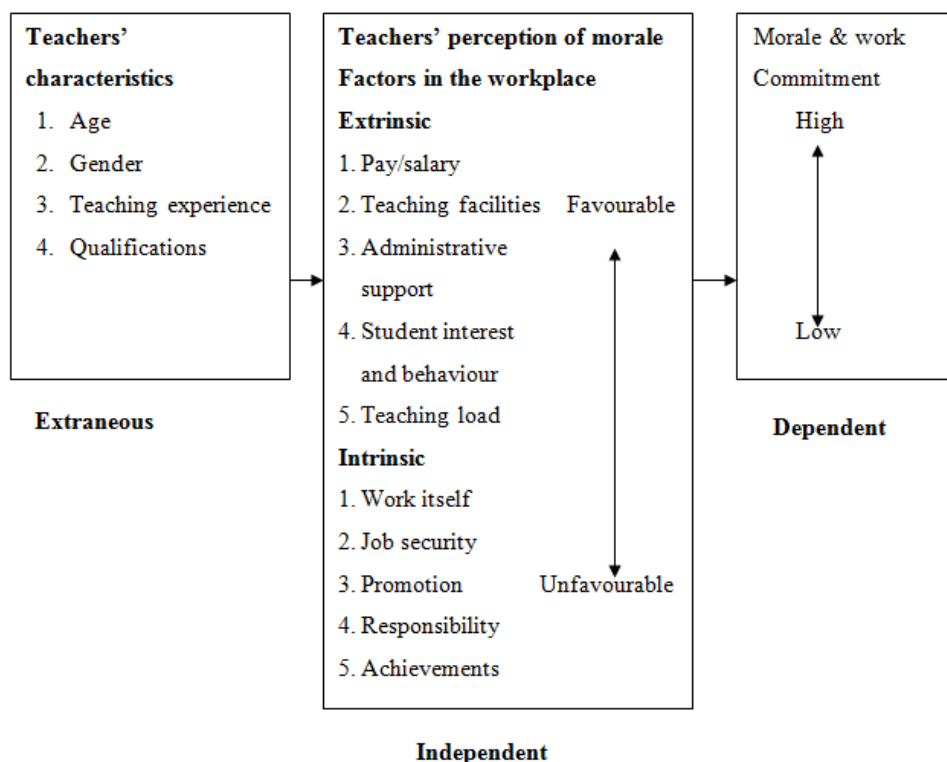
2.2   CONCEPTUALIZATION

Figure 1: The Relationship between Independent and Dependent Variables

This study was based on the motivational theories such as Hertzberg's two-factor theory; Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid and Vroom's expectancy theory. Herzberg's theory advance that workers are motivated by intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The intrinsic factors include: achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility and advancement that are also referred to as motivators. Maslow calls these higher level needs and their presence increase motivation thus leading to job satisfaction. The extrinsic factors include: organisational policies, supervision, salary, working conditions and interpersonal relations. These are referred to as hygiene factors and their presence prevents dissatisfaction (James, 1996). Vroom on the other hand contends that individual's perceptions of their potential to meet personal and organizational goals act as a valence to arouse them to action. Drawing from these theories, the figure below shows the interaction between the various variables that are related to morale and job satisfaction. Personal characteristics of the teacher and morale factors are assumed to be the independent variables. The level of morale either high or low and work commitment are the dependent ones. Therefore, teachers' level of morale will depend on the extent to which these factors are satisfied or unsatisfied as Maslow and Herzberg expounds, an individual will aspire to satisfy higher level of needs if the lower ones have been satisfied. If a teacher perceives certain morale factors as important and they are consequently satisfied to a certain degree, his/her commitment to work will increase for performance is considered to be a function of ability and motivation (Accel.- Team, 2004).

3   METHOD

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The target population of this study was all teachers in public secondary schools in Nakuru District. It has 16 educational divisions and according to Nakuru District records (2004), it has a total of 109 public secondary schools and a population of 1711 teachers. Purposive sampling was used to select divisions that were included in the study. Proportionate random sampling was used to select the required sample of schools. This was to ensure that actual proportions of the individual stratum in the population were represented and that every sampling unit of the population had a proportionate size (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1997). In descriptive research, a researcher can use 10% or 20% of the accessible population (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). In this, study three (3) divisions was purposively selected out of sixteen (16). These were Nakuru Municipality, Naivasha and Bahati. These divisions did not only have a high number of

schools but they were also accessible to the researcher. The three (3) divisions had fifty (50) schools. 20% of these schools were proportionately randomly selected giving a sample of eleven (11) schools. A summary of this information is on Table 1. The three (3) divisions had 862 teachers. A sample of 172 teachers was proportionately randomly selected; the summary of this data is on Table 2. The Table of random numbers was used to determine the sample that was included in the study. A good sample must be representative of the universe therefore it should be adequate in size (Mutai 2001; Young, 2001). Head teachers of the sample schools were also included in the sample. The study used structures questionnaire and interview schedule as the main data collection tool. Pearson Moments Correlation was used to establish the relationships between teachers' perceptions of morale factors, their characteristics and work commitment was also determined at alpha is equal to 0.05.

4 RESULTS

4.1 TEACHERS COMMITMENT TO THEIR WORK IN RELATION TO THEIR STUDENTS

Table 1. Level of Teacher commitment to work in Relation to their Students

Descriptors	N	%
I enjoy teaching when the learners are active and participative	119	99
I work hard because I enjoy seeing my students perform well	119	98
I get concerned when my students do not perform as expected	115	99
I am concerned when my students do not ask questions	118	93
I enjoy working with students	118	95
I feel attached to my students	117	94
I encourage my students to do extra work and enjoy marking it	119	88
I encourage my students to share with me their personal problems	119	85
I like taking students out for co-curricular activities even without being asked to do so by the school head	118	46

Majority of the teachers showed a high commitment to their students. Ninety nine (99%) of the respondents agreed that they got concerned when their students did not perform as expected. Wright & Custer, (1998) argue that secondary school teachers' morale depends in part on their students' achievement. A further 93% were concerned when the students did not ask questions nor completed their homework. The study also revealed that teachers were disappointed when their students did not perform well, indicating that teachers encouraged their students to work hard. Steyn (1996) observed that the relationship between teachers and their students was very important. He argued that teachers derived their greatest satisfaction from positive and successful relationships with their students and observing them succeed.

Meighan, (1996) argues that the teacher must encourage pupils, lead them in the right direction and help them recognize that their allegiance to societal goals and values came before personal concerns. In this study 85% of teachers claimed that they encouraged their students to share their personal problems with them. This implied that teachers were not only concerned with the student as a learner but also as a person. This is in agreement with the RoK, (2004) that, the role of the teacher was not only to impart knowledge but also to help students learn how to be agents of life transformation.

4.2 TEACHERS' LEVEL OF COMMITMENT IN RELATION TO THEIR PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES

Table 2. Teachers' Level of Commitment in Relation to their Performance of Duties

Descriptors	N	Rating (%) A	Rating (%) S.A
I do my work to the best of my ability without supervision	119	33	66
I explore new ideas in teaching methods and subject matter in order to teach effectively	117	39	52
I will enroll for further professional training in order to be a better teacher	118	34	46
I rarely get late to my classes	118	45	36
I prepare lesson plans and schemes of work without supervision	115	57	27
I develop and use teaching aids out of my own choice	116	57	21
I carry school work home to complete it	117	47	18
I don't mind working after school hours	118	39	15

Table 2 shows that 54% of the respondents felt that they did not mind working after school hours. This concurs with the observations of 50% of the head teachers. They were able to judge the commitment of teachers as observed from their willingness to work after school hours or weekends without pay. The study also revealed that 65% of teachers did not mind carrying school work home to complete it. This may be a sign of high commitment to their duties. Eighty one percent (81%) of the respondents indicated that they rarely got late to their classes. These observations are in agreement with the head teachers' observations. Ninety (90%) of the head teachers interviewed pointed out that one of the most important indicator of a committed teacher is punctuality to class or duty. This manifested low level of motivation and low morale of teachers.

4.3 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON FACTORS RELATING TO THEIR JOB

Table 3. Teachers' Perceptions on Factors Relating to their Job

Descriptor	N	Ratings (%) Agree/Strongly Agree	Frequency Ratings (%) Disagree/Strongly Disagree
I feel well remunerated for the work I do	119	15	78
I am engaged in other income generating activities to supplement my pay	119	49	42
The teaching profession gives me the social status I desire in the community	115	47	38
I feel secure in my job because my employer has adequate policies and guidelines to protect me as a teacher	117	53	32
I feel appreciated and recognized by my employer	118	43	34
I feel appreciated by my school because my opinions are listened to	118	46	45
I like my job because it provides opportunities for to those who seek further training	119	34	50
I love my job because there are many training opportunities provided to help me perform better	119	24	60
I love my job and would not want to leave it	117	34	48
I am satisfied with the progress I am making in my career	118	46	38
I have invested too much in my job to consider changing to another job	118	39	39
I have a strong sense of belonging that I would not consider leaving the current station	118	50	27
I would like to spend the rest of my career life in the teaching	118	34	40

Salary was perceived as a major influencer with only 15% feeling that they were well remunerated for the work they did. Promotion and administrative support were also considered as most important. This study also found out that 47% of the respondents felt that the teaching profession did not give them the social status they desired in the society. Light (1979) claimed that status go with power, money and prestige. Teachers have neither the money nor the power needed to have a high social status they desired in the society. Linda (1998) observed that shared governance or participatory management enhances professional status. There is need therefore to involve teachers in management issues to enhance their status. This recognition satisfies esteem needs according to Maslow's theory of motivation. Hoy and Miskel (1996) agreed that recognition is a motivator which increased job satisfaction. Teachers need also to be recognized for their accomplishments. School heads, parents and the employer should recognize teachers in form of verbal praises or promotions.

4.4   TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS SELECTED FACTORS RELATING TO THE WORK ENVIRONMENT INFLUENCING THEIR MORALE AND COMMITMENT TO WORK

Table 4. Teachers' Perceptions towards selected Factors relating to the Work Environment Influencing their Morale and Commitment to Work

Item	N	M	SD	Percentages
I enjoy teaching in a school with adequate teaching - learning facilities	118	4.68	0.568	98 %
My work is enjoyable because the Head Master supports me	118	4.64	0.594	96%
I enjoy working in a school with clear roles and a supportive administration	117	4.63	0.535	99%
I feel good when any school head gives me a feedback on my performance	116	4.45	0.623	93%
I love working with a school head that is sensitive to my personal needs	118	4.44	1.812	90%
I have a sense of belonging because of the way staff mates relate with me	118	4.23	0.767	89%
I have a strong emotional attachment to my current station	117	3.68	1.072	69%

Most teachers (99%) perceived the support of administration as well as existence of clear roles in a school as important boosters to their morale and commitment to their duties. Benwell (2004) pointed out that lack of clear roles and responsibilities demotivates teachers, and was likely to result into conflicts. Linda (1998) observed that if school principals created a positive school climate and culture, teachers' morale would be improved. Ninety three percent (93%) of teachers perceived feedback from the head teacher on their performance as an important factor that promoted their morale and commitment to work. Hoy and Miskel (1996) argue that feedback leads to job commitment and satisfaction. Mutshinyani (1997) regards feedback as liable to motivate teachers and encourage them towards achievement of competence. Teachers need adequate, regular and accurate feedback on their performance. Regular feedback is a strong predictor of job satisfaction (Fraser & Sorenson, 1992).

School heads play a vital role in the care for the personal welfare and emotional well-being of teachers. Thus 90% of the teachers indicated that they loved working in a school where the school head was sensitive to their personal needs. This is supported by Abbey and Esposito (1985) who observed that teachers who were supported by their school heads reported less stress and burnout. Most head teachers (78%) in the study observed that they had put into place measures for assisting teachers with personal problems. The assistance was in form of financial and counseling support.   The relationships in the workplace may affect teachers for good or bad. It is an important factor that influences their morale and commitment to work. Eighty nine (89%) of the teachers had claimed that they felt a sense of belonging in their schools because of the way colleagues related with them. Kloep and Tarifa (1994) reported that teachers seemed to be motivated and satisfied by congenial relationships at the workplace. Interpersonal relations with colleagues may contribute to job satisfaction and teachers are most satisfied with their co-workers since they have a need to identify themselves with others and enjoy team - work (Steyn, 1994; Wright & Custer, 1998). However, this factor may have contributed to a majority feeling obliged to stay in one school, with 58% feeling that they had an obligation to remain in their current stations. Another 69% said that they had a strong emotional attachment to their schools. The head teachers were also on the opinion that teachers who were committed had good relationships with other teachers. Ninety eight percent (98%) of the respondents pointed out that they enjoyed working in a school with adequate teaching- learning facilities. The government of Kenya also ensured equitable distribution of learning-teaching materials in schools to support curriculum implementation (GOK, 2004). Therefore teaching-learning facilities, administrative support, clear roles, feedback and sense of belonging are among the most important factors that enhance the working environment thereby improving morale and commitment to duty of teachers in public secondary schools.

4.5   RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' CHARACTERISTICS AND COMMITMENT TO WORK

The study established no statistically significant relationship between teachers' commitment to work and their gender **(p>0.05; r=0.96).** This implied that teachers' commitment to work was the same irrespective of their gender. Secondly, the study established no statistically significant relationship between teachers' commitment to work and their age bracket **(p>0.05; r=0.051).** Third, the study established no statistically significant relationship between teachers' commitment to work and their years of experience **(p>0.05; r=0.070)**. Four, the study established a statistically significant relationship between commitment to work and teachers' academic and professional qualifications a teacher has **(p>0.05; r=-0.080).** Five, the study established no significant relationship between teachers' perception of the factors that influenced their motivation and gender (P>0.05; r=0.067). Six, the study established no statistically significant relationship between teachers' perception of the factors that influenced their morale and age. **(p>0.05; r=0.251).** Seven, the study establsished no statistically significant

relationship between teachers' perception on the factors that influenced their morale and their years of experience (**P>0.05; r=0.167**). Eight, the study established no statistically significant relationship between teachers' perception of factors that influenced their morale and the level of professional qualifications (**p=0.05; r=-0.080**). Nine, the study established no statistically significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of the factors that influenced their morale and their commitment to work since **p>0.05.**

5   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1   CONCLUSION

The study established that the teachers were highly committed to their work; there was less absenteeism, lower burnout, less dysfunctional classroom behaviour and high productivity. Remuneration, availability of training opportunities, responsibility given in school, participation in decision making, social status and job security were perceived as some of the most important factors influencing the morale and commitment of teachers in their work. There was no significant relationship between teachers' commitment to work and their age. It further found out that there was no significant relationship between experience of the teacher and their commitment to work. Neither was there a significant relationship between teachers' gender and commitment to their work. There was no statistically significant relationship between teachers' gender, age, years of experience and academic and professional qualifications and perceptions of the factors that influenced their morale. Lastly, there was no statistically significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of the factors that influenced their morale and their commitment to work.

5.2   RECOMMENDATIONS

1- Since remuneration was perceived as a major motivator it should be improved further. Policy interventions on salary structures should be undertaken to encourage higher levels of motivation and job satisfaction among teachers.

2- There is need to motivate teachers in order to maintain the high level of commitment in their work. School heads should think of ways of motivating teachers for instance, they should give incentives such as certificates of the 'teacher of the week'.

3- Teachers should be involved in formulation of policies that affect them, that is participatory decision making in order to give them a sense of belonging.

4- There is need for Ministry of Education to organize skill up-grading and in-service training programmes regularly to help teachers cope with emerging challenges in schools.

5- Since responsibility was viewed as a motivator, head teachers should ensure that teachers are given more responsibilities not just classroom teaching.

6- TSC has a responsibility of ensuring that teachers have job security through implementation of schemes of service for all cadres of teachers.

7- Schools should have adequate teaching-learning facilities in order for teachers to enjoy their work.

8- School heads should be sensitive to their teachers' personal needs because it motivated them.

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