

Transformational Leadership style and occupational stress among primary School Teachers in Tanzania.

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on assessing how transformational leadership style affects occupational stress among public primary school teachers in Tanzania, Morogoro Municipality being as a case study. A sample size of 618 primary school teachers was used for data collection. A cross-sectional survey was done in 51 schools in Morogoro Municipality from January to March, 2020. The study examined how four elements of transformational leadership style affect occupational stress. The study used multiple linear regression analysis to examine how four components of transformational leadership which includes inspirational motivation, idealized influence, individual consideration and intellectual stimulation relate with occupational stress. The study found that all four components individual influence ($\beta = -.154, p = .001$), inspirational motivation ($\beta = -.122, p = .000$), intellectual stimulation ($\beta = -.112, p = .002$), individual consideration ($\beta = -.179, p = .000$) have significant negative relationship with occupational stress. This implies that the use of transformational leadership can help in reducing amount of stress that primary school teachers' experience.

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KURJ
ISSN 2790-1394

pp. 76 - 85
Vol 1. Issue 3.
July 2022

Keywords: Occupational stress, Leadership style, Job stress - study & teaching (primary) - Tanzania

Introduction

Occupational stress is a mental and physical discomfort that an employee experiences as a result of a mismatch between job requirements on one side and capabilities and resources of a job holder on the side. Different factors such as poor working conditions, skill insufficiency, conflicting roles, workload, and poor time management are among sources of occupational stress among employees. The use of inappropriate leadership style tend to negatively affect job performance, job satisfaction, employee motivation, organisational commitment and other issues that lead to bad experiences at workplaces (Mwita, Mwakasangula, & Tefurukwa, 2018; Belias & Koustelios, 2014).

Teachers have been considered to work in a very stressful profession due to nature of activities and pressures that is associated with their daily activities (Wettstein, Schneider, Holtforth, & Marca, 2021; Herman, Hickmon-Rosa, & Reinke, 2018; Yusoff & Khan, 2013). Teaching workloads, class disruptions, maintaining students discipline and multiple roles that teachers play (as educators and guardians) make teaching profession more stressful (Wettstein, Schneider, Holtforth, & Marca, 2021).

Globally, attention has been given to educators to find out ways of making their working environment pleasant due to an important role they play in our communities (Ekpoh, 2018). In Tanzania, teachers in both primary and secondary schools have been experiencing stressful working environment. Studies show that leadership is considered one of factors that can lead to higher levels of stress or helping in making working places less stressful (Villalba-Moreno et al., 2016).

It has been widely recognised by different researchers that transformational leadership is among the most prominent leadership style in contemporary organisations (Yoho, 2021). However, the reviewed literature shows that there are no empirical evidences that show how leadership styles specifically transformational leadership affect occupational stress among primary school teachers in Tanzania public primary schools although teachers in public primary schools experience high levels of stress (Mwakasangula & Mwita, 2020; Mlaki; 2015). This study aimed at bridging this empirical gap.

Study Objectives

The study's main objective was to explore the relationship between transformational leadership style and occupational stress among primary school teachers in Tanzania. The study had the following specific objectives;

- To determine the effect of idealised influence on occupational stress among primary school teachers in Morogoro Municipality.
- To determine the influence of inspirational motivation on occupational stress among primary school teachers in Morogoro Municipality.
- To determine the influence of intellectual stimulation on occupational stress among primary school teachers in Morogoro Municipality.
- To determine the influence of individualised consideration on occupational stress among primary school teachers in Morogoro Municipality.

Research Hypotheses

The study tested the following null hypotheses:

H₁: There is no significant positive relationship between idealised influence and occupational stress among primary school teachers in Morogoro Municipality.

H₂: There is no significant positive relationship between inspirational motivation and occupational stress among primary school teachers in Morogoro Municipality.

H₃: There is no significant positive relationship between intellectual stimulation and occupational stress among primary school teachers in Morogoro Municipality.

H₄: There is no significant positive relationship between individualised consideration and occupational stress among primary school teachers in Morogoro Municipality.

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

This study was underpinned by transformational leadership theory. The origin of transformational leadership theory is associated with studies on charismatic leadership conducted by Weber (1947).

Weber argues that charismatic leaders gain authority from exceptional qualities that few leaders have. Transformational leadership as a concept was firstly noted in the work of Burns (1978) and later various transformational theory versions were developed by different theorists including Bass (1985).

Transformational leadership has to do with inspiration that a leader directs his followers to transcend their own self-interests for the benefit of the organisation; leaders can have a profound and desirable effect on followers to make the required change (Robbins, 2003). Leaders who opt to use transformational leadership style provide a vision and develop an emotional relationship with people they lead, increasing the latter's consciousness and belief in higher goals, above their own interests (Bass, 1985). Transformational leadership comprises four components which are inspirational motivation; intellectual stimulation; ideal influence; and individual consideration, interdependent, and synergized to achieve performance that meets expectations (Rindu, et al 2020).

Bass and Avolio (1994) postulated that idealized influence relates to how leaders hold trust of their followers, maintain their respect and faith, showing dedication and appeal their hopes and dreams and act as their role models. On the other hand, inspirational motivation shows the extent to which a leader provides a vision, uses appropriate symbols and images to help others focus on their work, and try to make others feel their work is significant. Intellectual stimulation has to do with the amount of encouragement that a leader offers to help them to be more creative. Intellectual stimulation helps subordinates to find new ways of solving existing problems. Through intellectual stimulation, leaders create an environment that makes subordinates to evaluate their values and beliefs and those of the organisations they are working in. Lastly, individualized consideration shows the extent to which leaders are concerned with their subordinates' well-being and regard them as individuals with varied needs. Through individual consideration, leaders tend to help those who seem to be less engaged with groups or organisation's activities.

In the effort to make workplace friendlier and less stressful, researchers have been looking for empirical evidences to see how transformational leadership affects occupational stress in different sectors. Arguably, leaders may play a crucial role in reducing stress at work, and in helping employees to cope with stress. The positive effects of perceived supervisor support have been well documented and increasingly researched in the literature (Villalba-Moreno, Ramos-Garza & Ramos-Garza, 2016).

Leadership

Leadership is a process of influencing and inspiring followers to willingly use their knowledge, skills and expertise to achieve group or organisational goals (Mwakasangula & Mwita, 2021). Roupne, Rinfre & Grenier (2019) define leadership as a capacity serving to transform ways of seeing, thinking, and acting so that the group may adapt to the various challenges confronting it. This means that leadership has to do with what a leader says or does to influence his/her followers to do what it takes to achieve group or organisational goals.

Occupational Stress

Occupational stress is a natural reaction to excessive demands and perceived threats from an occupational perspective or it is the gap between employees' needs and employees' abilities and what their workplace offers and requires (Jain, 2021).

Occupational or job stress means harmful physical and emotional responses which occur as the result of a mismatch between job requirements and capabilities and resources of a job holder.

Transformational Leadership and Occupational Stress

Leadership styles have been associated with various issues in organisations including occupational stress (Villalba-Moreno, Ramos-Garza & Ramos-Garza, 2016). Salem and Kattara (2015) studied the relationship between transformational leadership and occupational stress in the hospitality industry and found a significant and negative relationship between transformational leadership and occupational stress among five-star hotels in Egypt. Other consistent findings were reported by Huang, Kuo, Yang, Hsiao and Yang (2018) who studied the impact of transformational leadership on nurses' job stress in Taiwan. The study found an inverse relationship between transformational leadership and employee job stress. Dartey-Baah and Ampofo (2015) conducted a study among banks in Ghana to see how leadership styles affect occupational stress. The study also found a negative relationship between transformational leadership and job stress among employees working in Ghanaian banks.

Leadership in the educational sector is something that deserves a more serious attention by researchers and practitioners. This is due to the fact that teachers are considered to be working in a more fragile sector comparing to other professionals. A study of Marshall (2015) which was done in Barbados detected a negative relationship between leadership styles adopted with school principals and teachers' stress levels. This implies that leadership styles used were the sources of higher level of stress among the teachers.

In Tanzania, educational reforms have taken place, which is part of improving the quality of education. These reforms in Tanzania have been in place to enhance performance and commitment of teachers. Schools in Tanzania are expected to facilitate transformational change while ensuring teachers are committed with work morale (Nguni, Slegers & Denessen, 2006). While government initiatives on supplying various facilities to help schools performing better an element of leadership in primary schools has not been given attention it deserves by the government and scholars to see how leadership styles could be a potential source of stress or stress management among primary school teachers.

Data and Methods

The study employed a cross sectional survey which included 51 public primary schools found in Morogoro Municipality. Cross-sectional survey examines information of many cases at one point in time which creates a 'snapshot' of a social life as argued by Neuman (2014). The study used a standardised questionnaire to collect data from a sample 618 teachers who were randomly sampled. The study involved inferential statistics to establish the relationship between transformational leadership and occupational stress among primary school teachers through the use of multiple linear regression analysis. Data analysis was done with an assistance of a computer software namely SPSS version 21.

Results

Valid and Reliability of Research the Instrument

Reliability and validity are the most important and fundamental factors to consider in evaluating any measurement instrument for good research (Mohajan, 2017).

Validity explains how well the collected data cover the actual area of investigation (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020). Validity has to do with whether the tool is able to measure what it was originally designed to measure. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to test the validity of the instrument for each variable involved in the study. Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.831, 0.77, 0.78, 0.776 and 0.790 for idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration and occupational stress respectively. Mugenda (2003) informs that a coefficient of 0.70 or above signifies a high degree of reliability. This implies that the instrument used in this study was reliable enough to be used for data collection. In order to ensure that the questionnaire for data collection was valid, the tool was given to two experts; one statistician and one researcher in the field of human resource management. The tool was improved based on comments offered by the experts. Further, a pilot study which involved 50 teachers was done. Piloting helped to correct errors and mistakes detected in the questionnaire especially in sentences that were not well understood by the respondents.

Table 1: Coefficients of Cronbach's Alpha

Variable	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Idealized Influence	3	.831
Inspirational Motivation	3	.770
Intellectual stimulation	3	.780
Individual consideration	3	.776
Occupational Stress	8	.790

Source: Authors (2022)

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

The study involved a total of 618 respondents who had different characteristics as presented in table 2. The table shows how inclusive the study was.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	130 (21%)
	Female	488 (29%)
Age	18-22 Years	4 (0.6%)
	23-33 Years	182 (29.4%)
	34-44 Years	266 (43%)
	45-55 Years	148 (23%)
	Above 55 Years	18 (2.9%)
Marital Status	Single	56 (9.1%)
	Married	562 (90.9%)
Education level	Certificate	248 (40.1%)
	Diploma	246 (39.8%)
	Bachelor's Degree	118 (19.1%)
	Master's Degree	6 (1%)

Source: Researchers' computation

Descriptive Findings

Means and standard deviations for all variables are presented in Table 3. All leadership components were found to have higher mean score than the midpoint of 3.0 except for inspirational motivation. The highest score was found in individual consideration with a mean of 3.8. The mean for occupational stress was found to be 4.2 which implies high level of stress among primary school teachers. The standard deviation scores for all five variables were relatively low because they were all below 1.0 which means they are close to the mean score.

Table 3: Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for study variables

Variable	M	SD
Idealized Influence	3.2	.39
Inspirational Motivation	2.7	.52
intellectual stimulation	3.5	.48
Individual consideration	3.8	.88
Occupational Stress	4.2	.72

Source: Field Data (2022)

Regression Analysis

The study involved multiple regression analysis. Independent variables included in the analysis were idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration, and while for the dependent variable was occupational stress. The following model tested;

$$OS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 II + \beta_2 IM + \beta_3 IS + \beta_4 IC + \varepsilon$$

Where

OS= Occupational stress

β_0 = Constant (coefficient of intercept)

II = Idealized Influence

IM = Inspirational Motivation

IS = Intellectual stimulation

IC= Individual Consideration

β_0 - β_4 = Regression coefficient of the three variables

ε = Error term

The model summary in table 4 shows that correlation coefficient value $r = 0.736$ which means that transformational leadership is a good predictor of occupational stress. Moreover, $r^2 = .542$ suggests that 54.2% variation in occupational stress is explained by the independent variables included in the model. This means 45.8% of the variation is explained by other factors which were not included in the study.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.736 ^a	.542	.540	3.324

a. Predictors: (Constant), Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, intellectual stimulation, Individual Consideration.

The goodness of fit test in table 5 shows that the model used in the study was a good predictor of occupational stress intentions among the students, $F(4, 229) = 12.251, p = .000$

Table 5: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	25.879	4	6.47	12.251	.000 ^b
	Residual	189.235	229	.527		
	Total	215.114	223			

a. Dependent Variable: Occupational Stress

b. Predictors: (Constant), Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual stimulation, Individual Consideration

Results in Table 6 show that individual influence ($\beta = -.154$, $p = .001$) have a negative significant relationship with occupational stress. Since $p = .001$ at $\alpha = 0.05$ we have sufficient evidence we to accept the null hypothesis and therefore conclude that individual influence has a significant negative relationship with occupational stress.

Inspirational motivation ($\beta = -.122$, $p = .000$) have a negative significant relationship with occupational stress. Since $p = .000$ at $\alpha = 0.05$ we have sufficient evidence to accept the null hypothesis and therefore conclude that inspirational motivation has a significant negative relationship with occupational stress.

Intellectual stimulation ($\beta = -.112$, $p = .002$) have a negative significant relationship with occupational stress. Since $p = .002$ at $\alpha = 0.05$ we have sufficient evidence to accept the null hypothesis and therefore conclude that intellectual stimulation has a significant negative relationship with occupational stress.

Further, individual consideration ($\beta = -.179$, $p = .000$) have a negative significant relationship with occupational stress. Since $p = .000$ at $\alpha = 0.05$ we have sufficient evidence to accept the null hypothesis and therefore conclude that individual consideration has a significant negative relationship with occupational stress.

Table 6: The estimated Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	20.421	1.137		18.433	.000
	Idealized Influence	-.154	.027	-.164	-2.661	.001
	Inspirational Motivation	-.122	.175	-.128	-2.335	.000
	intellectual stimulation	-.112	.214	-.114	2.124	.002
	Individual consideration	-.179	.269	-.154	2.321	.000

Dependent Variable: Occupational Stress

Source: Authors' Analysis (2022)

Discussion

The study showed a negative relationship between individual influence and occupational stress that public primary school teachers are experiencing in public primary schools. This implies that when leaders act as role models and demonstrate their capabilities while remaining ethical, there are higher chances of reducing amount of stress which teachers experience in job places. These findings are consistent with those of Salem and Kattara (2015) who found the inverse relationship between individual influence and occupational stress among employees.

The study detected a negative relationship between inspirational motivation and occupational stress; this implies that once leaders manage to inspire and motivate their employees, an environment is created that help primary school teachers to feel less stressful. This is due to the reason that employees tend to consider their leaders as sources of inspiration as postulated by Power (2016); therefore, having inspirational leaders leads into making them to feel confident and secure.

Intellectual stimulation was also found to have an inverse relationship with occupational stress in this study. This implies that when people holding leadership positions in public primary schools manage to stimulate teachers' efforts to be creative and innovative and give teachers opportunities to come up with new ideas it creates a positive environment for them and helps to lower their stress levels. These findings are against assumptions put forward by Arnold and Connelly (2013) that intellectual stimulation may act as a source of stress since a transformational leader becomes too demanding; hence, subordinates are required to work longer hours and use more energy into their work.

Individual consideration is also another component of transformational leadership that was found to have a negative relationship with occupational stress. Individual consideration refers to transformational leaders who give special attention to each individual followers' needs for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor (Avolio & Bass, 1995). This means teachers who experience support in achieving their individual and organisational goals from their leaders experience lower levels of stress comparing to those who do not. These findings are consistent with those of Khalid, Murtaza, Zafar, Saqib and Mushtaq (2012) who found that supportive leadership plays an important role in making workplaces for employees in education institutions less stressful.

Generally, this study's findings show that transformational leadership negatively affects occupational stress among teachers in Tanzania public primary schools which implies that the use of transformational leadership style in primary schools may help to lower level of stress among the teachers working in the schools. This study confirms findings of previous studies done by different researchers who attempted to study how transformational leadership affects occupational stress (Huang et al, 2018; Dartey-Baah & Ampofo, 2015; Marshall, 2015). The fact that occupational stress is still a major challenge among Tanzania primary school teachers sends a signal on type of leadership styles that leaders use in the education sector and leadership skills they possess.

Limitations

Data for this study were collected from Morogoro Municipality only; it did not cover other regions in Tanzania. Hence, this has limited the study since circumstances in other regions could be different. Moreover, the study made use of quantitative data only; this implies that the study misses the triangulation of data from both qualitative and quantitative approach. The use of both approaches could help to offer more insights from opinions of the respondents.

Conclusion

This study examined how transformational leadership relates to occupational stress among teachers in Tanzania public primary schools. The study concludes that there is a significant negative relationship between transformational leadership and occupational stress. Further, all transformational leadership elements were found to negatively affect occupational stress.

Recommendations

Leaders in Tanzania education sector specifically in public primary schools where this study focused should consider using transformational leadership so as to make working environment for teachers less stressful. Special leadership training should be designed for people holding positions in primary schools to equip them with necessary leadership skills.

More researches have to be done on leadership and occupational stress in both private and public schools which will have to cover bigger geographical area of Tanzania and use both qualitative and quantitative approach.

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