

# Relationship between Participative Leadership Style and Teachers Job Satisfaction in Public Primary Schools Nakuru County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** *This study explored participative leadership style practiced by head teachers' and job satisfaction of teachers'. The study was conducted among a random sample of 348 primary school teachers from Nakuru County, Kenya. A researcher developed questionnaire was administered. Correlation design was used for the study. Spearman's coefficient correlation analysis was used to predict relationships between variables. The objective of the study was to determine relationship between head teachers' participative leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction in primary schools. Teacher job satisfaction is influenced by teacher participation in decision making on school activities such as; supervision, finance handling and administrative affairs. The expertise needed for school development must come from a broader base of individuals with diverse skills, knowledge regarding curriculum, pedagogy, decision making authority and best practices of school and work-related relationships. Participative leadership consults and contributions are taken into account. It involves soliciting for suggestions, opinion, ideas, sharing responsibilities, involving subordinates in the planning, execution phases and integrates their suggestions into decision making prior to making a final decision. A Spearman rho correlation coefficient relation between head teachers' participative leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction was found to be significantly positive however, it was weak. The study concludes that absence of a coherent leadership framework in primary schools with centralized roles was a major bottleneck in enhancing head teachers' capacity to provide the leadership needed to influence job satisfaction. Recommendations include developing formal framework strategy that will prepare teachers to successively ascend upwards, broaden leadership and increase participation.*

**Keywords:** Participative style, Job satisfaction, leadership, Work relationships

## 1. Introduction

As organizations become redesigned, teachers are given opportunities to be part of group decision making. Job satisfaction includes the idea that teachers' have influence and participate in school-wide decisions for staff development (Walstrom & Louis, 2008). The study by Joo (2011) postulates teacher participation in decision determines school activities such as; supervision, finance handling and administrative affairs. In addition, the expertise needed for school development must come from a broader base of individuals with diverse skills, knowledge regarding curriculum, pedagogy, decision making authority and best practices (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001; Watson & Scribner, 2007; Hartley, 2007; & Gronn, 2009).

Participative leadership consults with subordinates about decisions, and takes their contributions into account, solicits for suggestions, opinion, obtains their ideas, shares responsibilities involving them in the planning, execution phases and integrates their suggestions into decision making prior to making a final decision (Mat, 2008; Negron, 2008; Leana, 2013; & Northouse, 2013). However, participative leadership is appropriate when subordinates don't want autocratic leadership, have internal locus of control, and follower ability is high; when task is complex, authority is either weak or strong, and satisfaction from co-workers is either high or low (Lussier and Achua, 2010). Moreover, Mat (2008) argue that participative leadership is suggested to increase the follower effort when the task is unstructured by increasing the role clarity and increasing the follower autonomy.

Harris and Spillane (2008); & Street (2011) argued that based on the charge of collective groups, autonomy to make

decisions may be limited because formal leadership structures cannot be removed. However, participation in decision being stretched over people and place lead to greater commitment on goals and strategies associated with job satisfaction (Harris, 2006; Mangin, 2007; & Jacobs, 2010). Gronn (2008) reflecting back on development of leadership, preferred its application for positive quality decisions. Nevertheless, Lima (2008) viewed decision making is risky and has negative impact on team. According to Jacobs (2010) leadership experiences gained by teachers when school decisions are spread assist in skill development. In light of these claims by researchers, teachers possess skills, knowledge and expertise to solve emerging issues and meet goals for staff development by incorporating their decision which may significantly contribute to job satisfaction.

Participative leadership according to Lewin (cited in Waters, 2013) states that minds of many makes better decisions than judgment of a single mind alone. In light of this observation teachers become more committed to decision making practices and are more actively involved thus job satisfaction is realized. Lewin, Lippit & White (1939); Jani (2012) found out that participative leadership style was most effective style after examining relationship to the effect it had on children in educational setting. Drawing from these suggestions it is imperative to observe that relationship between head teachers' leadership style and teachers' is ultimately vital to influencing job satisfaction whereby participative style is practiced. Moreover, Waters (2013) opines that participative style builds relationship between teachers and principals, builds trust and collegiality among staff.

Therefore, a motivated employee might work harder than expected to complete the task, provide strategies, proactively find ways to improve the quality and efficiency of work environment through decision participation (Ashim, 2011; and Grant, 2011). This study notes participative leadership when engaged effectively in utilization of knowledge and expertise solves issues. Jacobs (2010) stressed that succession planning for school leadership positions is feasible if teachers within the school are committed, interested in formal leadership positions and also prepared for leadership roles. Additionally, heavy workload, remuneration, uncertain recruitment procedures and career development prospects deter potential candidates. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that even though, participative leadership style, enhance employee's motivation, employee's commitment and job satisfaction are distinct constructs, they are highly interrelated (Ismail, Zainuddin and Ibrahim, 2010). This means that leaders who implement participative leadership style effectively; then they strongly motivate employees to be committed to the organization (Brown, 2003; Rad and Yarmohammadian, 2006). This leads to higher job satisfaction in the organization (Yiing and Ahmad, 2009; Yousef, 2000).

Grant (2011) assert that workers may provide valuable input into the successful management of any organization when they are empowered to assume leadership roles. Yee and Chen (2009) contend that performance appraisal evaluates employees' present and previous output within laid down standards, but also provides feedback on employees' performance. Therefore, it is indispensable for supervision, identifying talents, capacities, advancements and target (Hamid, 2010; & Jabeen, 2011). This study recognizes participation of decision making as interaction between leader and followers in the context of participatory leadership; which (Spillane, 2005) described as system of practice comprised of collection and interacting components.

Sonia (2010) argued that it is plausible when employees judge the organization to be providing good supervision, positive feelings of well-being will be created. This stimulates them to reciprocate by increasing their sense of obligation and commitment due to interaction and participation. According to Teachers Code of Regulations (2015) performance appraisal for teachers is conducted by deputy head teacher in a primary school. Nevertheless, this arrangement of role overloads the appraiser and there is need to broaden concept of leadership policy in schools to strengthen succession management. This also increases recognition and enhance job satisfaction among teachers. However, with participative leadership, teachers' are motivated by being consulted on action and activities affecting them. According to Nisa, Zaidi & Bigger (2008) most staff have basic competence and the right kind of participation yields both motivation and knowledge, high autonomy, increase the intrinsic valence of work resulting in greater effort and higher satisfaction valuable for the accomplishment of solutions. In view of these claims, participation in decision making tend to increase satisfaction with performance appraisal. Nonetheless, teachers' in the school situation where there is internal locus of control they would be more satisfied with a participative leadership style (Nisa, et.al. 2008).

Since 1980 various scholars have studied the concept of participative leadership. Researchers argue that due to the complex changing environment previous styles of leadership seem to hinder organizational performance hence there is a need for new leadership styles based on participative principles to be able to cope with the rapid rate of changes (Trevino, Brown, & Hartmann 2003; Fulmer, 2005; Kakabadse, Kakabadse, A. & Lee-Davies, 2009). Therefore, this would mean a paradigm shift of leadership style to be engaged in organizations. According to Rok (2009) for effective leadership the leader should influence or inspire people toward group goals through individual motivation rather than coercion. Nemaei (2012) argue that Modern concept of leadership should be the impact of participative leadership on employee's motivation, job satisfaction and innovation conceived as a set of values and behaviors exhibited by the leader to encourage participation, commitment and development of the followers. Because openness to new ideas is an essential element in order to encourage participation of followers there is a growing need for more participative culture of leadership.

The modern leader not only leads and involves, but also more responsive to feedback from others and should try to integrate the core sustainability agenda with "hearts and minds" of all followers (Rok, 2009). The main reasons for the need for participative leaders are the changes in cultures, environment and politics. An interesting study done by Hay group (2011) claims because of factors such as globalization, climate change, demographic change, individualization and digital lifestyle, organizational principles such as leadership, corporate environment and organizational structures is expected to dramatically change by 2030. In context to these expressions, head teachers according to a Wallace Foundation Perspective report can no longer function simply as school managers but also instructional leaders (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). To be successful, they are also expected to distribute leadership effectively for sustainable change and improvement that translates into improved learning outcomes (Harris, 2014). This can be achieved through what Dufour and Marzano (2011) advocate; a shift in focus to efforts aimed at building the collective capacity of educators.

The increasing rate of dynamic changes inside and outside organization has encouraged leaders to shift the paradigm of their leadership style from traditional approaches to a humanistic based leadership with focus on employee's empowerment in order to achieve organizational goals (Brown, 2003; Rad & Yarmohammadian, 2006). Various scholars argue that participative leadership style is the only true humanistic approach to leadership (Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta, & Kramer 2004; Jong, and Hartog, 2007). These scholars argue that leader's ability to properly implement participative styles (i.e., general consultation, empowerment, joint decision-making and power sharing), together with consultative approaches (i.e., appreciation of follower's opinions and ideas in goal settings and task assignments) in planning organizational functions directly increase job satisfaction (Brown, 2003; Rad & Yarmohammadian, 2006).

Drawing from several suggestions made by research studies on participative leadership in the literature; it is therefore

imperative for this study to assume that success of participative leadership style is generated through involvement of teachers' in decision-making to improve the understanding of the issues. Moreover, the study assumes that teachers are more committed to actions where they are involved in the relevant decision-making. This is because when teachers make decisions together, the social commitment to one another is greater, they increase their commitment to the decision, make better decisions together, become competitive and more collaborative when working on joint goals.

## 2. Methodology

The study was grounded on positivist paradigm as an appropriate underpinning philosophical thought. However, to determine the degree of relationship between participative leadership style and job satisfactions correlational research design was adopted. Gall and Borg (2007) described correlational study as appropriate design to discover relationship between variables by using correlational statistics. Survey method was used to collect data in order to gain a holistic perspective. Kothari (2011) asserts surveys as attempt to collect data from a population using questionnaires to determine current conditions with respect to one or more variables. Cluster random sampling was used to select sub counties in rural and urban while systematic random sampling was applied to select schools. Head teachers' were automatically drawn from sampled schools and teachers were selected through stratified sampling for males and females in upper primary. Curriculum Support Officers were purposively selected and interviewed to shed more light. The study employed formula recommended by Krejcie and Morgan (1970; cited in Gall and Borg (2007) to determine the sample size. Spearman's rho correlation statistics analysis was used to establish relationship between participative leadership style and job satisfaction

## 3. Results and Discussions

A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient relationship between head teachers' participative leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction was significantly positive ( $\rho$  (n=305) = 0.364,  $p < 0.05$ ). The relationship between the two variables is summarized in Table 1

**Table 1:** Participative Leadership Style and Teachers Job Satisfaction

			Participative
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	Job satisfaction	0.364**
	N	305	

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 depicts a weak positive correlation (0.364). Nevertheless, it is significant. The results indicate that as head teacher demonstrated participative leadership style, teachers become satisfied. The findings further show a Co-efficient of determination being 13.24 % ( $0.364^2$ ), that is only 13.24 % of teachers' job satisfaction can be explained by the head teacher demonstration of participative leadership style within the school structure. The findings also indicate that teachers were reluctant with participative style

employed by head teachers. This is evidenced by results showing a weak correlation positive relationship of 0.364 though significant. In a similar context, Mat (2008) recorded participative leadership style have positive significant effects on HOD Performance in retailing. This translates that high level of job satisfaction is likely to be achieved among workers.

The weak positive correlation 0.364 with participative leadership is indicator of less motivation, weak consultation method over action and few activities. Moreover, the staff lacks basic competence and the right kind of participation strategy to yield both motivation and knowledge valuable for soliciting solution of the problem underlying the institution. Similarly, the absence of policy framework that spreads decision making in departments does not exist. In addition, the current leadership needs to be improved to fill the gap of fine quality standards. It is imperative to develop clear policy plans for future leadership and effective processes for leadership succession. However, the TSC Act, (2012) explain head teacher is responsible lead educator in the regulated school system. This hierarchical decision-making by head teachers in the school is a problem as head teachers dominate; this is evidenced by Co-efficient of determination of 13.24 % ( $0.364^2$ ). This finding contradicts Liu (2006) who suggested leaders need to involve employees to avert dissatisfaction. This is also corroborated by Walstrom & Louis (2008) who suggested in redesigned organizations, teachers are given opportunities to be part of group decision making, participate in school-wide decisions for staff development and have influence on job satisfaction.

Nevertheless, Street (2011) argued that the autonomy to make decisions may be limited because formal leadership structures cannot be removed. However, participation in decision being stretched over people lead to greater commitment on goals and strategies associated with job satisfaction (Harris, 2006; Mangin, 2007; & Jacobs, 2010). Therefore, freedom, autonomy and ability to make decision by teachers may improve on service quality enshrined in teachers' employer charter to enhance job satisfaction (TSC, COURT 2015). Specifically participation in setting standards, involving staff in decision making are key in influencing employee behavior and commitment towards quality (TSC Act 2012). However, report revealed from Curriculum Support Officers indicate that head teachers' dominate in school wide decisions and this significantly affected teachers' job satisfaction as value of 0.364 was obtained. This implies that teachers' have no clear avenues to making informed decisions as enshrined in the Kenya Constitution of 2010.

**Table 2:** Partial Correlation for Job Satisfaction versus Participative Leadership Style

Control Variables		Participative	
Achievement & Directive & Supportive	Job Satisfaction	Correlation	.156
		Significance (2-tailed)	.006
		Df	300

Table 2 depicts a partial correlation coefficient of 0.156. Participative leadership had partial correlation demonstrating that majority of teachers waned away from engaging in decision making process. This could mean that

teachers lacked ability to independency and autonomy within slim hierarchical structures in the school. Furthermore, reports gathered from the field expressed indicate weakness in leadership structure in schools.

The Curriculum Support Officers in their unique role of supporting head teachers as their central responsibility on improving teaching and learning in schools; cited that there is inadequate participatory involvement of teachers in decision making process. This adversely affects teacher job satisfaction moreover, it aggravate the gap of succession leadership planning for teachers. One of the critical roles of the TSC is to promote teachers continuously through the successive grades. However, it was cited that some head teachers with lower grades fail to recommend appraisal performance report for teachers due for promotion. This is an indication that performance of individual teachers reduces significantly making teachers to search for other avenues hence rate of absenteeism in schools increases.

#### 4. Hypotheses test on participative leadership and job satisfaction

The calculated value of t was – 20.707 at significance level of 95%, 2 tailed with 304 degree of freedom. The p-value was 0.000 and since it was less than 0.05 the null hypothesis was rejected. From this it can be inferred that there was no relationship between participative leadership style and job satisfaction as viewed by respondents.

#### 4. Conclusion

The Participative leadership style scored the least correlation although significant. The findings reveal that teachers generally disliked being involved in decision making and consultations. This demonstrates that teachers did not value the meaning of democracy at work environment as stated in the Kenya constitution of 2010. This could have being contributed by leaders liking to dominate in almost all the issues appertaining school program. The study concludes that head teachers' should encourage teachers to participate in decision process. This can be strengthened through reforming leadership structure in school by incorporating specialization of subjects and expanding leadership responsibility to departments to improve participation. Thus, the study concludes that absence of a coherent leadership framework in primary schools with centralized roles was a major bottleneck in enhancing head teachers' capacity to provide the leadership needed to influence job satisfaction. There is need to develop formal framework strategies that prepare teachers to successively ascend from subject head, head of department, deputy head teacher to head teacher in public primary schools. The strategy should be tailored to ensure a pipeline of potential head teachers have gained adequate experience with the requisite leadership knowledge and skills.

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