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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of dark 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 was analysed 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 results showed that dark leadership had a negative significant effect on employee engagement and its dimensions. Based on the findings of this study, it was established that applying dark leadership style on employees could reduce employee engagement. It was recommended that strategies be put in place by the Ministry of Education through the Teacher's Service Commission (TSC) to ensure that dark leadership style is discouraged in schools. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the leadership-behavioural outcomes domain that are significant to school leaders and recommends strategies that will enhance employee engagement.

Key Words: Dark Leadership, Employee Engagement, Teachers, Principals, Secondary Schools.

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INTRODUCTION

In the current environment of increasing global competition and slower growth prospects, raising employee engagement is seen as a key strategy for organizational success. Employee engagement builds zeal, dedication and alignment with the organization's strategies and goals hence achievement of high performance levels and superior business results (Nwinyokpugi, 2015). In today's world, employee engagement is the way to improve performance with fewer employees and dollars (Datche & Mukulu, 2015). There are three levels of employee engagement; engaged - refers to employees who go the extra mile; not engaged - refers to employees who do the bare minimum; disengaged- refers to employees who have mentally quit but still hang about.

A lack of work engagement is a worldwide problem and not limited to any specific sector. Globally, Only 13 percent of employees are engaged, the others being psychologically detached from their places of work and therefore not likely to be productive (Crabtree & Robinson, 2013). In United Kingdom, 17 % of employees are truly engaged, 63 % are "not engaged", and 20 % are disengaged (Huckerby, 2002). The implication is, 83 % of employees are on the job being paid and benefits for compensation of their energy which is not available to the organization. In the U.S, 26% of employees are actively engaged, 54 % are neutral about their work, and 20 % are disengaged (Fleming, Coffman, & Harter, 2005). In Africa, employee engagement is still at very low levels and has been linked to drivers of engagement like work place harmony (Nwinyokpugi, 2015) and authentic leadership (Omar, 2015). In Kenya, the low levels of employee engagement have been linked to the leadership styles (Datche & Mukulu, 2015; Ndethiu, 2014) and to poor work-life balance (Kangure, 2014).

Without engaged employees, meticulous planning, possession of sophisticated machines and equipment, and being up to date with technology are not likely to yield the expected results for any organization, large or small, and even if they do, it

will be short lived. '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 (Cook, 2008). Employee engagement has the potential to significantly affect employee retention, company reputation and overall stakeholder value. At the same time, actively disengaged employees are toxic to every aspect of the organization, which complicates the ways and means of implementing the most excellent customer service strategy effectively (Hoffman & Tschida, 2007).

Organizations that understand the conditions that enhance employee engagement will have accomplished something that competitors will find very difficult to imitate, to the detriment of those that do not understand or may not be willing to tore the line. As a result, suitable leadership styles that bring about employee engagement in organizations need to be practiced in order to encourage improved performance (Popli & Rizvi, 2016).

The traditional view of a 'job for life' has changed dramatically. Employees are now more likely to build an assortment of skills and competencies that will help them develop multiple careers. The nature of jobs has also changed. Likewise, 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 (Cook, 2008). The age of leader as position is rapidly fading. In the past, managers could realize results by applying a command and control style of leadership which adopted a 'carrot and stick' approach to ensuring productivity and achieving results. According to Shuck and Herd, (2012), to be a leader of today's dynamic workforce demands a willingness to understand and navigate the new approaches to leadership in an evolving landscape.

The opening up of market places, globalization, increased competition, the growing power of the customer, technological advancement, pressure on margins and the demands of stakeholders have all

contributed a different employment environment from that known to our parents. Employees nowadays have the privilege of having more choice in where and how they work. They expect that they will be involved in decision making, participate in the activities of the organization in addition to being treated with respect and fairness (Burke & Ng, 2006). As a result, one of the characteristics of today's workforce is their high level of mobility (Lumley *et al.*, 2011), which results in voluntary turnover creating a major challenge in the management of talent and human capital (Du Plooy & Roodt, 2010). Many employees are looking for environments where they can be engaged and feel that they are contributing in a positive way to something larger than themselves. The changing psychological contract has meant that organizations have had to find new ways to motivate their employees to encourage them to give their best.

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.

What is important to the idea of employee engagement is the aspect of not just creating a workforce that is satisfied and committed to the organization but one that works hard to go an extra mile to offer discretionary effort to satisfy the customer (Cook, 2008). Thus, providing a work environment and conditions that encourage employees to be willing to do and then go ahead do more than what is expected of them by the employer as per their job description is the challenge for business today, not just satisfying employees and retaining them in the organization. This is in agreement with Batista-Taran *et al.* (2013), who say that mere motivation of employees in

today's competitive work environment is not enough if conditions that encourage engagement are absent. Organizations therefore have to work harder to ensure that they win the loyalty of the best employees.

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 (MOES & T, 2005). Brown and Wynn (2009) proposed that failing to address high attrition rates could have a negative impact on the overall education system in terms of; a deficit of quality teachers and instruction; loss of continuity and commitment; and devotion of time, attention, and funds to recruitment rather than support. As leaders of their schools, principals are charged with the responsibility of developing an educational environment that ensures satisfaction and raises organizational commitment (Aydin, Sarier, & Uysal, 2013). Müller, Alliata, and Benninghoff (2009) argue that attracting and retaining competent teachers is a key concern when it comes to managing the supply and demand of teachers. The problem of teacher exit cannot simply be solved by training and recruiting new teachers to replace those who quit.

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 (Cook, 2008). Companies that focus on building engaging leaders will see an exponential impact on employee engagement (Hewitt, 2014). Global engagement report suggests that 'companies will need employees to go above and beyond in different ways—not just to engage by working harder, but to engage in ways that show resiliency, learning, adaptability and speed' (Hewitt, 2014). A serious gap that needs to be addressed by employees, employers, and the Human Resource Development professionals is evident because of the inconsistency arising from the expected benefits that are linked to employee engagement and the

prevailing level of engagement that exists in organizations today.

Statement of the Problem

School leaders should always work consciously toward creating congruency between organizational and individual needs fulfillment for improved productivity (Woestman & Wasonga, 2015) in an effort to increase the level of teacher engagement.

Despite efforts by the government of Kenya to increase teachers' salaries, provide bursaries through the Ministry of Education and Constituency Development Funds to improve access, participation, and performance of students in national examinations (MoEST, 2010), and train teachers like in the Strengthening Mathematics and Science in Secondary Education (SMASSE) program that has been going on for several years now, 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. For example, a study by Kenya National Union of Teachers (2015) indicated that more than 200,000 of teachers in public schools wish to leave teaching because of professional and personal needs. Uwezo East Africa (2014) reported that about 12% of teachers are absent from school which is about 35,000 teachers on any given day. Teacher absenteeism is a serious obstacle to the delivery of quality education (Komoni, 2015). Recent researches in Murang'a county indicate high levels of teacher dissatisfaction and desire to quit the profession (Njiru, 2014; Wachira, 2013).

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 to 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 (Aydin *et al.*, 2013) and is also a predictor of employee engagement (Popli & Rizvi, 2016). According to the researcher, not much has been done to study teacher engagement in public schools in Kenya. The rationale behind this research study was to establish the relationship between dark leadership style and teacher engagement in public secondary schools in Murang'a County, Kenya.

Research Objective

To examine the effect of dark leadership style on teacher engagement in public secondary schools of Murang'a County, Kenya.

Research Hypotheses

H₀: There is no significant effect of dark leadership on teacher engagement in public secondary schools of Murang'a County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dark leadership is characterized by manipulation, dominance, and coercion, rather than influence, persuasion, and commitment. Rosenthal and Pittinsky (as cited in (Pryor, Odom, & Toombs, 2014) indicate that dark leadership has a selfish orientation, implying that it is focused more on the leader's needs than the needs of the larger social group. Dark leadership often involves imposing goals on constituents without their agreement or regard for their long-term welfare (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Many scholars in the leadership field have not explicitly defined dark leadership *per se*, but have rather treated it as a 'know it when you see it' phenomenon (Howell & Avolio, 1992). At the same time, many leadership research studies have avoided the dark side of the leadership but have concentrated on building up a good and effective leadership by emphasizing the positive and constructive aspects of leadership (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). The focus on 'good' leadership may be seen to be rooted in a view that any other form of behavior is not leadership as per the observation by Burns (2003) who comments that, 'If it is unethical

or immoral, it is not leadership’.

According to Higgs (2009), the following behaviours portray dark leadership: abuse of power which includes the application of power to emphasize self-image and boost perceptions of personal performance, the abuse of power to conceal personal shortfalls, and the abuse of power to achieve personal goals for personal benefit (Kellerman, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 2006); inflicting harm on other people through bullying, coercion, negative influence on the way followers perceive their self-efficacy, hurting the emotional health of their followers, and the erratic way of handling followers (Aasland, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2008); being fanatical with detail that leads to application unnecessary control in order to fulfill personal needs, perfectionism, and controlling follower initiative (Benson & Hogan, 2008; Tepper, 2000)and; flouting of rules to serve own purposes. These are areas of behavior in which leaders engage in corrupt, unethical, even illegal actions (Benson & Hogan, 2008; Lipman-Blumen, 2006; Tepper, 2000).

The impact of dark leadership tends to be felt in the longer term as evidenced by the weakening effect on morale and motivation of employees. Benson and Hogan (2008) support this argument by pointing out that the toxic behavior of dark leaders tears down the ability of people to work together productively in an organization over the long term. Higgs (2009) agrees with this view point when he makes the observation that the behaviours of dark leadership eventually impact negatively on individual, group and the organization performance through the work climate that such leaders create, which unfortunately can lead to employee disengagement. Based on employee engagement literature, leadership involves courteous treatment

of employees, understandable company values and company’s standards of ethical behavior (Andrew & Sofian, 2011) which dark leadership conspicuously lacks.

A research study on the impact of dark leadership on organizational commitment and turnover (both of which indicate levels of employee engagement) by Weaver and Yancey (2010) found that the subordinates of dark leaders had greater intentions to leave their organization and lower affective commitment to their organizations. Boddy (2015) in a study on psychopathic leadership, which is a strong example of dark leadership, found that both illness absence and staff turnover increased under the reign of a psychopathic CEO and that employees were dissatisfied with their jobs, became increasingly lacking in commitment and ultimately withdrew from and left the organization. Bullying by the CEO in this study was found to be related to turnover intention and indeed, actual turnover. The study also found that the CEO had a social dominance orientation which was in turn related to some counterproductive workplace outcomes (Shao, Resick, & Hargis, 2011). The study also found that illness or absence due to stress was reported at all levels of the organization, and stress-related absence was reported to be particularly evident at senior levels, among those working closest to the psychopathic CEO.

However, these findings differ from those of a similar research study by Woestman and Wasonga (2015) who found that educational professionals are attracted to teaching, and stay in teaching because of other reasons besides job satisfaction and/or low stress despite experiencing forms of dark leadership behaviours, job stress, or job dissatisfaction.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This study used survey design. This design affords the researcher an opportunity to capture a population's characteristics and test hypotheses by applying correlation as a statistical tool (Goodwin, 2016). A quantitative approach was adopted 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 schools (clusters). Cluster sampling technique guarantees that each cluster is represented in the sample and thus reflects the characteristics of the population with some level of accuracy. The study population was 3860 teachers in 306 schools out of which 92 schools were selected, representing the 30% recommended by Hill (1998). Random numbers were then used to sample 368 respondents. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between employees' perceptions of their leaders' dark leadership and 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 variable. F statistic was used to test the significance of the regression model.

Dark leadership was measured using a self-report questionnaire consisting of ten items developed based on the main features of the leadership practices namely; dominance, coercion, manipulation and selfish orientation on a Likert 5 point scale. The computed cronbach's alpha coefficient for the variable was 0.940. Where the computed alpha coefficient is greater than 0.80, it is considered as an acceptable level of internal reliability (Bryman, 2008). 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.

FINDINGS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Opinions of Respondents on Employee Engagement

Leadership Item	Mean	SD
At my work, I feel bursting with energy	3.40	0.95
At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	3.72	0.898
I am enthusiastic about my job	3.90	0.883
My job inspires me.	3.89	0.907
When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	3.79	0.905
I feel happy when I am working intensely	3.74	0.845
I am proud of the work that I do	4.08	0.798
I am immersed in my work.	3.60	0.900
I get carried away when I am working	3.04	1.090

The results in Table 1 showed that all the studied items had means above 3.0 meaning that the respondents were positive and generally agreed with the items. Apart from the item "I get carried away when I am working", all the other studied items had a standard deviation of below 1.0. This

indicated that the respondents were in agreement with one another, the reason why there were no extremes in scoring the items. The reliability of employee engagement variable was found to be 0.897. Since the alpha was greater than 0.8, it was acceptable.

Table 2: Opinions of Respondents Dark Leadership

Leadership Item	Mean	SD
Is highly defensive when criticized	3.17	1.184
Devalues and exploits other people	2.50	1.190
Lacks concern for the needs of subordinates unless convenient	2.52	1.238
Takes all credit for success	2.62	1.199
Undermines competitors for promotion	2.38	1.167
Likes scapegoating	2.50	1.286
Has excessive self - promotion and attention -seeking behavior	2.45	1.217
Sees all events in terms of significance to his/her own career	2.53	1.164
Harbors unfounded beliefs that others want to hurt him/her	2.43	1.225
Works hard for favor with superiors while failing to support and develop those below him/her	2.50	1.27

The results in Table 2 indicated that, except for the item “is highly defensive when criticized” which had a mean of 3.17, all the means for the items considered were below 3. This meant that the results were negative and that the respondents disagreed with the items. The standard deviation of

all the items was high (above 1.0) meaning there were extremes towards both agreement and disagreement in scoring the items. The reliability of dark leadership variable was found to be 0.940. Since the alpha was greater than 0.8, it was acceptable.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Pearson’s Correlation between Dark leadership and Employee Engagement

Items		Employee Engagement Mean	Dark Leadership Mean
Employee Engagement	Pearson Correlation	1	-.304**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	296	296
Dark	Pearson Correlation	-.304**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	296	296

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

The results in Table 3 showed that there was a weak negative correlation ($r = -0.304$; p -value <0.001) between dark leadership and Employee Engagement. This implied that 9.24 % (0.304^2) of variation in employee engagement in secondary schools in Murang’a Country is explained by

reduced use of dark leadership style by their principals, other factors outside dark leadership therefore explain 90.76% of variation in employee engagement. The results implied that an increase in dark leadership will reduce employee engagement.

Table 4: Pearson’s Correlation between the Dimensions of Employee Engagement and Dark Leadership

	Dark Leadership
Vigor	-0.314**
Dedication	-0.316**
Absorption	-0.132*

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

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

The findings in Table 4 implied that there was a statistically significant negative correlation; between vigor and dark leadership ($r=-0.314$, $p<0.01$), between dedication and dark leadership ($r=-0.316$, $p<0.01$), and between absorption and dark leadership ($r=-0.132$, $p<0.05$).

Regression Analysis

H_0 : There is no significant effect of dark leadership on teacher engagement in public secondary schools of Murang'a County.

Table 5: ANOVA and Model Summary

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	10.176	1	10.176	29.843	.000
Residual	100.254	294	.341		
Total	110.431	295			
R.=0.304	R ² =0.092	R ² = 0.089			

The model to be tested was:

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1x + \epsilon$$

Where;

Y= Employee Engagement

β_0 = level of employee engagement in the absence of Dark leadership

β_1 = intercept for the independent variable

X=Dark leadership

ϵ =Error term

The model was found to be valid (F (1,274) =29.843, p -value<0.001) as shown in Table 5. These results have the implication that the relationship between dark leadership and employee engagement is significant and not by chance. The fitted model equation is $Y= -0.190X$.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients of Dark Leadership on Employment Engagement

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	4.172	.095		43.765	.000
Dark leadership	-.190	.035	-.304	-5.463	.000

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

Hypothesis Testing

The fitted model equation showed that standardized employee engagement will increase by 0.190 units with one unit decrease in standardized dark leadership style. The model indicated that dark leadership is significantly explaining the variation in employee engagement. Therefore, hypothesis H_{01} : there is no significant effect of dark leadership style on employee engagement is rejected and the alternative that dark leadership style has a significant effect on employee engagement supported. The high residual sum of squares (100.254) indicated 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. These results agreed with those of a similar study by Finch (2013) in an Army War College which found that 57% of senior service school students considered leaving the service at some time due to the destructive leadership of a superior. A similar scenario was revealed in another similar study by Reed and Olsen (2010).

However, despite the negative correlation between dark leadership and employee engagement, most teachers in this research were well engaged in their teaching job. A large number of the respondents demonstrated resilience in the explanations they provided in the open-ended questions. This was found to be the same case in the study by Woestman and Wasonga (2015) where the

destructive leadership behaviors neither diminished job satisfaction nor created the need to consider leaving the job. The respondents who were experiencing dark leadership behaviours in this study had developed resistance to mistreatment by their principals just like in the findings of the research studies by Woestman and Wasonga (2015) and Blase and Blase (2003) where respondents avoided and ignored their destructive leaders by concentrating on their core functions in their schools. For example, many teachers in this study said that they were motivated to work hard for the success of their students and that they loved the teaching job so much that even if they were provided with other jobs, they would not take them.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENADCTIONS

The study established that there was a significant negative correlation between dark leadership style and employee engagement.

The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) should focus on building engaging principals. In addition, School Principals need to make themselves familiar with what employee engagement is and, how and why it will influence school performance, which they must deliver as per the demands placed on them by the parents, society, and the government at large.

It is necessary that schools principals focus on capturing employee suggestions and ideas on the aspects of their leadership that will make them desire to go an extra mile in their work, and those that will not.

To engage teachers, school principals should closely examine the unwritten, psychological contract between the employer and the employees. Unlike the formal written contract of employment which clarifies duties and responsibilities of an employee, the psychological contract represents the mutual beliefs, perceptions, and informal obligations between the employer and employee.

It is necessary that the TSC in coordination with the Ministry of Education puts in place organized evaluation strategies through policy that gives school principals the opportunity to assess their performance on a regular basis to help enhance their leadership skills. The '360 degree' feedback system if applied will give the principals a complete knowledge of their skills, strengths, and weaknesses as viewed by themselves and others, and thus provide them with an opportunity to become more aware of themselves. This will open their eyes on the areas that they will need to improve on so as to increase teacher engagement in their schools.

In an effort to discourage dark leadership in secondary schools, there is need for a proper mechanism of reporting and dealing with principals who practice the same. All educational professionals should be made aware of the legal implications associated with work place mistreatment, where and how to report, and how to take individual action in case of mistreatment.

In the same vein, it is also necessary to subject all principals to heightened scrutiny from the general public and the law before they take office as is the practice in the America and other developed countries. This involves rigorous vetting process that include personality tests, criminal background checks, sex abuse, drug abuse, and health status before being hired and entrusted legally, professionally, and ethically with the general welfare and safety of teachers and students.

Suggestions for Future Research

It is necessary that a more detailed research study be carried out where the effect of each component of dark leadership style on each component of employee engagement is studied.

This research study was cross-sectional. It therefore means that the current study cannot explain why still highly engaged employees may at times exhibit below average or poor performance. The researcher therefore recommends that a study can be carried out to investigate daily changes in work

engagement of teachers in public secondary schools.

This study only concentrated on the teachers within public secondary schools. Future research studies can investigate the effects of dark leadership style on employee engagement using a variety of respondents in the same institution or in different institutions, for example teaching and nonteaching staff, so as to compare levels of engagement among different categories of employees. In the same vein,

studies can be carried out on employee engagement at the group or team level because not much is known about this aspect of engagement. This is because people work in teams to achieve organizational goals.

Further research can also be carried out to establish the effects of dark leadership on teacher work life balance and, in the same line, the effects of dark leadership on student educational outcomes.

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