

Challenges Facing Secondary School Teachers in Achieving Effective Job Performance: A Case Study of Meru District Council, Arusha Region

ABSTRACT

This study examines the challenges facing secondary school teachers in executing their duties for effective job performance through a qualitative case study design. The study participants were secondary school teachers, heads of schools, and the District Education Officer. A total of 111 respondents were involved, including 100 teachers, 10 heads of schools, and 1 District Education Officer. In collecting data, interview and focus group discussion (FGD) methods of data collection were used for the purpose of this study. The data were analyzed through content and thematic analysis. The study found teachers are burdened with several challenges, including but not limited to an unfriendly working environment, a shortage of teaching and learning materials, low achievement of students in science subjects, poor cooperation between parents and teachers, poor cooperation accorded by employers, a lack of overtime and/or housing allowances, and political influences on teaching and learning processes. The study concluded that teaching, apart from being a noble profession that prepares not only leaders but also champions of various fields, has grown to be forgotten. Thus, it is recommended that there are significant needs to shift priorities and attention towards the teaching profession. One key aspect highlighted is the need for better compensation and entitlements for teachers, including salaries, subsistence allowances, extra-time allowances, and access to teaching and learning materials. Moreover, addressing these challenges requires comprehensive support and tailored interventions from educational institutions, policymakers, and other stakeholders in the education sector.

Keywords: Teachers, Teaching, Learning, Workplace and Job performance

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher job performance is the achievement of the work done and achieved by the teacher, which illustrates how a teacher performs his duties in the learning process, namely preparing lesson plans, conducting learning activities, and carrying out assessments and evaluations, to name a few (Farezhenah and Wijayaningsih, 2022; Russamsi et al. 2020).

Griffin (2020) explored that the performance of an individual is determined by three factors, i.e., motivation, work environment, and ability to do work. Inayatullah and Jehangir (2012) examined how the workplace environment impacts employee morale, productivity, and job performance, both positively and negatively. If the workplace environment is not liked by the employees, they get demotivated, and their performance is also affected. Poorly designed work timings, unsuitable authorities or duties, a lack of appreciation, and a lack of personal decision-making

opportunity affect employees severely. People working in such an environment are not satisfied; they feel stress on themselves, which impacts the employee's job performance.

In another study in Pakistan, Parveen et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between the leadership styles of principals and teachers' job performance in secondary schools. He found that the principals mostly used a democratic leadership style in schools as compared to an autocratic style. It was the most commonly used leadership style by principals in schools. His study also determined that there is a direct relationship between the leadership styles used by principals and teacher job performance. His study concluded that the performance of teachers is better in those schools where principals have autocratic leadership styles as compared to those schools where principals have democratic styles of leadership. Thus, the autocratic style is the best style of leadership that can motivate and improve the productivity and performance of teachers in schools. He also recommended that the principals use both autocratic and democratic leadership styles in their schools from situation to situation in order to improve teachers's job performance.

Makia (2016), in her study in Singida Municipal Council, Tanzania, found that the quality of education depends primarily on the way schools are managed rather than the abundance of available resources. Makia states that a lack of leadership knowledge to motivate teachers would lead to poor job performance, despite the availability of all relevant resources required to make students perform well in their examinations. According to **Opoku (2020)**, attempts to improve performance in schools will never succeed if teachers' motivation is ignored. Opoku examined that motivated teachers in a school will render services to the employer and students very efficiently and effectively.

The study was guided by Herzberg's Two Factor Theory, which suggests that there are certain factors in the workplace that cause job satisfaction and others that cause dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1968). According to this theory, challenges facing workers at the workplace can be categorized into these two factors: hygiene factors, including but not limited to job security, salary, working conditions, company policies, and motivators, including recognition, achievement, responsibility, and advancement opportunities, to mention a few. The theory fits the study as challenges facing workers at the workplace were analyzed through Herzberg's framework by identifying hygiene factors leading to dissatisfaction, including salary, allowances,

and good relationships between workers and employers, among others (Herzberg, 1968). Hygiene factors, according to Herzberg's Two Factor Theory, are factors that, when absent, can lead to dissatisfaction among workers, but their presence alone does not necessarily result in increased job satisfaction or effective job performance. However, if hygiene factors are not adequately addressed, they can have significant negative consequences on workers' effective job performance by continuing to cause job turnover, reduced morale, increased stress, and negative health outcomes.

The effectiveness of secondary school teachers in executing their teaching activities can, without doubt, yield improved students' academic and professional development. On the other side, teachers' challenges can have adverse effects on the quality of teaching and learning, leading to poor academic performance, low student morale, and teacher fatigue.

Despite the efforts made by the Secondary Education Development Programme II (SEDP II) from 2010 to 2015 as a continuation of SEDP I, which was implemented between 2004 and 2009, building on the national goals of secondary education provision to improve access with equity, quality, management, and delivery of secondary education in Tanzania. The program was most successful in improving access and equity, particularly in Meru District Council, where the number of secondary schools has increased to 45 serving different underserved communities, as has the number of enrollees (checklist).

Despite these successes, there have been a number of challenges, including poor performance in public secondary education, particularly in national Form IV examinations, with most students getting marginal passes in Division IV or failing completely (Necta, 2015–2020). Furthermore, there have been deteriorating standards of professional conduct, including serious misbehaviour (in and outside of work) and general poor job performance. Employees' absenteeism is unacceptable in schools as it contributes to the low academic performance of students. Moreover, there is a massive movement of teachers from the teaching profession to other professions after some years of teaching, underground strikes, and complaints to force the existing government to increase salaries and promote them on time. These grievances can have a negative impact on the teaching and learning process in secondary schools, which may lead to poor academic performance, low student morale, and teacher burnout.

Secondary school education is a crucial stage in the development of students' academic and professional careers (Lee et al. 2021). In Tanzania, the secondary school education system follows a four-year Ordinary Level (O-Level) and two-year Advanced Level (A-Level) structure. During this period, secondary school teachers play a critical role in shaping the academic, social, and personal development of their students.

From this point of view, little is known in Arusha, particularly in Meru District, about the challenges facing secondary school teachers in executing their duties for effective job performance. This study specifically intends to fill such a knowledge gap. By examining these challenges, the study can provide insights into the barriers that prevent teachers from delivering effective teaching and provide potential recommendations to address them. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to the improvement of the quality of secondary school education in the Arusha region and Tanzania as a whole.

1.2 The significance of the study

This study provided helpful insights to researchers, educators, curriculum developers, parents, and policymakers regarding the motivation of teachers. Curriculum developers were informed about the challenges teachers faced in the actual teaching and learning processes. Educators were provided with information about teachers' needs and additional insights related to teaching and the challenges teachers encountered. The study also allowed teachers to express their views to education stakeholders, politicians, and parents, potentially aiding teachers in working more efficiently. As a result, parents and the wider community knew how to collaborate with teachers and actively invest in their children's education. Additionally, the study enhanced the researchers' knowledge and skills in administering educational matters within any institution. Moreover, it served as a valuable reference for any researcher interested in studying the challenges teachers face in achieving effective job performance.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1 The Study Area

The study was conducted at Meru District Council in Arusha Region. Meru District Council is the leading district with 45 public secondary schools among the seven district councils of the Arusha region. The researcher has decided to conduct this study in Meru district council due to such cases of teachers' turnover and the need for re-categorization after completing their studies,

which are of great concern in the district (Interview Headmaster, Secondary X, Meru DC, 2022). However, the availability of respondents, time factor, and cost effectiveness in terms of accessibility and accommodation for the entire research period ascertain the study to be in Meru District Council.

2.2 Research design

A case study research design was used in this study as it helps to organize social data for the purpose of viewing social reality (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, case study research design allows the researcher to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of teachers' job performance at school in real life. This study applied a qualitative approach because it sought to get detailed information from respondents, and a conclusion was then given accordingly.

2.3 Target population and Sample Size

The target population in this research were teachers working in public secondary schools in Meru District Council. A small sample of 21 public secondary schools was used for in-depth analysis of the 45 schools (Cochran, 1977). From such public secondary schools researched, 100 teaching staff and 10 heads of school participated in the study, and the District Education Officer (DEO) was also involved in the study as an administrator.

2.4 Sampling Techniques

Simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were employed. In many cases, purposive sampling is used in order to access knowledgeable people, i.e., those who have in-depth knowledge about particular issues, maybe by virtue of their professional role, power, and access to networks, expertise, or experience (Cohen et al. 2007). In this technique, heads of schools together with DEO were selected because of their in-depth knowledge of supervising and employees' motivation. By systematic sampling technique, teaching staff were selected randomly in given schools because of their availability. This was done by requesting the list of all teachers in each school. Thereafter, the researcher picked every n th teacher to get the required information from the lists.

The process of simple random sampling was also involved in determining the schools to be investigated by writing all the names of secondary schools on pieces of paper that were folded, put in a container, and mixed up together. One paper was picked at random without replacement. The names of the first ten schools on the picked papers were the ones included in the study.

2.5 Data Collection Methods

The researcher used in-depth interview and focus group discussion (FGD) methods for data collection, whereby semi-structured interview questions were used with all respondents, including the heads of schools and DEO, to get their views on the challenges facing teachers' job performance. A semi-structured interview enables objectivity in defined answers while including more open-ended questions for issues to be explored. FGD was applied to teaching staff from each secondary school by discussing the questions prepared under the guidance of experts.

2.6 Data Analysis

Content and thematic analysis were used to analyse the data built on a general codebook. For data saturation and qualitative data analysis software (NVIVO version 12) was used to sort the codes into categories and subcategories with a specific classification of each category of the interview and FGDs. The process assisted in discovering the variations, similarities, and associations of the materials that helped to draw meaningful themes for the interpretations of the results. Thus, data from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were organized according to themes as per respondents' responses and analysed accordingly.

2.7 Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, the instruments were developed under the close guidance of peer reviewers. After designing the tools, questions were pre-tested with some teachers of two nearby, privately owned secondary schools. Their input helped identify ambiguous questions in the instruments and realign them to the objectives. Also, comments from the peer scholars were of the utmost help in refining the instruments. The best way to increase reliability in this study was through the use of multiple instruments as sources of data. These instruments were tested by other researchers who paid special attention to the wording of the questions and their coding. Following that, a reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha to determine the internal consistency of the instruments' items. This analysis offered quantitative proof of the instrument's reliability.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Demographic characteristics

Overall, these demographic factors provide insights into the respondents' perspectives on the diverse challenges that teachers face in performing their jobs thoroughly, including issues related to sex, age, marital status, salary, household size, experience level, and educational background.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Male	67	60
Female	44	40
Age		
50+	3	3
45-49	10	9
40-44	16	14
35-39	12	11
30-34	23	21
25-29	40	36
20-24	7	6
Married	76	68
Single	32	29
Divorced	0	0
Widow	3	3
Net Salary		
1000000+	21	19
700000-990000	80	72
500000-690000	10	9
Household size		
7+	13	12
4-6	88	79
1-3	10	9
Number of Years at work		
15+	80	72
10-14	16	14
5-9	10	9
0-4	5	5

Education Level		
Master's degree	9	8
Bachelor Degree	92	83
Diploma	10	9

3.1.1 Age distribution

The age distribution shows a relatively balanced representation across different age groups, with a higher percentage of younger teachers (25–34 years old) comprising 57% of the total respondents. Younger teachers may lack teaching experience and may require more support and mentorship to perform their duties thoroughly than the more mature ones (Abetang et al. 2020). However, such younger teachers, as the majority are just from colleges and/or universities, have higher expectations, which if not met by employers at the workplace, they can easily term the absence of such hygiene factors as a challenge to effective job performance (Herzberg, 1968).

3.1.2 Marital status

A significant majority of teachers (70%) are married, which could imply additional responsibilities outside of work that may impact their ability to focus on their teaching duties accordingly once they lack some basic hygiene factors at the workplace, as proposed by Herzberg (1968). Single teachers also make up a considerable portion (27%), and their challenges might revolve around balancing work with personal life.

3.1.3 Net salary

As the majority of teachers were married (70%), which implies additional responsibilities, the findings reveal teachers (74%) earn between Tshs 700,000/= to 990,000/=, indicating that most teachers face financial constraints that could impact their job performance and decide to leave their jobs due to low pay (Li & Yao, 2022). Higher salaries (above Tshs 1,000,000/=) are less common (17%), potentially affecting motivation and job satisfaction among this group.

3.1.4 Household size

The majority of respondents (79%) have household size of 4-6 members, which could suggest additional familial responsibilities that could detract from teachers' ability to devote sufficient time and energy to their work.

3.1.5 Number of years at work

The study was of interest in determining the duration spent by teachers in the teaching profession. This reveals the experiences possessed by respondents in giving out challenges related to their job performance. The findings indicate that a significant portion of teachers (72%) have been in their current job for 15 or more years, indicating a relatively experienced workforce, as shown in Table 1. However, this might also suggest potential challenges related to burnout, complacency, or resistance to change among more senior teachers, as they are reluctant to accept new methods, styles, and working cultures (Kim, 2023).

3.1.6 Educational level

Most teachers (83%) hold bachelor's degrees, while fewer (8%) have master's degrees or diplomas (9%). This distribution shows secondary school teachers are knowledgeable and skilled professionals enough to develop students' talents and academic development once their challenges are addressed. With such educational levels, teachers' ability to access career advancement opportunities or specialized training is higher once they feel dissatisfied at the workplace.

3.2 Challenges Facing Secondary School Teachers in Executing their Duties

The study aimed at examining challenges facing secondary school teachers in executing their teaching activities. From interview and focus group discussions, respondents stated low achievement of students in science subjects, an unfriendly working environment, and the absence of meals at school, a shortage of science teachers, and a shortage of materials for science. Other challenges elaborated were students' disinterest in pursuing science subjects, poor cooperation between parents and teachers, poor cooperation accorded by employers, and political influences, as explained below in relation to themes:

Theme 1. Low salary

Respondents suggested low salaries as one of the factors that demotivate them from performing their work of teaching and learning. From the field, a teacher interviewed stated that:

“The salary paid is, for sure, little compared to the cost of living. With my take home/net salary of less than Tshs 700,000/= I cannot afford to run my home expenditures, paying for my children's school fees, transport, and house rent. I used to supplement income through my poultry project, but it has now collapsed.”

These findings are evidenced by Li and Yao (2022), who discovered that teachers leave their jobs due to low pay; this is because they are loaded with families' responsibilities to be fulfilled despite spending many hours at the workplace. Similarly, Borman and Dowling (2018) contend that low pay is the primary factor affecting teacher attrition and retention.

Theme 2. Delayed salary increment

Respondents were of the opinion that delaying increments to their salary is a factor that demotivates them. They said the lack of an increment for almost a year now has reduced their morale in performing their teaching and learning jobs properly. One of the teachers commented that she had been working for six years without a salary increment. This point reveals that some teachers are demotivated. Respondent E from school said,

“It is now six years without a salary increment; worse enough, some deductions from our salaries are increasing, like income tax and CWT, to mention a few.”

Another respondent from school, F, has said,

“Had I gotten an increment, I would have requested a huge bank loan to buy a plot this year, but I did go for money lenders who charge prohibitive interest rates.”

The findings are in line with the study by Okpara and Nwabia (2022) in Nigeria on factors affecting teachers' quality practices in government secondary schools. The authors commented that delaying paying teachers' salaries and/or salary increments militates teachers' quality practices, which in turn yields poor students' results.

Theme 3. No allowance

Teaching staff commented that no allowances were given to them, which demotivated them from working hard. They mentioned that there was no housing or overtime allowance despite having devoted much effort to students' academic performance. One of the teachers from FGD said,

“Our employer and headmaster are not providing us with even a housing allowance. As a result, I used to pay Tshs 180,000/ to my householder monthly. Nevertheless, during holidays, I request that students come for remedial teaching free of charge, but no extra time allowance is given.”

The findings align with Terzi (2022) study on the effect of short-time working allowances on employee assurance and motivation, which stated that short-time working allowances provide significant benefits to employees in terms of generating a small income only if they do not reduce the monthly payments. Farezhena and Wijayaningsih (2022) propose that the welfare of teachers be regarded and professional allowances be paid on time as it has a beneficial effect on teacher performance; otherwise, it will limit teachers’ efficiency and effectiveness, resulting in poor student output. Teachers should be given short-time allowances for the tasks they used to perform outside of normal working hours and sometimes for the works that were beyond their expectations, like fetching water, maintaining cleanliness, and marking hundreds of students’ scripts daily for normal exercises, tests, and examinations required by the annual school schedule.

Theme 4. Poor working conditions

Teachers claim to have been demotivated due to poor working conditions. They mentioned lack of housing and poor infrastructure, such as un-renovated classes, toilets, and offices, as demotivating factors. Respondents commented that they share toilets with students. Respondents added that they have been conducting marking and teaching preparations in a broken staff room.

Among others, they mentioned that weather conditions and poor means of transport are also challenges they encounter in the working environment as they are living far away from working stations. The researcher’s observation found teachers in a class used as a staff room where everyone was busy attending to their tasks. It was a bit difficult for a discipline master to counsel a student due to a lack of privacy as directed by professional counsellors.

One headmaster said,

“This is my office! It was at first a class, but was partitioned with ceiling boards to be a staff room and headmaster’s office. How can we feel motivated under such circumstances?” he lamented.

When asked about this, DEO has this to say:

“Some teachers are working in a difficult environment as they are living very far from schools, and we do not have houses at some schools. Water is also a problem in some areas, and daily transport is a problem in some areas, to say the least.”

Study findings by Ojaka et al. (2014) show that working conditions offer an atmosphere upon completion of work. Its components include the availability of working tools and equipment, the presence of enough working space needed for the accomplishment of various tasks, leadership styles that give freedom of expression of personal desires, innovation and creativity, a feeling of recognition, and the social work availability of different forms of motivators. More often, some supervisors demand a lot of effort from subordinates in the execution of tasks with little regard to providing the necessary tools and resources required for effective discharge of duties (Ondigo, 2011).

Theme 5. Delayed arrears payment

Teachers pointed out that delaying payment of their arrears demotivated them to work hard to achieve the set goals. Other teachers said they have unpaid arrears from 2015, others from 2018 to date. One of the heads of schools commented that,

“I am demotivated by unpaid arrears; I sometimes think about how to repay a loan to our group because my arrears have not been paid for sometimes, although I sent a request several times’.

This shows that some teachers are forced to request a loan, whether from a bank or any other financial institution, because of delayed arrears, which could help them cover some gaps. The argument is similar to the study by Farezhena and Wijayaningsih (2022) that when teachers are not paid their dues on time, they lose morale, a situation that impacts their daily activities and students’ academic performance as well.

Theme 6. Delayed leave payment

Respondents mentioned that delaying leave payments is a demotivation factor at a workplace. This means teachers are in need of leave payments. One respondent said, *“I am very disappointed to have to follow up on my leave payments for nearly a year now, and there is no indication of being paid.”*

“I have travelled with my family from Arusha to Bukoba and have come back with all the required documents. You can imagine how embarrassing the situation is,” said another respondent from one of the schools.

The findings are in line with Gaihre et al. (2022), who suggest that on-time leave payment is a driving force that directs and controls the institutional activities to be done accordingly in and out of classroom situations.

Theme 7. Delayed promotion

Delaying promotion was another challenge facing teachers. Respondents complained about the delaying promotion from the management system as a critical problem that demotivates them. Some respondents from this group said it has been four to five years since they were promoted from one level to another. This point is related to the study by Nyakongo (2015) in Kenya about the influence of motivation on teachers' job performance in public secondary schools, where the researcher believed that the extent to which regular promotion of teachers is done would significantly enhance individual teachers' commitment to job performance.

Theme 8. Lack of meals at school

Respondents mentioned a lack of meals at school as a challenge. The respondents said they are neither provided with breakfast nor lunch. They said they have been enduring such unfavourable conditions from morning until early evening. The researcher had observed teachers leaving the office at 2 p.m. in one school searching for lunch, and in some other schools, teachers were walking a long distance of about 2 km at 10:30 a.m. in search of breakfast. One respondent from FGD has said,

"Teachers, we are not valued at all, we are working all day without breakfast or lunch, yet we are required to perform well in our teaching activities. Sometimes I use the opportunity to look for lunch by quitting my other payable jobs."

The findings concur with Mujuni et al. (2022) study about teachers' welfare and performance in Uganda. The authors suggest the provision of meals as a motivation factor for teachers to perform their work thoroughly.

Theme 9. Shortage of science teachers

Respondents mentioned a shortage of science teachers as another challenge at many schools. The respondents mentioned that science teachers have a larger number of periods per week compared to arts subjects' teachers. From the findings the researcher has found in two different schools, there were only two science teachers, where one of them was teaching from one to six physics and mathematics subjects, thus, having a total of about 50 periods per week.

"I have about 48 sessions per week. I have been teaching mathematics and physics from Form 3 to 6. On the other side, there is a teacher with only about eight sessions per week teaching only six English language subjects, and we're paid the same," said a respondent from one of the schools.

The findings corroborate the study by Räsänen et al. (2020), which found that high workload contributes accordingly to teachers' turnover rates as they are demotivated to employ their skills and knowledge to equip students to demonstrate their potential. Similarly, the findings are in line with the study by Herawati et al. (2023), which found that, work performance is negatively affected by the enormous work load assigned to employees. In a real sense, no one can be happy seeing his or her fellow teacher pay the same amount for teaching 8 sessions per week while he or she is teaching 30 sessions.

Theme 10. Shortage of teaching and learning materials

Respondents mentioned a shortage of teaching and learning materials, particularly for science subjects, as a challenge. According to the findings in some schools, there was a shortage of

science reference books, and the only few copies found in the library were taken by teachers for note preparation. Thus, students cannot borrow science books at all from the library for fear of scrambling for learning materials. The headmaster at secondary school F said,

“We have plenty of arts reference and textbooks where three students share a single book, but science textbooks are such few in which ten to fifteen students share a book. It is not easy to lend a book to students for this reason.”

Another head of school D said

“The capitation grant is limited to buying some copies, so we have to wait until further notice while insisting students have their own copies to supplement.”

The results corroborate a study by Mohammed and Abdulai (2022) in South Africa on factors affecting secondary school teachers’ motivation, which reveals inadequate teacher-learner support materials in schools affect teachers’ job performance negatively as they fail to demonstrate their potential skills, knowledge, and innovative teaching styles. Balintag and Saengsri (2022) study in Thailand suggests that plenty of educational materials develop teachers’ teaching performance and, vice versa, demotivate their performance.

Theme 11. Influence of politics in education

Respondents said that the influence of politics in educational matters poses a challenge to managing educational institutions. Politicians demand their needs be fulfilled by professionals (teachers) in favour of students and communities, which costs not only teaching staff and administrators but also the nation at large. For instance, as it was introduced, students moving from Form 1 to Form 4 without screening inhibits the delivery of quality education in the country. Nowadays, the issue of new curricula with competence-based training notions, without training teachers on how to go through not only teaching but also measuring and evaluating students, becomes an issue. Teachers said they know nothing about competence-based curricula as they were not trained to perform such curricula; thus, they are implementing it through experience.

Moreover, with new curricula and free education, a shortage of books by the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) like English and Civics has become a crisis in some schools. One head of school said,

“Disbursing very little capitation grants at school for books that cannot even suffice students in a single classroom is very discouraging. We cannot long for good performance under the slogan of big results now with limited learning and teaching materials.”

All these, in addition to emerging new programs like Kalenda and the Teachers Continuous Development Programme, interfere with teachers' annual action plans, which must be implemented thoroughly, they said.

Theme 12. Poor cooperation between teachers and employers

Respondents complained about the poor cooperation given by employers and supervisors. Respondents said employers are not responding to their problems on time and sometimes ignore meeting them to discuss some issues related to their job. Some respondents said they had never even seen their employer personally. The study by Ufuophu-Biri and Ayewumi (2022) in Nigeria suggests communication between employer and employee attracts, motivates, retains, and satisfies employees. Employees that are duly appreciated for satisfactory performance tend to repeat such good works.

Theme 13. Lack of students' readiness to learn

Teaching staff mentioned a lack of readiness for students to learn as a challenge. Readiness is the state of being ready or prepared for something. Respondents commented that students lack readiness and commitment to attend classroom sessions and do whatever classroom tasks are assigned. One respondent from FGD said, *“It demotivates me when I get to the class and I find that students are neither prepared nor committed to learning. They simply get satisfied with whatever marks they score.”*

Another respondent from FGD said, *“Apart from readiness, our students are not cooperative with teachers; they cannot feel free to ask for teacher's help, particularly in academics.”* This also demotivates teachers from fulfilling their duties.

Tian et al. (2022) suggest a student-teacher relationship is a crucial way to enhance teachers' sense of happiness. Once a teacher feels happy with his or her students, they can demonstrate the full potential of teaching and learning processes for students to attain the intended, specific objectives. Being in poor mode demotivates and thus distorts the intended lesson to be covered.

Theme 14. Poor cooperation between parents and teachers

Respondents mentioned poor cooperation from parents to teachers as a challenge, especially in students' affairs. Teachers said that parents are not giving full follow-up on their children's academic reports, disciplinary actions, and the like; all these reduce teachers' morale to work hard as they lack support. The study by Izzo (1999) and Caskey (2008) showed that teachers and parents' communication is very essential. When parents communicate positively with teachers and actively get involved in making students follow up, they increase a clear understanding of what is expected from their children at school, and they may learn from teachers how to work at home to improve their children's education. A respectful teacher-parent relationship is helpful to a student's school performance and could result in higher grades and test scores, long-term academic achievement, and a positive attitude and behaviour. One of the heads said,

“Parents are not recognizing teachers at all; they use abusive language toward teachers, and they back students with in-disciplinary cases. All these create a challenge and reduce interest in helping our students morally and academically.”

Sumra (2019) argues that when there are disciplinary cases among students, teachers and parents should assist to ameliorate the warring situation. Also, the study proved what Hill and Craft (2023) found: that parents' participation in a student's education is consistently set up to be positively associated with a student's academic performance. Children whose parents are actively involved in their education tend to have higher levels of academic performance than children whose parents are involved to a lesser degree.

Theme 15. Higher expectations of teachers towards teaching

Respondents mentioned higher expectations of teachers from universities or colleges as a challenge in performing their duties since they expect a high salary, big positions, and good-mannered students to accord them respect. Similarly, the DEO commented that,

“Some teachers come from universities with higher expectations towards teaching careers and get demotivated after experiencing the real situation in terms of salary, working conditions, and recognition. Thus, many teachers neither employ their talents nor share whatever they have with their colleagues to ensure efficiency in executing their duties.”

The findings are supported by Werang et al. (2023), who found that teachers lose commitment and morale to perform at their best once they get to work and are disappointed with the working environment and other school hygiene factors that are not provided at the workplace. The government should provide a good salary, housing, and overtime allowances, together with a friendly working environment, as a way of making sure teachers feel motivated to execute their duties.

Theme 16. Low achievement of students in subjects

Respondents mentioned the low achievement of students as a challenge to performing well on their tasks. They said understanding science subjects is a challenge for most students, especially in physics and maths. Teachers claim to have been threatened by district authorities over the failures of their students in national examinations. The District Commissioner had been up in arms against the heads of schools whose schools failed to shine academically. One of the headmasters said:

“Despite the fact that we have an ill-equipped laboratory, we get blamed for students’ poor performance in science subjects. I have been warned to pack up and go in case my school keeps on performing poorly. I’m in a dilemma. I receive poor students from public primary schools who can hardly spell their names. What miracles should I make to bring about colourful results?” he complained.

The findings of this study concur with Bandura Theory (1986), which discovered that when individuals or teachers perceive that the outcome is beyond their ability to influence expectancy, motivation is low to perform the desirable task. Hard work is therefore based on estimates of how well the expected results of a given teaching task are going to match with or eventually lead to the desired results.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

From this point of view, this study concluded that teaching, apart from being a noble profession that prepares not only leaders but also champions of various fields, has grown to be forgotten. Although the findings revealed many challenges teachers are facing in fulfilling their jobs at the workplace, including delayed promotions, poor cooperation from parents, and the influence of politics in education, to mention a few, the issue of their interests in terms of good salaries and other entitlements such as subsistence allowance, extra-time allowance, and teaching and learning materials should be prioritized.

4.2 Recommendations

The recommendation drawn from this conclusion is that there are significant needs to shift priorities and attention towards the teaching profession. While acknowledging the noble nature of teaching and its role in shaping future leaders and champions across different domains, the study underscores the concerning trend of teaching being neglected.

Given the challenges highlighted in the study, such as delayed promotions, poor cooperation from parents, and political influence in education, it's imperative to address the fundamental issues affecting teachers' ability to fulfil their roles effectively. One key aspect highlighted is the need for better compensation and entitlements for teachers, including salaries, subsistence allowances, extra-time allowances, and access to teaching and learning materials.

Therefore, the recommendation would be to prioritize the improvement of teachers' working conditions, including addressing salary discrepancies and ensuring they have the necessary resources to excel in their profession. This could involve policy changes, increased funding for education teaching and learning materials, and efforts to raise awareness about the importance of supporting and valuing the teaching profession. By doing so, it's believed that the overall quality of education and the motivation of teachers would improve, ultimately benefiting students and society as a whole. Moreover, addressing these challenges requires comprehensive support and tailored interventions from educational institutions, policymakers, and other stakeholders in the education sector.

4.3 Recommendations for Further Studies

Grounded on the conclusion of the study, the research acclaims the following for further investigation:

i) The recent study has covered only a few public secondary schools in Meru district council. Thus, similar studies should be conducted in other districts and regions of Tanzania so as to inquire into the same issue for better generalization.

ii) A study should be conducted to investigate the contribution of teachers' challenges to students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Tanzania.

Ethical Approval and Consent

Ethical issues were taken into consideration, including protocol entry for gaining access to secondary schools and the potential District Education Officer seeking official permission. As per international standards or university standards, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

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