

CLASSROOM TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIP PRACTICES IN RURAL GHANAIAN BASIC SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT: *In spite of accrued benefits of workplace relationships for organisations, Ghanaian management literature seem oblivious of it in today's knowledge society where human capital has been estimated as a crucial production factor. Consequently, the current study seeks to explore the construct of workplace relationship between classroom teachers and head teachers in a rural Ghanaian setting using 136 survey data randomly chosen from the Ekumfi Education District. A survey instrument with overall alpha of 0.9 was mainly used to test three hypotheses and one research question. Statistical findings practically reveal that 22 per cent of classroom teachers' performances are explained by job stress and propensity to leave as a result of workplace relationship with head teachers in the Ekumfi District. In addition, gender was not a distinguishing factor in workplace relationship management amongst classroom teachers. The researcher concludes, in search of variables predicting teacher productivity, relationship management constitutes significant force in the equation. Hence, school administrators and other stakeholders interested in teachers' morale should intensify their education and build head teachers skills in workplace relationships management. Above all, contribution of this paper to educational policy formulation and evaluation are pointed out.*

KEYWORDS: *teacher workplace relationship, job stress, propensity to leave, and gender.*

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In a classical piece, Rotemberg (1994) explored the concept of altruism at the workplace and questioned whether organisations benefit from encouraging such human relations at work. Indeed, managers' quest for new ways to handling employees in the wake of legalising unions, collective bargaining, and promoting worker satisfaction have all led to the human relations movement (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2006) for organisation's benefits. Today, the growth of knowledge workers suggests employee-friendly workspace that promotes interactivity, flexibility and exchange of knowledge (Drucker, 1999). The crucial role of relationships in organisations contributed to Mintzberg's (1973) pioneer work on managers' liaison role that classified work largely as involving interactions with subordinates and other stakeholders. Another classical work on relationship by Stewart (1967) estimates that employees are most likely to spend 12% of their time with superiors whilst 47% of interactions will occur with peers in the UK. Since the earlier works on interpersonal relationship and workplace productivity by Mintzberg and Stewart, subsequent empirical works seem to support the immense benefit of the construct to diverse stakeholders (e.g. Hannaway, 1989; Kotter, 1982) Based on strategic roles of relationship management, Kinicki et al. gladly hailed it as a mechanism of promoting healthy working culture in organisations. Other researchers have reported the relevance of non-monetary outcomes such as fulfilling jobs,

collective goals, teams, feedback, and decision-making (Locke, 1980; Mitchell & Mickel, 1999). In support of the human relation movement is the concept of human and social capital, which advocates that individuals' knowledge and attitudes are dynamic sources for productivity gains in the world of work today. Similarly, Singh, Bhandarker, Rai, and Jain (2011) argue that firms holding to the dictum of profit maximisation are likely to fail since employees are increasingly seeking procedural justices, fairness, and ethical standards as frameworks of employment relationships and this is not much different in the 21st Century schools.

Closely linked to ethics is the concept of 'values' which has been found to guide working relationships as well (Ros, Schwartz, & Surkiss, 1999). Though many academics appreciate the significance of interpersonal relationships, some (Porter & McKibbin, 1988; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002) vehemently lament the lack of attention the concept has received from schools. Even though management course areas such as communication and customer relationship practices attempt to treat the topic of interpersonal relationship, they rather tend to be nice to clients instead of developing management skills for lasting solutions to workplace supervision (Onsman, 2003). Undoubtedly, workplaces are characterised by conflicts. Hence, Clydesdale (2009) contends that academics should train students to acquire such important skills of relationship management for the future of work.

Workplace literature also highlights the roles of physical settings likely to facilitate harmonious interpersonal relationship in public organisations. Whilst others like (Kim, 2014) are concerned about the method of studying workers subjective behaviour in association with objective physical structures, significant others also recommend interpretivists approach for in-depth exploration of behavioural outcomes for workers (Yanow, 1998; Gagliardi, 1990). Even though physical facilities are out of scope of the current study, teachers' workplace relationship phenomenon could add to the overall insight on the subject in view of often-reported poor rural housing and work infrastructure in the Ghanaian setting. Indeed, interest in buildings as predictors of human interactions and meaning making in public administration has been extensively examined. For instance, Goodsell (2001) found that the way government buildings are dotted with insignias projects social meanings and power relationships between the governed and heads of governors. The aforementioned benefits of relationships between workers and superiors call for global perspectives. In spite of the phenomenon being widely studied from the Western academy, the case of the Ghanaian seems silent from the literature. Unfortunately, the literature on Ghanaian workplace relationship often shows anecdotes about sexual relationships and trade unions' policy documents. Evidently, Obeng-Fosu (2007) offers some lessons on the Ghanaian industrial relation practice and extensive expositions on workplace relationship documented by the Labour Act 2003, Act 651 on worker-employee relationships in Part III, sub-sections 10 and 11 respectively. Similarly, Britwum (2007) gave historical account of six decades of promoting workers' rights in Ghana with some documenting the subordinate relationship between female employees and superiors based on sexual harassment (Andoh, 2001).

However, the significant contribution of harnessing workplace relationships for teacher performance in a Ghanaian rural community remain understudied. Hence, the need to deconstruct the nuances of workplace relationship from educationists' views and examine it influences on teachers' performance in the Ekumfi District of Ghana. The choice of rural setting for the current

study offers the researcher opportunity to examine community structures and social relationships likely to contribute to effective head teacher and classroom teacher connections with implications for productivity measure for educational planning and administration. Therefore, the following research question and hypotheses guided the study.

Research Question 1

Individually, what are the nature of head teachers' and classroom teachers' relationship in the study area?

Research Hypotheses

For confirmation, three null hypotheses were formulated to support and identify statistical significant differences in the study as well. However, the alternate hypotheses are implied in the current study.

H₀1: Classroom teachers' job stress and propensity to leave will not significantly predict teacher performance.

H₀2: teachers' workplace relationship will not be influenced by gender in the Ekumfi District.

H₀3: Sampled teachers' views on workplace relationship will not differ significantly from the population of teachers in the Ekumfi District.

METHOD

The methodology section describes research design, how the samples were selected from the identified population. In addition, data collection instrument, validity and reliability statistics are stated. Above all, data analysis procedures are also stated in this section. Organisational psychologists (Drenth, Thierry, & Wolff, 1998) and social researchers (Babbie, 2010) indicate that descriptive survey enables researchers to systematically identify, record a phenomenon, or process pertain to a particular population in time. Similarly, a descriptive survey design was used to examine head teachers' workplace relationship practices from classroom teachers' perspectives in the Ekumfi District in the Central Region of Ghana.

Participants and procedure

Ekumfi District from rural Ghana has a conservative teacher population of 645 teachers in 46 basic schools. Hence, a simple random sampling technique was used to select 15 representational samples schools from five circuits i.e.(Narikwa, Eyisam, Essakyir, Otum and Esseuehyia) where 136(21%) teachers were chosen for the current study. The samples comprised 56.62% (n = 77) males and 43.38% (n = 59) females. Respondents were from 22.06% (n = 30) semi-urban communities, whilst rural teachers constituted 77.94% (n = 106).

Research Instruments

A two-part questionnaire was used to measure classroom teachers' views on their workplace relationship with head teachers in the Ekumfi Education area. Part I comprised respondents' demographic data with Part II measuring four constructs on relationships at the workplace using five-points Likert type scale and reliability statistics checked in this study. For instance, the influence of workplace relationship on teachers' performance had six items ($\alpha = .68$), whilst teachers' workplace relationship with job stress factor was also measured with 6 questionnaire

items ($\alpha = .72$). The remaining two sub-scales on teachers workplace relationship comprised of their propensity to leave or quit the teaching career (measures with items ($\alpha = .64$) with similar four items used to measure preferred workplace relationship themes ($\alpha = .74$). However, the overall Cronbach alpha obtained for the 20 questionnaire items measured on Likert-type scale produced an appreciable alpha figure of 0.9 in this study.

Primarily, subject matter experts such as colleague academics in the field of educational administration and management, human resource management, and communication made significant suggestions on the self-constructed questionnaire items measuring the four constructs as part of validity checks.

Data Analysis

The valid questionnaires of 136 were entered into IBM-SPSS package for subsequent analysis. Based on the goal of the research design employed in their current study to describe the nature of teachers' and head teachers' relationship in the study, descriptive statistics were primarily used to examine the individual items on the questionnaire in line with Research Question 1. Hence, graphs are used to project the teachers' dominant views on each of the four constructs measuring teachers' workplace relationship. On the other hand, multiple regression was used to test Hypothesis 1, whilst independent sample t-test and one-sample t-tests are used to test Research Hypotheses 2 and 3 respectively in the results section of this paper.

RESULTS

This segment presents the findings of the survey data on workplace relation management amongst classroom teachers. Three hypotheses and one research question are answered using a sample size of 136 participants. However, this segment commences with detail descriptions of the constructs measuring teachers' relationship preference with their head teachers based on Research Question 1.

Research Question 1: Classroom Teachers' Views on Workplace Relationships Schoolteachers' preferred workplace practices

Research Question 1 explored teachers' suggestions on which aspects of their workplace relationship with head teachers were important to them based on four main themes including communication, teamwork, acknowledgement, and staff involvement consultations. Using mean and standard deviation scores, Figure 1 shows that collectively, the teachers sampled for this study rated acknowledgement higher ($M = 4.45$, $SD = .65$) with teamwork receiving the least ($M = 4.26$, $SD = .73$) preference expected from head teachers in the basic schools.

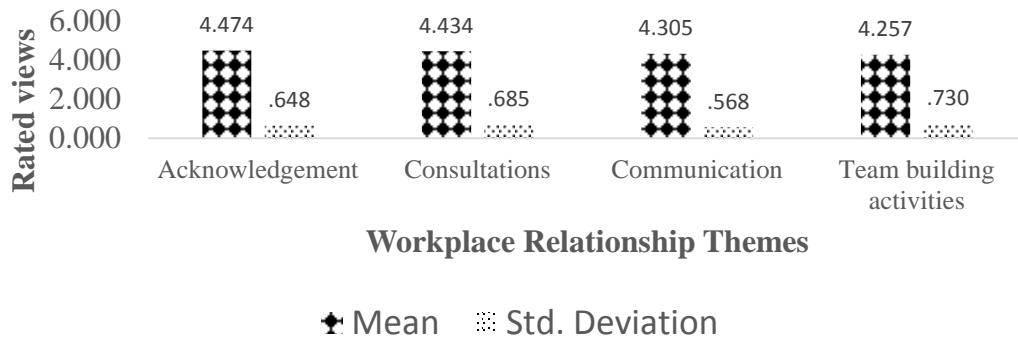


Figure 1: Themes explored under workplace relationship amongst classroom teachers and head teachers

However, subsequent findings in this study are based on hypothetic-deductive approach to nomothetic views (Babbie, 2010). Babbie explains that the tendency to establish causation, prediction, and differences between events require isolation of variables; an important dimension for hypothesis testing. The researcher adhered to the necessary procedures for testing predictions and significant differences by observing fundamental assumptions underlying the statistical models applied to the data in this study.

Hypothesis 1 Outcomes: Teachers' Job Stress and Propensity to Leave as Influence of Workplace Work Performance

Hypothesis 1 examined teachers' job stress and propensity to quit their job (predictors) because of poor workplace relationship with head teachers with implications for work output (outcome factor). Proceeding, statisticians often advocate for basic assumptions testing using varieties of techniques including graphs (Howitt & Cramer, 2011; Field, 2009). Hence, prior to Hypothesis 1 testing, normality and contiguity tests were conducted. Figure 2 shows a normal distribution on the dependent variable (teachers' performance) with standard deviation below 1. Hence, the assumption of normal distribution is tenable in this study.

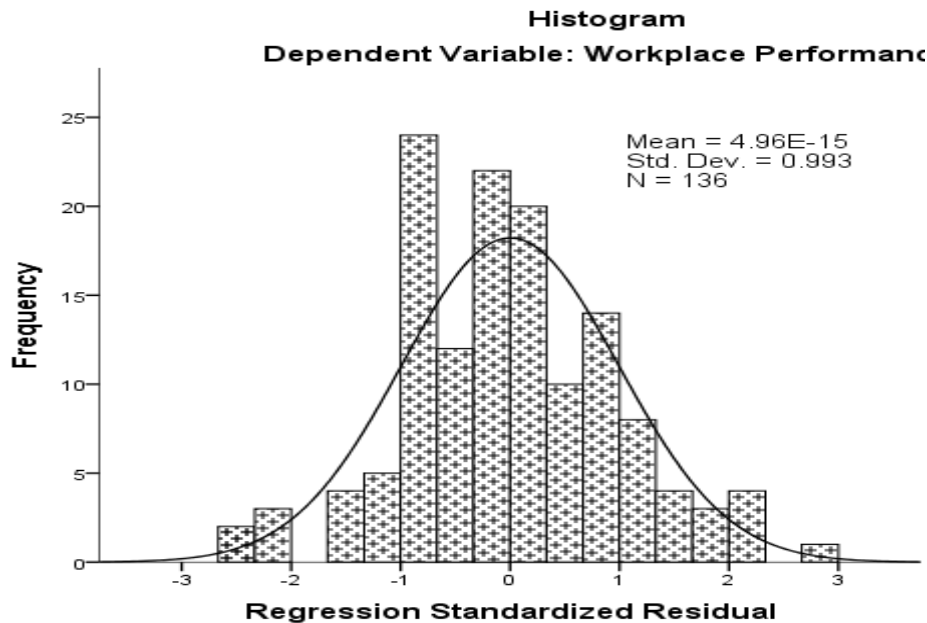


Figure 2 : Normal distribution of dependent variable scores in the regression model for Hypothesis 1

In the same vein, linear assumption as prerequisite for multiple regression modelling was also examined with a diagonal wiggly distribution of scores as evidence of existence of relationship between the predictors and the dependent factor in this study (see Figure 3).

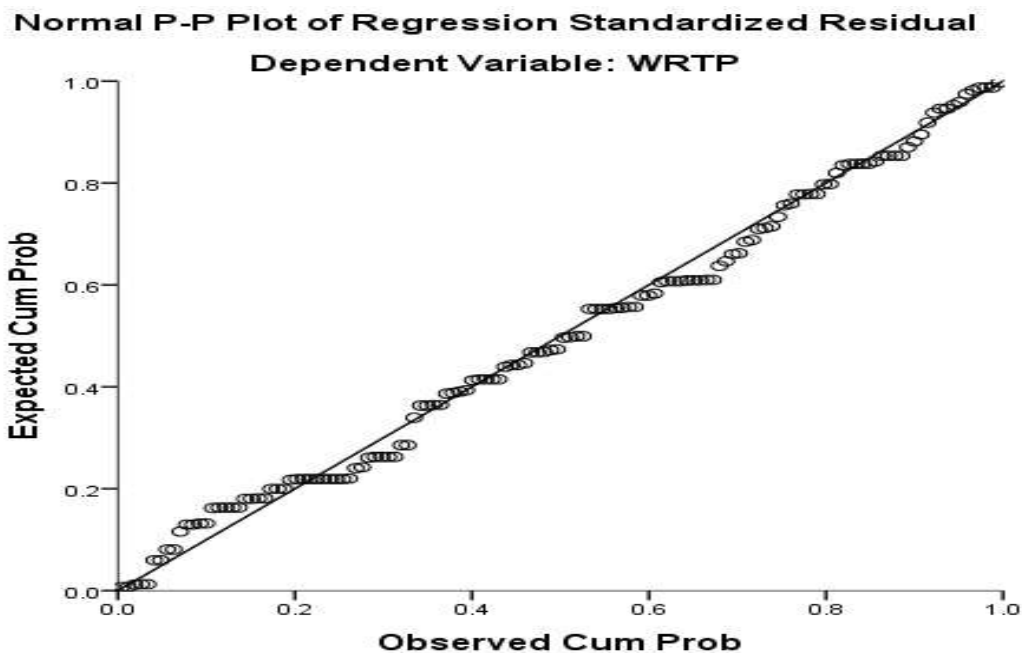


Figure 3 : Contiguity test as regression assumption for Hypothesis 1

Based on the assumptions testing, the one-way ANOVA statistics revealed a significant difference between the predictors and the outcome scores ($F(2) = 10.34, p = .001$) for the predictors and the dependent factor. Based on the significant ANOVA result, the researcher proceeded to test the null Hypothesis 1 (H_01) with multiple regression using the enter method. Table 1 shows a moderately positive association ($R = .38$) between the predictors and the outcome variable (workplace performance of teachers) in this study. In addition, .14 coefficient of determination was recorded for H_01 . Instructively, the regression model significantly ($\Delta R(2, 133) = 10.34, p = .001$) accounted for 12 per cent variance in the outcome factor for teacher population in the study area.

Table 1
Model Summary of Multiple Regression Results for Hypothesis 1

Model	R	R ²	ΔR^2	Change Statistics					
				SE of the Estimate	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change
1	.367 ^a	.135	.122	.39652	.135	10.337	2	133	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Propensity to leave, Workplace job stress

b. Dependent Variable: Teacher performance

In Table 2, the study used t-test as a post-hoc tool to explore the contributions of the independent variables that accounted for the 12% variance in teacher performance scores. The outcome of the t-test results showed that teachers' workplace job stress significantly ($t = 15.60, p = .001$) accounted for 48% variance errors in teacher performance. However, a point increase in teacher performance was likely to reduce teachers' intention to leave by 0.17 scores in this study. Thus, if conditions influencing teachers' job performance are enhanced, their desire to leave the service will be curtailed; an indication of the significant contributions of workplace relationship management on teachers' attrition rate in a rural setting.

Table 2
Predictors Coefficients in Teachers' Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.	95.0% CI for Beta	
	B	Std. Error	Beta				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1 (Constant)	3.544	.227			15.595	.000	3.095	3.994
Workplace job stress	.277	.064	.447		4.325	.000	.150	.403
Propensity to leave	-.107	.066	-.166		-1.609	.110	-.238	.024

Source: Survey data, 2016

Ho2: Gender Influences on Workplace Relationship Management

Hypothesis 2 examined gender roles in workplace relationship management amongst teachers. The sample size used consisted of 57% ($n = 77$) for males and 43% ($n = 59$) females. On the overall workplace relations scores, female teachers recorded slightly higher scores ($M = 4.22, SD = .343$)

compared with males ($M = 4.12$, $SD = .341$). Practically, on a Likert scale of 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree), male and female teachers collectively seemed to agree on good workplace relation with their head teachers based on a mean value of 4. The two samples indicated a homogeneous views on their overall workplace relationship scores with similar standard deviation value below 1 ($SD = .3$) in the current study.

Therefore, the researcher sought to test the statistical difference of the mean scores of male and female teachers' views on their workplace relationships with head teachers in rural Ghana basic schools. The test of equal variances across the two samples was tenable ($F(134) = .050$, $p > .05$) for the current study. Hence, the researcher proceeding to use independent samples t-test which revealed that no statistical significant difference ($t(134) = 1.816$, $p = .07$) between male and female teachers views on workplace relationship with their head teachers in the current study. Supplementary statistics also showed that the researcher was confident that the mean difference of 0.12 between male and female teachers could be realised under similar conditions described in the methodology section of this study during data collection based on 95% CI (0.01; 0.22). Conclusively, the study failed to reject the null hypothesis 2 and concluded that indeed, female and male teachers' had equal views on their workplace relationships with their school heads.

Results of Hypothesis 3

In effect, the researcher sought to subject the mean difference and standard error of mean ($M = 4.38$, $SE = .047$) of the samples to one-sample t-test in order to extrapolate the views into the larger population of teachers in the Ekumfi education district based on themes in Figure 1. Hence, the Null hypothesis that respondents view on workplace relationship preferences would not differ from the entire population of teachers in the District was retained ($t(135) = 93.62$, $p = .001$; two-tailed) in lieu of the alternate hypothesis in the present study. Consequently, the study concludes that teachers' views of preferred workplace relationship practices were not statistically different between sampled schools and the rest of basic schools in the study area. In fact, a p -value of .001 indicates that a t (93.62) this big could only be due to 0.1% chance of deriving a mean difference of 4.38 which lies between 4.28 (lower boundary) and 4.47 (upper boundary) in the population.

DISCUSSIONS OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The views expressed by classroom teachers on their relationships (Figure 1) with institutional heads have managerial implications for promoting workplace creativity in the teaching profession. For instance, Montag, Maertz Jr, and Baer (2012) extensively argue that workplace creativity is largely influenced by contextual factors aside the thought processes of individuals. Therefore, the type of relationship perceived by the teachers could influence their job performances and effectiveness in the Ghanaian context as well. Similarly, Herzberg's two factor theory has implications for workplace relationships for knowledge producers in terms of hygiene factors. Mulins (2005) submits that the absence of hygiene or maintenance factors which are related to the work environment are the surest recipe for worker dissatisfaction. Hence, extrinsic factors unrelated to the job itself including innocuous construct of 'workplace relationships' pose greater risk to teacher effectiveness.

However, the unpredictable nature of human behaviour continues to force Educational managers' thinking of more creative and best practices that drive organisational performance. Therefore, the 22 per cent factors promoting healthy teacher performances in the current study offer educational administrators training resource and performance evaluation criteria in Ghanaian basic schools. Indeed, relationship is a crucial variable for public workplaces vis-à-vis the hospitality of the Ghanaian. Similarly, Aquino, Grover, Goldman, and Folger (2003) submitted that individuals working together have the potential to offend or harm one another intentionally or unintentionally. In addition, Crowley (2014) outlines the impact of workplace rules as forms of control on behaviour and the threat of sanctions for compliance (Edwards & Whitston, 1989; Tenbrunsel & Messick, 1999). Indeed, important source of compliance likely to influence classroom teachers' relationships with their heads could be the rules and policies governing the Ghanaian teaching profession. So, educational administration needs analysis towards workplace relationship training should interrogate obsolete rules guiding the working relationships in the Ghanaian basic school system. Haraway (2005) also strongly recommends the strengthening of grievance procedures for addressing workplace relationship. Hence, conflict resolution mechanisms are important management tools that can facilitate teacher performances as well, if one has to account for the 88 per cent variance in Hypothesis 1 (Table 1). Therefore, statistical significant findings in this study hold lessons for continue education on workplace relationship management in the Ghana Education Service. The study recommends that teacher annual appraisal criteria should incorporate workplace relation into formal evaluation works as well for productivity gains.

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