



Fostering Teacher Teamwork: Strategies and Challenges for School Heads a Study of Community Secondary Schools in Nyamagana-Mwanza, Tanzania

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the role of school heads in fostering teamwork among secondary school teachers in Nyamagana district, Mwanza region, Tanzania. The study was guided by three specific objectives: exploring the significance of teamwork among community secondary school teachers, examining the strategies employed by school heads to promote teacher teamwork, and identifying the challenges they face in this endeavor. Utilizing a qualitative research approach and a case study design, the study employed non-probability sampling, selecting 25 teachers for group discussions, and interviewing 5 heads of schools. The findings revealed the importance of teamwork for both student performance and overall school success. Despite the efforts of school heads, the promotion of teamwork was found to be insufficient due to a lack of proper knowledge

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and techniques in establishing and conducting it. Various challenges were identified, including the inadequate technical and interpersonal skills among school heads, attributed to inadequate training. The study recommends that government leaders provide training to school heads on managerial techniques for promoting teamwork and offer motivation to teachers to enhance their morale and work motivation. In conclusion, the study advocates for recognizing teacher teamwork as a fundamental element in motivating teachers, improving efficiency, and fostering the development of innovative ideas for overall school effectiveness.

Keywords: Teacher teamwork; team building in education; teacher collaboration.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Tanzania, like in many other countries, the educational landscape is undergoing unprecedented changes which include technological, pedagogical, demand for lifelong learning and adoptability, issues of inclusive education, focus on STEM education to name a few. These changes are a wake-up call for all teachers to work together as a team and with other stakeholders for a broader shift toward preparing students for a rapidly changing world and equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary for success in the 21st century. However great as it sounds, these changes are obviously presenting complex challenges for those managing institutions such as community secondary schools. To navigate the challenges successfully, a concerted effort is required from all stakeholders, but more specifically from teachers as a team of people entrusted with the responsibility of facilitating the process of acquiring education. For by pooling together their efforts, skills, knowledge, and energies, they can collectively work towards realizing the intended educational goals. In essence, the collaborative endeavors of teachers and school leaders, as well as cooperation with other stakeholders within a school, are indispensable for cultivating a dynamic and effective learning environment where educational goals can be achieved.

Hence, recognizing the pivotal role of teacher teamwork in achieving educational objectives, this study explores the significance of collaboration among teachers in community secondary schools. Specifically, the paper explores the importance of teachers' teamwork and the strategies which school heads employ in facilitating and promoting teamwork, the strategies employed to foster a collaborative culture and the challenges they encounter. Throughout this study, the term "teamwork" and "collaboration" are used interchangeably to mean the same. Borrowing from Polega Neto, Brilowski

& Baker [1] the concept of teachers' teamwork in this study refers to the ability of individual teachers to work with others through cooperation and communication to achieve common school goals. Furthermore, in the context of this study, teacher teamwork signifies a scenario where educators within a school choose to collaborate in pursuit of their institution's set objectives [2]. Likewise, Chukwedi (2014) defines teamwork as collaborative efforts toward achieving organizational goals and underscoring its influence on job satisfaction. Thus, based on the conceptual understanding of teamwork, it is apparent that investigating the significance of teacher collaboration, the associated challenges, and strategies for promoting teamwork among secondary school teachers in Tanzanian community schools is imperative.

Despite the prolonged application of teamwork in Tanzanian schools, there exists a noteworthy gap in comprehending its principles and the optimal methods for implementation, particularly among certain school heads and teachers. This indicates that, while some schools in Tanzania showcase unity and collaborative efforts among teachers, achieving a widespread and effective implementation of teamwork remains a considerable challenge. Moreover, it is apparent in Tanzania that the establishment of teamwork in schools, as emphasized by Emmanuel (2015), has not been effectively achieved despite sincere endeavors through initiatives like workshops, seminars, and meetings aimed at fostering its practice. The collaborative endeavors among teachers play a pivotal role in enhancing educational outcomes for students. For when educators engage in collaborative efforts within the school context, the result is an improvement in educational outcomes, the cultivation of supportive learning environments, efficient utilization of teaching and learning resources, and the promotion of teacher professional development. All these factors significantly contribute to academic well-being.

Hence, building on this perspective, the persistent under-performance of students in many Tanzanian schools is often linked to the absence of a collaborative school environment, especially among teachers. This viewpoint aligns with Raman and Don's (2019) assertion regarding how collaboration can effectively propel development within the school. By tapping into a diverse array of skills, experiences, and judgment, collaborative efforts yield superior results compared to individual endeavors. Thus, having recognized this deficiency, this study explored the importance of teamwork among teachers in selected community secondary schools in Nyamagana district, Mwanza, Tanzania. The goal was to identify the level of knowledge among teachers and school heads regarding the importance of teamwork, the strategies employed, and the challenges faced by school heads in fostering a culture of teamwork. The study was therefore guided by the following research objectives.

1. To explore the significance of teamwork among community secondary school teachers;
2. To examine strategies employed by school heads in promoting team work among teachers,
3. To identify challenges which school heads face in promoting teachers' teamwork.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Importance of Teamwork among Teachers

The significance of teamwork among teachers cannot be emphasized enough. Practical experience consistently demonstrates that teamwork is indispensable for every success within an organization. According to Raes and Kyndt [3], teamwork significantly enhances teachers' teaching practices by alleviating workload stress through a collaborative approach. This approach involves collectively addressing tasks, sharing positive teaching experiences, and exchanging knowledge, teaching materials, and instructional methods [4]. Teamwork also facilitates the distribution of responsibilities, including instructional delivery, preparation of teaching materials, and decision-making on curriculum and student assessment (Navin, 2004). In essence, teamwork ensures the effective accomplishment of important tasks [5],

thereby enhancing the overall teaching and learning experience in schools.

Moreover, as detailed in a study by Rehman [6], teamwork plays a vital role by significantly encouraging a sense of collectivism, nurturing relationships, and cultivating commitment to the school's overarching objectives. When the school community collaborates, individuals tend to be more motivated, leading to heightened job satisfaction and a reduction in turnover rates within the school. Babirye [7] similarly suggests that robust teamwork contributes to low turnover in schools. As a result, school leaders play a crucial role in motivating teachers to collaborate for effective performance. Additionally, Polega et al. [8] emphasizes teamwork's importance in promoting community building, school success, and the establishment and achievement of common goals. They highlight how teamwork contributes to a positive school culture and an environment conducive to open communication. In summary, teachers' collaborative efforts through teamwork have wide-ranging positive effects on the school environment and teacher satisfaction.

2.2 The Strategies Employed by School Heads in Promoting Teamwork

School leaders can cultivate teamwork among teachers by employing a range of strategies tailored to the specific context of the school. One effective approach involves designing small-scale activities, such as get-togethers or sports events, to encourage teacher participation. These activities cultivate a team-working culture, allowing school leaders to observe effective collaborations. As suggested by Hallinger [9], strategically grouping teachers into teams based on these observations can elevate good teams to become stronger teams. Furthermore, Eameaim et al. [10] stress the importance of team building through clear purposes, defined roles, and established goals. School leaders play a critical role in assigning specific roles and goals to teachers, fostering a sense of teamwork.

To inspire teams, school leaders ought to implement a reward system that emphasizes teamwork over individual performance. As suggested by Hargreaves [11], although individual rewards may be appropriate in specific circumstances, prioritizing a team-based approach is essential for fostering collaboration

and discouraging an overemphasis on individual accomplishments.

Recognizing collective achievements, such as improved school performance in national examinations, contributes to building a positive team culture. Additionally, providing teamwork building training for teachers, as suggested by Hartenian [12], can enhance team skills. This training, which may involve external facilitators, equips teachers with the necessary skills for effective collaboration. Short-term training sessions, proposed by Skaalvik and Skaalvik [13], are also effective tools for promoting teamwork.

To reinforce the importance of teamwork, school leaders should set clear and achievable collective goals and objectives. This inspires teachers to work collaboratively toward shared objectives, providing a clear sense of purpose and direction. Therefore, creating team training programs and implementing effective reward systems are essential strategies for school leaders to ensure and promote teamwork among teachers.

2.3 The Challenges Faced by School Heads in Promoting Teamwork

The endeavor to cultivate teamwork among secondary school teachers, as part of the responsibilities of school heads, is indeed a stimulating and gratifying pursuit. Nonetheless, similar to other roles undertaken by school heads, this responsibility is not without its share of challenges. A prevalent obstacle stems from the diverse nature of individuals within the school community, where not everyone possesses the requisite skills for effective teamwork [14]. Another overarching challenge in fostering teamwork is intricately tied to leadership itself; for school heads to persuade others to collaborate for a shared objective, they must exemplify strong leadership qualities and serve as role models in collaborative efforts.

Beyond these general challenges, school heads wrestle with various impediments specific to community secondary schools in Tanzania. Mtawa [15] highlights the formidable challenge of establishing and instilling a culture of teamwork among teachers. This sentiment is reinforced by Pitsoe and Isingoma [16], who observe that many teachers tend to operate in isolation within schools, making it difficult for school heads to

promote a sense of teamwork among them. Similarly, Kumso [5] notes that heads of schools and teachers often operate independently, a viewpoint echoed by Levi [17], who suggests that some individuals may prefer isolation over collaborative efforts. Effecting a transition from individual self-efficacy to collective efficacy among teachers is also a significant hurdle for school heads.

Another noteworthy challenge is the frequent transfer of teachers without immediate replacements, disrupting established teamwork due to reasons such as marriage, illness, promotions, and demotions, leading to uneven shifts in workstations [18]. This poses a considerable obstacle for school heads in establishing effective teamwork. Additionally, the inadequate motivation of teachers adversely affects teamwork by impacting the maintenance of positive working relationships [19]. Llah [20] underscores the importance of motivating teachers through timely and adequate payment for fostering a spirit of teamwork. Insufficient motivation can negatively affect teachers' morale, undermining the collaborative spirit and potentially resulting in increased turnover. Babirye [7] links low turnover in schools to the presence of strong teamwork, emphasizing the pivotal role of motivation in fostering collaboration.

Moreover, as noted by various scholars, scarcity of time appears to be one of the recurring challenge for school heads in promoting teamwork [21,22,23]. School heads express concerns about finding common time for team meetings, and certain studies indicate challenges related to team members misusing or ineffectively using the available time [22,24]. Time constraints hinder school heads from organizing effective cooperative work among teachers.

Effective communication is acknowledged as a pivotal factor in building successful teamwork [25,26]. However, research suggests a deficiency in clear communication when school heads attempt to establish teacher teams. Szceslul and Huizenga [24] argue that this lack of communication includes school heads' inability to convey a vision or provide feedback, leaving teams without clearly stated goals and a sense of purpose. Additionally, school heads grapple with challenges related to budget constraints and insufficient funds released by the government. Musalia [27] notes that strict directives on fund

usage impede efforts to achieve goals such as motivating workers and acquiring teaching and learning materials, thereby hindering the promotion of teamwork.

3. METHODOLOGY

This Study was conducted in Nyamagana District, Mwanza Tanzania, and focused on five Community secondary schools. To achieve the purpose of the study, a qualitative research approach and a case study design were employed. Data was collected through in-depth interview and focus group discussion involving five school Heads and 25 teachers who were purposefully selected based on their years of experience. Data was analyzed thematically whereby the process commenced with a thorough review of field notes and transcription of audio data. This process was useful in comprehending the content and identifying the recurring patterns or relationships. Subsequently, relevant data were categorized, and codes were assigned to facilitate identification or reference. Themes were then derived from these codes to uncover broader patterns, which were further scrutinized to determine their relevance to the research questions. To maintain confidentiality pseudonym names were used throughout the study for both schools involved and individual participants. Data were presented in a narrative form, incorporating quotations to give voice to the participants.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's findings underline the undeniable importance of teamwork among teachers working in community secondary schools in Tanzania. Moreover, due to the ever-changing landscape of education and the need to meet the diverse needs of students, the collaborative efforts of teachers emerge as a fundamental pillar for success. Thus, based on this viewpoint this study on the importance of teachers' teamwork, challenges encountered by school leaders in the effort to promote teamwork and the strategies they employ in that endeavor has yielded noteworthy insights. The study established that within the context of community secondary schools, educators collaboratively work to improve teaching practices, share knowledge, and cultivate a positive school culture. The study's findings highlight that when school leaders prioritize promoting teamwork among teachers, starting from enhancing communication

to collectively addressing challenges, teamwork becomes a crucial factor in enhancing the overall teaching and learning experience for students. In presenting and discussing the findings, this paper follows the study's objectives. The focus is initially on the significance of teamwork among teachers, followed by an exploration of the strategies employed by school leaders to promote teamwork, and finally, an examination of the challenges associated with teamwork among community secondary school teachers. This comprehensive approach sheds light on the pivotal role that teamwork plays in shaping the educational landscape.

4.1 Participants' Views on the Importance of Teamwork among Teachers

In assessing participants' views on the significance of teamwork among teachers, it became evident that their views are to some extent shaped by their beliefs and lifestyle which on the other hand is influenced by the embrace of the African philosophies which promote bonding and teamwork as a means of effectiveness. Some of the philosophies include the Ujamaa Philosophy by Mwalimu J. K. Nyerere the first President of Tanzania and the founding Father of the nation. The Ujamaa Philosophie, promotes teamwork and cooperation as the means of putting efforts together for the well-being on the entire society rather than the individuals. Moreover, upon observation and attentive listening, it became apparent that the participants strongly embrace the Ubuntu and the 'Ujamaa' philosophies. These philosophies are grounded in the African humanism, which underline the interconnectedness of humanity and the notion that individuals thrive within a community through mutual support and cooperation. When questioning participants about their perspectives on the importance of teamwork among teachers, they emphatically asserted that the success of the school transcends individual achievements, emphasizing a collective effort. Consequently, teamwork is deemed crucial as it cultivates a spirit of shared responsibility, ultimately contributing to the effectiveness of the school.

Participants expressed the view that collaborative efforts and mutual support lead to the overall prosperity and growth of the school, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose, all of which are vital for the institution's well-being. Furthermore, the study's findings underscore the

promotion of teamwork by emphasizing collaboration, interconnectedness, and the understanding that individuals thrive when actively contributing to the collective well-being. This aligns with the work of Chigangaidze, Matanga, and Katsuro [28], who advocate for the adoption of African philosophies that champion teamwork based on their acknowledged importance.

Moreover, while discussing the importance of teamwork in advancing institutional goals, respondents emphasized that it fosters a sense of unity among workers, encouraging them to strive collectively for the achievement of shared objectives. During a focus group discussion, a participant highlighted that working as a team enables teachers to perceive themselves as a unified entity, all with a common goal, motivating them to work in harmony towards the school's objectives. This sentiment aligns with Bandura's Collective Efficacy Theory, which maintains that collective efforts facilitate the attainment of common institutional goals. The theory suggests that collaboration is a straightforward approach to reaching these goals, emphasizing the necessity of teamwork for a school to fulfill its common objectives, leading to increased performance and overall success.

Furthermore, during interviews, the participants consistently highlighted the importance of teamwork based on its fundamental role in boosting schools towards achieving their purposes. Notably, a participant from one of the schools underlined the critical nature of teamwork, emphasizing its importance in fostering unity among teachers. This unity, according to the respondent, establishes a robust connection to the school and instills a collective commitment to working collaboratively towards common goals and objectives. This finding underlines the organizational significance of teamwork, contributing to heightened worker performance. This finding relates well with the findings from the study by Sanyal and Hisam [29] which established that teamwork is indispensable for promoting collaboration among employees as they creatively strive towards shared aims and objectives. Additionally, Musab et al. [30] assert that schools prioritizing teamwork enjoy advantages such as swift decision-making, increased flexibility, shared responsibilities, and organizational focus. Moreover, as found by this study and as earlier established by Don and Arumugam [14], teamwork among teachers is significantly important because it contributes to

individual growth, integrity as well as the effectiveness of the organization. For this reason, like other educators and researchers, we can argue that teamwork in public secondary schools is imperative for attaining educational and school-related goals.

Another finding regarding the significance of teamwork among teachers extends to its pivotal role in cultivating a harmonious working environment, thereby minimizing avoidable conflicts among teachers and other staff members. Participants emphasized the positive impact of teamwork in fostering a serene atmosphere that ultimately enhances overall work effectiveness. This importance has been articulated by Don and Arumugam [14], who assert that teamwork significantly contributes to efficient decision-making within a constrained time-frame, and in the event of conflicts, prompt resolutions can be achieved through consultation with other team members. During the Focus Group Discussion, a participant emphasized that teamwork unites teachers, fostering a sense of empathy and solidarity that eliminates unnecessary misunderstandings. This collaborative spirit engenders a conducive working environment which is favorable to both peaceful and productive endeavors.

Likewise, in articulating the importance of teamwork, one participant stated, "Teamwork is important because it helps to reduce uncertainties within the school." Similarly, another participant in the focus group discussion expressed, "Working as a team fosters a sense of unity, transforming colleagues into a cohesive entity resembling friends or relatives." This participant further argued, "This bond helps diminish uncertainties, including conflicts, dishonesty, and gossip, which could otherwise disrupt the team's cohesion." These quotes underscore the importance of teamwork in an organizational setting like a school. Hence, based on these findings, it is evident that fostering teamwork within a school is crucial because it contributes to the creation of a conducive atmosphere that supports effective working environment. These findings align with a study conducted by Sanyal and Hisam [29], revealing that teamwork allows organizational members to experience emotional freedom, build self-confidence, and positively collaborate in decision-making and planning. Subsequently, this facilitates the establishment of a healthy work environment characterized by viable agendas, creative activities, and positive values.

Another significant aspect of teamwork among teachers is its role in fostering strong relationships among them. As a matter of fact, the findings clearly indicate that teamwork is regarded as a catalyst for building robust connections among teachers, as evident from participant responses gathered during focus group discussions involving 25 respondents across five groups. A participant in one of the discussions expressed, "Teamwork fosters robust relationships among teachers within a school and between teachers and their school head." The participant emphasized that through teamwork, members learn from each other and collectively grow for their own well-being and the well-being of the institutions. This perspective on the importance of teamwork aligns well with the findings from a study by Don and Arumugam [14], when they argue that, "Among the importance of cooperation in the organization of the school is working to improve the performance, creating strong links between workers and harmonious working environment, improve employee productivity, and reduce costs" (p. 34). Alongside other identified benefits of teamwork established by this study, it is evident that teamwork contributes to interconnectedness, serving as the foundation for successful collaboration driven by a shared goal of enhancing academic performance among learners. This discovery validates the assertion made by earlier researchers, including Dugang [31] that collaborative efforts of multiple individuals lead to effective attainment of organizational goals. Therefore, the significance of teamwork cannot be overstated.

A parallel perspective on the importance of teamwork among teachers was voiced by the five heads of schools during interview sessions, emphasizing that teamwork promotes unity among teachers and other members of the school. Moreover, the synergy created by unity among teachers was said to be one of the factors that contributes to fostering good relationships, and reciprocally, strong relationships contribute to organizational unity. This finding resonates well with Tripathy [32] whose study concludes that teamwork compels team members to depend on one another, thereby fortifying relationships and establishing links crucial for resolving minor conflicts and problems. This underscores the importance of unity within the team, promoting trust, expediting decision-making, and nurturing cooperation. Such principles align with the Collective Efficacy Theory, emphasizing the role of teamwork in

enhancing communication among team members. Effective communication, in turn, cultivates strong working relationships, ultimately contributing to institutional performance when consistently maintained.

Another significant key aspect identified by this study in regard to the importance of teamwork among teachers, is that it creates the opportunity for mutual learning and enhanced work performance. In both focus group discussions and individual interviews, many participants acknowledged that working as a team provides an invaluable opportunity to learn from one another. This observation resonates with [33] research, asserting that teamwork plays a crucial role in enriching workers' knowledge within their respective roles. Marquis suggests that collaborative efforts in schools contribute to a collective learning process that benefits every team member. Therefore, the improvement of teaching practices not only facilitates the acquisition of new knowledge by teachers but also contributes to their professional development, ultimately enhancing overall effectiveness in their careers.

Furthermore, the study revealed that teamwork among teachers significantly contributes to increased work performance. Insights from the five focus group discussions indicated that teamwork fosters heightened work performance, attributed to the strong relationships and trust among teachers. This environment promotes dedicated teaching with the singular purpose of elevating students' learning outcomes and performance in examinations. The collaborative nature of teamwork acts as a motivational factor, inspiring teachers to enhance their work performance. These findings align with research conducted by Sanyal and Hisam [29], asserting that teamwork profoundly impacts the performance of both organizations and individual workers within a team. Therefore, teamwork is correctly recognized as a crucial occupational skill essential for achieving organizational goals, visions, objectives, and plans, thereby activating and enhancing workers' performance within the organization. Similarly, Samwel [34] posits that teamwork serves as the organizational axis around which various organizational and individual components revolve to fulfill the organization's philosophy. Consequently, teamwork emerges as a vital factor and an indispensable skill in facilitating improvement processes within schools and enhancing the overall performance of teachers.

The study's findings established the significance of teamwork among teachers in fostering a sense of belonging and ownership within the institution. According to participants in the five focus group discussions, teamwork plays a crucial role in cultivating a strong sense of ownership among team members. Collaborative efforts within the team were highlighted as instilling a profound sense of belonging and ownership among teachers. Specifically, participants emphasized that teamwork creates a feeling of possession, where individuals take pride in considering the group and the school as their own. The sentiment of ownership, as expressed by one participant, fuels motivation among team members to contribute actively towards the success and excellence of both the group and the school. Interview sessions further revealed that teamwork consistently engenders a sense of ownership among teachers, particularly towards the school. This deep connection leads teachers to perceive the school as their own, prompting them to invest their utmost efforts in ensuring its superior performance. These findings align with Tripathy's (2018) study, which emphasizes that teamwork contributes to team members feeling integral to the organization. Through collaborative contributions and dedicated efforts in various projects and tasks, teachers develop strong connections, establishing a profound sense of ownership. In the context of education, teachers, driven by this sense of ownership, are motivated to channel their collective efforts towards the successful realization of the school's goals and objectives.

The study further highlights another crucial aspect of teamwork among teachers in community secondary schools. Teamwork generally plays key roles in cultivating a culture of respect and care within the school community. Teamwork, as revealed in interviews with teachers, is shown to foster a culture of respect among its members. In discussing this aspect, one participant emphasized that collaborative efforts within a team contribute significantly to the development of mutual respect among its members. This respect extends to valuing the opinions and contributions of each team member. This viewpoint aligns with the findings of Kumso [5], who posits that collaboration among teachers can enhance the teaching and learning environment in schools. In essence, effective teamwork, involving both teaching and non-teaching staff, is instrumental in promoting respect among team members. This, in turn,

contributes to the overall success of educational organizations in achieving their goals.

4.2 Strategies Heads of Schools Employ in Promoting Teamwork among Teachers

Results from this study indicate that school heads employ various strategies that promote team work among teachers. In some cases, the strategies were implemented intentionally, and some were carried out as part of the regular practice which resulted into promoting teamwork among teachers. Among strategies that came up repeatedly were; professional development workshops, communicating school mission and vision, team-building activities, communication channels, collaborative planning, resources sharing, inclusive decision making, mobilizing teachers to work collaboratively, and other forms of motivation, particularly recognizing those who excel in different areas. Below is an overview of the strategies as found in this study.

Professional development workshops: During individual interviews with school heads and in the focus group discussion, most participants highlighted professional development workshops as one of the key strategy which contributes to fostering teamwork among teachers. During focused group discussions, participants emphasized the importance of these workshops in guiding teachers to function as a cohesive team. Although professional development workshops were not necessarily intended for building teamwork, the participants noted that when teachers come together during seminars and workshops, the result was the deepening of their relationships and bonding which eventually contributed to building stronger relationships and teamwork. This finding resonates well with the views of Gast, Schildkamp and van der Veen, [35] when they argue that through teacher professional development workshops, they are practically exposed to working together in small groups. As a result, they learn more about each other and eventually they strengthen their bonds, thus the growth of teams.

Recognition of unique performance by individual teachers: The findings indicated that both verbal and material rewards were utilized by heads of schools to recognize individuals exhibiting outstanding performance. A participant noted, "Our head of school emphasizes teamwork in various activities, including

teaching." Financial incentives, such as monetary rewards for academic achievements, are given to individual subject teachers, and occasionally to the entire department for active contributions to student success. These findings align with Hargreaves' [36]' assertion that effective rewards should be team-based, encouraging collective efforts over individual accomplishments. While financial incentives prove effective, their implementation requires careful balance to prevent fostering selfishness and individualism among teachers.

Holding regular meetings: During the study, it was observed that public secondary schools hold regular meetings to build and enhance teamwork among teachers. School meetings serve as a platform for open communication, encouragement, and the discussion of challenges and successes related to teamwork. According to a participant in focus group discussion, "The heads of schools use meetings as a place where all matters concerning the application of teamwork in implementing various tasks in the school are communicated and discussed." This practice aligns with Hildrum, [37] who emphasized on the importance of face-to-face contact at regular intervals for both social and business purposes. Meetings facilitate information sharing, decision-making, and the assessment of options, thus, contributing significantly to building teamwork within the school.

Heads of schools' participation in teaching: A third strategy involves the active participation of heads of schools in teaching activities. Focus group discussion 2 revealed that some heads of schools allocate teaching periods to themselves, demonstrating solidarity with the teaching staff. This hands-on involvement encourages teachers to perceive their leaders as active contributors, fostering motivation and teamwork. While this may not be explicitly considered a strategy for promoting teamwork, it serves as a means for other teachers to recognize the efforts of school heads as implementers of the curriculum. The participation of heads of schools in teaching activities was pointed out as one of the factors that contribute to strengthening the bond among teachers and contributing to the achievement of common educational goals.

Heads of schools' consideration of individual teachers' concerns: Another crucial strategy highlighted by teachers is the attentiveness of heads of schools to individual concerns. This

approach involves addressing the diverse problems faced by teachers and ensuring fair consideration. Participants noted that school heads who actively listen and respond to individual concerns contribute to building teamwork, as teachers feel supported and valued. However, the study also identified instances where heads of schools may inadvertently foster division among teachers by showing preferential treatment. This underscores the importance of unbiased consideration of individual teachers' concerns to maintain unity within the teaching staff. These findings align with Aslanargun's [38] emphasis on the role of school principals in guiding and motivating teachers while being sensitive to their problems and expectations. The participants emphasized that when school leaders are supportive to their teachers and considers their concerns without bias, the result is that it contributes to promoting and fostering teamwork and collaboration among all teachers as well as the support staff in the school.

Communicating and Promoting School vision and Mission: One fundamental strategy employed by heads of schools as was found by this study was the endeavor to realize school vision and mission. Some participants in this study, mentioned the efforts made by school heads in making sure that teachers are well informed about the vision and the mission of their school. They underlined that by being aware of the school vision and mission, they were able to develop a sense of belonging and together they saw the need to work together as a team in realizing their vision and mission. Emphasizing on this important strategy one of the participants further argued, "The first strategy which the head of school use in promoting teamwork among us teachers, is communicating and promoting school vision and mission. "The participant saw this as the most important strategy saying that, unless teachers, know what they are trying to achieve as a school, it is difficulty to bring them together. They can easily come together when they know they have the purpose and the goal which they are all aiming to achieve and as the result they establish strong bonds that keeps them focused as a team. This strategy resonates well with Dugang [31], who views teamwork as something that cements a group of people together in such as way that their bonds are strengthened such that they journey together smoothly overcoming all possible obstacles as they strive towards achieving their institutional goals. Hence, communicating and promoting

school vision and mission is a powerful strategy because, when teachers are aware of their vision and mission and they are actively involved in advancement and realization, the result is that it ensures alignment of individual efforts with the overarching objectives, contributing to the success of the school.

Giving support to employees: Heads of schools play a crucial role in promoting teamwork by providing support to teachers, either individually or in groups. Respondent 1 emphasized the importance of financial support for various activities, such as sports and games or materials for teaching. This supportive approach fosters trust, collaboration, and a positive working relationship between teachers and school leaders. This aligns with Meador's [39] assertion that a supportive head of school can make a significant difference for teachers. Building a relationship based on trust and ongoing collaborative support enhances teamwork, as teachers feel valued and encouraged to work together for the success of the school.

Collaboration with teachers: Collaboration with teachers is identified as a strategy employed by heads of schools to enhance teamwork. Respondents highlighted the importance of working together on academic, disciplinary, and social welfare matters. Collaboration is seen as a means of achieving common goals and addressing challenges that require creative problem-solving. This strategy aligns with Khawam et al.'s [40] perspective, emphasizing the importance of collaboration for tasks that demand creativity, problem-solving, and innovation. The involvement of heads of schools in collaborative efforts with teachers reinforces teamwork and contributes to the overall success of the school.

Involvement of teachers in decision making: Heads of schools employ the strategy of involving teachers in decision-making processes to promote teamwork. This approach recognizes the importance of collective input in addressing various school affairs. Respondent 2 emphasized the involvement of all teachers in decision-making on disciplinary issues, period distribution, and other plans for school development. The respondents collectively acknowledge that participation in decision-making fosters a sense of ownership and commitment among teachers. This strategy is supported by Addai [41] and Gemechu [42], who argue that involving workers

in decision-making processes enhances their sense of contribution and satisfaction.

Establishing good communication system: A crucial strategy employed by heads of schools to promote teamwork is establishing effective communication systems. Through regular meetings and clear communication channels, heads of schools ensure that information flows seamlessly among all members of the school community. This enhances understanding, cooperation, and the overall strength of teamwork. This finding aligns with the Collective Efficacy Theory by Ashraf [43], which emphasizes the role of communication in building strong working relationships. Effective communication contributes to a positive working environment and facilitates the coordination of efforts toward common goals.

Ensuring every individual teacher is accountable: Heads of schools employ a strategy of ensuring accountability among individual teachers to promote teamwork. This involves setting clear expectations, providing rewards for excellence, and addressing concerns or shortcomings through corrective measures. Respondent 5 highlighted the importance of accountability in motivating teachers to strive for the achievement of school goals. This strategy aligns with Ballard and Bates [44] perspective on individual responsibility and individual teacher's accountability to student performance. The emphasis on accountability contributes to efficient and effective daily activities within the school, reinforcing the principles of teamwork. The strategies which we have just discussed based on our findings, when considered as single they may not be that much effective in promoting teamwork among teachers. Instead, they are considered they work collectively. For when implemented together they contribute to fostering a collaborative and supportive working environment within the school, ultimately leading to the achievement of common goals and objectives.

4.3 Challenges Faced by School Heads in Promoting Teamwork

Notwithstanding the extensive importance of teamwork among secondary school teachers as discussed in this study, the process of promoting teamwork, is inherently complex and challenging. The findings from this study highlight various challenges, particularly in the realm of work-

related issues. Through interviews with school heads, it became evident that factors such as low and delayed salaries, non-payment for annual leave, delayed salary increments, and poor working conditions served as demoralizing elements for teachers. These unfavorable work-related circumstances contributed significantly to high levels of teacher dissatisfaction and demoralization, ultimately leading to a reluctance among teachers to engage in teamwork. Consequently, the challenge arises in fostering teamwork. This finding aligns with earlier research indicating that ensuring sufficient motivation, such as timely salary payments, is essential for cultivating a collaborative spirit among teachers [8,20].

Additionally, the study identified poor communication as a major hindrance to school heads efforts to promoting teamwork. The lack of effective communication from school leaders to teachers created confusion and a loss of purpose among the teaching staff. In cases where teachers were demoralized due to unfavorable working conditions and low salaries, they tended to withdraw and became unwilling to communicate with the leadership. This reluctance to communicate negatively impacted the school heads' efforts to foster teamwork. This finding aligns with the research by Polega et al. [8], which similarly identified a lack of communication as a barrier to promoting teamwork. Ineffective communication poses a significant obstacle to achieving efficient teamwork by fostering uncertainty among group members, hindering decisive actions on necessary tasks. When school leaders neglect proper communication, it results in teams being unsure about the correct course of action, leading to a lack of productivity. Similarly, if school leaders do not receive timely responses from the members they are leading, it impedes their ability to take necessary actions for the school's well-being. In essence, clear communication is fundamental for fostering a collaborative environment and ensuring that all team members and leaders are well-informed and aligned in their efforts.

Another challenge which was found by this study as a hindrance to school head's efforts in promoting teamwork among teachers was leadership characteristics, including age differences, educational background as well as personality issues. These characteristics as previously established by Levitt [45] study, critically affects the efforts of promoting

teamwork among teachers. In that when school heads were unable to organize the school well and to provide a necessary motivation to teachers, the result was teachers' resistance to work as a team. Also, in cases where school leaders lack morals such as failure to treat teachers justly and fairly, teachers felt discriminated and so resisted working as a team. The reason for this resistance was said to be lack of trust as they were not treated fairly. This finding resonates well with Skripak et al. (2016) study which argue that when school leader fail to treat people well especially in sharing resources well, the result is the failure to achieve team goals.

This study also found out that non-cooperative behaviors among teachers also acted as stumbling blocks to school heads' endeavors in promoting teamwork. Some teachers, whether engrossed in personal economic activities or social issues, generally resisted participation in team activities. On that same note, the study revealed the aspect of inferiority complexes as another challenge impeding the efforts for school heads in promoting teamwork. Teachers working in isolation due to differing education levels and a proclivity towards selfishness contribute to a lack of collaboration. Bandura [46] posits that overcoming inferiority complexes and selfish tendencies is vital for enhancing teamwork in community secondary schools. Furthermore, poor relationships among teachers emerged as another hindrance affecting school heads' efforts to promote teamwork. The absence of cooperation in teaching and a reluctance to engage in discussions on academic matters hinder the attainment of common goals.

To conclude on the issue of challenges which school heads face in promoting teamwork among teachers, the study aptly argue that the challenges are well-established and common to many school contexts. Consequently, this study suggests that school heads should persevere actively towards the efforts of fostering collaboration among teachers, recognizing its vital role in achieving the school's goals and vision. It is also true that as recommended by Goodard et al., (2004); Polega et al. [8] and Robinson [47] team work increases efficiency and effectiveness and at the same time reduces work stress. It is also true that positive work relationship among teachers contributes significantly to higher academic performance. Hence, school leaders should strive to overcome

the challenges for effective collaboration among teachers and other educational stakeholders.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Teamwork plays a pivotal role in the overall performance of schools, and the responsibility of fostering it lies significantly with school leaders, particularly heads of schools. The study underscores the importance of teamwork in enhancing teacher performance, strategies employed by heads of school promoting teamwork and the challenges which heads of school face in this endeavor. The study established that teamwork is the key element of school success and so it cannot be overlooked. However, despite the implementation of various strategies aimed at fostering teamwork, the study reveals that heads of schools face challenges in achieving effective teamwork in their schools. The strategies employed, such as promoting professional development, communicating school vision and mission, delegating roles, providing support, making collective decisions, and establishing good communication systems, to name but a few, aim to bring teachers together to work collectively. Unfortunately, the study finds that these efforts have not translated into optimal teamwork and improved school performance. The study identifies several challenges hindering the promotion of teamwork among teachers. Denial of teachers' rights by the government, including the delay of promotions and annual salary increments, poor organizational approaches by school heads, non-cooperative behavior among teachers, inferiority complex, lack of sufficient motivation, and poor interpersonal relationships among teachers are significant obstacles. These challenges contribute to the inadequacy of teamwork, subsequently impacting the overall effectiveness of teachers.

Considering the study's findings, the following recommendations are worth considering for implementation for the wellbeing of schools and for the society. First, schools' heads should endeavor to intensify their efforts in promoting teamwork among teachers. To do this effectively, they should begin by revisiting and refining existing strategies, because as found by this study, the strategies employed have not been as effective as expected. Hence adopting new approaches which are well aligned with the needs of the school will contribute to ensuring effective teamwork among teachers. Second,

educational leader in the country, should make intentional efforts to empower school heads through seminars and professional development courses which can contribute to enhancement of school heads leadership skills which they require for promoting teamwork among teachers effectively. Through seminars and other professional development, school heads will gain deeper understanding of the meaning of teamwork and acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills necessary for navigating the challenges which they are currently encountering and so become successful in their endeavor to promote teamwork among teachers. Third, the work of promoting teamwork among teachers, should be considered as a work of a team involving government leaders, parents, and all community members. Together, they should strive to ensure teacher motivation, by providing a good working environment. Poor working environment and lack of support was found by this study as one of the key challenges that was discouraging teachers from building a sense of belonging which is necessary for teamwork. To enhance the current situation, it is crucial for different educational stakeholders to collaborate in creating a favorable working environment for teachers, particularly those in rural areas where standardized housing for teachers and their families might be inadequate. This lack of proper housing contributes to the demoralization of teachers, making it challenging for them to collaborate with others for the overall well-being of the schools.

To conclude, it is fair to underline the critical role of teamwork in school success and at the same time emphasize the need for all educational stakeholders to take proactive measures to address the challenges faced by heads of schools in nurturing teamwork as a lubricant of effective schools. Undoubtedly, implementing these recommendations can contribute to a more collaborative and successful educational environment for both teachers and students. Thus, strengthening teamwork, as a necessary tool for gaining momentum in the move towards achieving educational goals is paramount.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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