

Relationship between Locus of Control and Stress Management among High School Principals Kenya

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Abstract In a pre-conference brief by the Kenya High School Heads Association (KEHNSA, 2016) alluded that twenty three (23) principals die annually in Kenya due to stress related issues. The present study examined the relationship between locus of control and stress management among high school Principals in Homa Bay County of Kenya. The study adopted a Convergent Parallel research design within the Mixed Method approach. From a population of 295 principals, the study used stratified random sampling to sample the one hundred and sixty nine (169) high school principals. The Locus of Control Questionnaire and Stress Management Questionnaire were used to collect data. Analysis of Variance was used to collect data. The study further noted that principals with internal locus of control had the highest score (mean=3.37, standard deviation = .289 and a standard error =.052) of stress management and external locus of control had the least level (mean=1.76 standard deviation =.271 and a standard error =.041) of stress management. The ANOVA results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference ($p=.05$) in stress management scores for locus of control [$F(2, 165) = 356, p < .05$]. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education should have a stress management programme for high school Principals.

Keywords Locus of control, Stress management, High school, Principals, Kenya

1. Introduction

A World Bank report (2009) on high school leadership revealed that the education system world over have been ineffective and has failed to address the issue of high school principals stress and burnout. This has negated efforts to create a stronger human resource base which is invaluable for development in all its spheres in the school. Mustafa (2015) study in Kenya revealed that more than a half of the principals 64% had quit principal ship for other jobs, 72% of the principals reported that the extent of their stress is so stressful. In addition a report by the Kenya High Schools Heads Association (KESHA) indicated that 67% of their deaths were as a result of heart attacks, high blood pressure, hypertension and other ailments triggered by stress (Awiti, 2014). The report further reiterated that principals were held responsible for student's performance and school management. This entails planning meetings with parents, teachers, and coordinating all development activities in their schools (KESHA Conference Report, 2014).

Rather than viewing people as inherently flawed with problematic behaviours and thoughts that require treatment, person centred therapy identify that each person has the

capacity and desire for personal growth and change. Rodgers (1950) termed them natural human inclination "actualising tendency" or self-actualization (Sunbull, 2011). Studies have been reviewed on relationship between locus of control and stress. For example, Howart (2012) in Ottawa Canada found out that a person with an internal locus of control believes that rewards in life are guided by their own decision and efforts. The reviewed study was on teachers and not on high school Principals as was the current study. Awan, Noureen, Aziz & Hassan (2013) in United States of America indicated that the locus of control differentially affected subordinate outcome relationships with directive and participative leader behaviour. The reviewed study was on colleges and not high schools principals. In addition, Iyabo and Iranada (2015) in Britain showed that there is positive relationship between locus of control emotional intelligence and subjective happiness. A significant relationship also existed between emotional intelligence and locus of control. Selart (2012) in Switzerland also revealed that managers with low external locus of control used group consultative decision making more frequently than those with high locus of control.

Sunbull (2011) in Turkey showed that external locus of control was positively and directly related to emotional exhaustion dimension of burnout. Moreover, Singh and Dubey (2011) in Banares Hindu indicated that role overload was significantly negatively correlated to locus of control of managers and total satisfaction role ambiguity was significantly negatively correlated to locus of control of

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managers and total satisfaction. Sabrain, Omidiyar, Gharizadeh and Bazrafshan (2014) in Iran also noted that locus of control is one of the most important factors with a significant role in stress management and increase or decrease negative emotions notably in the working environment with many occupational consequences. Chen and Thorne (2008) in Taiwan indicates that locus of control plays an important role in the overall effectiveness of accountants even in a non-western culture. The study was on professional accountants and not high school principals. The data was quantitatively analysed but lacked qualitative aspects. The current study was a mixed approach hence filled the gap in literature. Goswami (2014) in India showed that all burnout dimensions were either positively or negatively related to independent variable locus of control.

In Kenya, a Conference report urged the principals to remain focused on their work but also to learn some coping skills during the stress management training that would be offered. In a pre-conference brief by the Kenya High School Heads Association (KEHSA, 2016) alluded that twenty three (23) principals die annually in Kenya due to stress related issues (*Daily Nation of 29th June, 2016*). The report noted that most of the victims suffer serious medical conditions because of working long hours and days without adequate rest. The report further reiterated that there is a lot of pressure on the principals to produce academic excellence and implement government educational reforms which were taking a toll on the health of the principals. In Homa Bay County of Kenya, there are reported cases of stressful experiences among high school principals. This has made some principals to opt out of their position of responsibilities. The changing environment of the learners, challenges of acquiring teaching and learning materials and blame for examination cheating and failure, creates stress on the principals because of being answerable on the school to all education stakeholders. All these seem to make the high school principals experience a lot of stress. According to Education report (2015) most of the principals work under unfavourable conditions; their schools are inaccessible due to poor road network, lack of adequate computer labs in this digital world, lack of office space, poor staffing, overburdened curriculum, over demanding parents and inadequate supervision.

The present study sought to investigate the relationship between locus of control and stress management among high school principals. Locus of Control refers to ones beliefs that outcomes are determined by either oneself, luck or significant others. In this study Locus of Control refers to high school Principals believe in their own ability or social support to overcome their administrative challenges. There are two types of locus of control, the internal locus of control and External locus of control. Internal locus of control refers to people who believe in themselves and their abilities. In this study, they are the principals who believe that whatever happens to them is due to their own efforts and not from outside influence. On the other hand, external locus of control are the people who believe that rewards or outcomes

are determined by either luck or others with more power than them. One hypothesis was tested: There is no statistically significant relationship between locus of control and stress management among high school principals in Homa Bay County.

2. Methodology

A concurrent Triangulation design was used to collect data. The population of the study were 295 high school Principals in public high schools in Homa Bay County of Kenya. The study used Krejcie and Morgan's 1970 Table of determining sample size from a known population. For a population of two hundred and ninety five (295) according to the table, we got a sample of one hundred and sixty nine (169). The Locus of Control Questionnaire and Stress Management Questionnaires were used to collect data. This questionnaire contained 20 test items of which the Principals were expected to respond using a 5 likert scale of Strongly Agree=5, Agree =4, Undecided =3, Disagree=2 and Strongly Disagree= 1. Expert opinion and judgment on content and face validity was sought from lecturers in University, to ensure face and content validity. Reliability of the instruments for data collection was tested by assessing the scale's internal consistency. This was done using Cronbach's alpha. According to Orodho (2009), a questionnaire has good internal consistency if the Cronbach alpha coefficient of a scale is above .7. In the current study Cronbach alpha coefficient established was .814 and 0.875 for the two questionnaires used.

To test the hypothesis, responses on the locus of control questionnaire for each respondent was calculated. The questionnaire items had 20 test items on a 5 point likert scale. Stress management questionnaire had 27 test items on a 5 likert scale. Therefore the mean scores for the responses in the two questionnaires were obtained. The locus of control was in three categories namely external, internal and intermediate. Hence parametric test (ANOVA) was used. The ANOVA test was used to ascertain if there were differences on the basis of externals, internals and intermediate locus of control.

3. Results & Discussions

From the findings of the study, three types of locus of control (external locus of control, internal locus of control and intermediate locus of control) were evidently present among the principals who participated in the study. Hence, to establish whether a statistical relationship exists between principals' locus of control and stress management, the hypothesis, "there is no statistically significant influence of locus of control on stress management among principals in Homa Bay County", was tested. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to explore the relationship between locus of control and stress management. A descriptive statistics was computed to compare the three dimensions of

locus of control, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 shows the descriptive information of the groups of locus of control indicates that the principals with internal locus of control had the highest score (mean = 3.37, standard deviation = .289 and standard error = .052) of stress management and external locus of control had the least level (mean = 1.76, standard deviation = .271 and standard error = .041) of stress management. This confirms Lynton (2012) assertion that one's gender has a significant relationship with one's locus of control. This finding also resonates Darshini (2014) who noted that locus of control had a strong correlate with mental strain. Externals tend to report more negative moods when faced with stressful events. Internals tend to perceive less stress and have better coping skills.

The ANOVA results in Table 2 confirmed that there was a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) in stress management scores for the three locus of control [$F(2, 165) = 356, p < .05$]. This means that consequently, given the fact that significance difference was established, there was need to find out which group was significantly different from which group thus the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative accepted. This was done by use of a Post-Hoc test indicated in Table 2.

Having received a statistically significant difference, a look at the results of the Post-Hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test was necessary. The statistical significance of the differences between each pair of groups was shown in the table of the Post-Hoc tests.

Table 1. Descriptive on Stress Management against Locus of Control

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
External	44	1.7614	.27171	.04096	1.6788	1.8440
Intermediate	93	2.6037	.24342	.02524	2.5535	2.6538
Internal	32	3.3665	.28971	.05203	3.2602	3.4727
Total	169	2.5238	.59603	.04598	2.4330	2.6146

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 2. Anova Results

Stress Management	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	48.183	2	24.091	356.713	.000
Within Groups	11.144	165	.068		
Total	59.326	167			

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 3. Post Hoc Test on Locus of Control

(I) Locus of Control	(J) Locus of Control	Mean Difference (I - J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
External	Intermediate	-.84229*	.04755	.000	-.9548	-.7298
	External	-1.60509*	.06094	.000	-1.7492	-1.4610
Intermediate	Internal	.84229	.04755	.000	.7298	.9548
	External	-.76280*	.05390	.000	-.8903	-.6353
Internal	Internal	1.60509*	.06094	.000	1.4610	1.7492
	Intermediate	.76280*	.05390	.000	.6353	.8903

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3, shows the SPSS output of the post-hoc test and indicates that the difference of mean in stress management for each of the groups of locus of control were significantly ($p < .05$) different from each other. The mean stress management for the principals who exhibited internal locus of control was the highest score (mean = 3.36), meaning they managed their stresses than the other two groups. This is in agreement with Kurt, April, Babar and Kai (2012) in Kenya who noted in their study that leadership qualities are predominately present in those with an internal locus of control and that maximum levels of happiness is achieved by individual principals with a balanced locus of control expectancy and a mixture of internal and external locus of control alternatively. This finding is in agreement with Ahmed, Saleem and Raheela (2012) who found out those teachers identified with internal locus of control revealed low levels of stress as contrasted with the teachers with external locus of control. This makes such principals manage their stressful situations positively.

From the ANOVA table, the effect size calculated using eta squared:

$$\text{Eta squared} = \frac{\text{Sum of squares between groups}}{\text{Total sum of squares}}, \text{ was } 0.812$$

This indicated that about 81% of variance of the level of stress management (dependent variable) was explained by the independent variables (principals' locus of control). Suffice, it was concluded that there was statistical significance difference ($P < 0.05$, in all cases) among the three types of locus of control regarding the principals level of stress management. This finding agrees with the theoretical framework as state by Rotter (1950) as he expanded on Banduras ideas on reciprocal determinism; it is how an individual views his relationship with his environment. Locus of control can be classified as either internal or external. A principal with an internal locus of control tends to praise or blame themselves and their abilities for their success or failure; whereas principals with an external locus of control would tend to praise or blame others or an external force for their failure or success.

Qualitative data was obtained from interview transcripts and analysed on how internal locus of control enable the principal manage their stressful situations in their work place. On the relationship between internal locus of control and stress management, most participants reported that principals with internal locus of control were good planners and they understood the school context very well enabling them in stress management as indicated in the excerpts.

I know the principal is the school and the school is the principal. For my school to perform well depends on my action or inaction. I believe I can manage any challenging situation and preserver until I achieve my objectives (Principal, 3).

From the above excerpts it is evident that the overall school outlook and performance all depends on the principal's leadership style and personality. This means that if the principal is a performer then the school overall performance would improve. This finding is in tandem with

Birdie (2015) in India whose study found out that majority of suicide attempters personalities were inclined to type A personality characteristics and had an internal locus of control but insignificant with optimism. Similarly, principal 10 reiterated that:-

Well, I know I can change any situation in a school set up. I plan for myself school programmes ahead of time and delegate appropriately who to do what and timeline. I look at the needs of the school and give direction. I normally set deadlines for all the planned school activities and ensure that objectives are achieved (Principal, 10).

From the above excerpts it is evident that principal 10 delegates duties and responsibilities a lot but with adequate supervision. This makes this principal have less stressful situation because she plans ahead of time what is to be done and delegates to other staff members whose roles are well designed and executed. This finding is in agreement with Salami (2011) in Pakistan who noted that job stress, personality dimensions and social support jointly and separately predicted dimensions of burn out. On the other hand Cleare (2013) in Bahamas suggested that while there is a significant positive relationship between internal locus of control and stress management it was not a substantial predictor of job satisfaction. This means that an individual internal locus of control cannot parse indicate whether one can manage stressful situations in a school set up adequately. On the other hand principal 8 postulate that:-

Whatever situation in my school I believe I can manage effectively

The most important thing is to understand the context, the personnel you are working with, and to plan early the school calendar of events. I do my things early to avoid last minute rush (principal, 8)

Verbatim quotes from principal 8 indicates a strong internal locus of control. He believes so much in himself to change any situation from worse to best. Such principals who believe in their abilities are quite achievers and the word failure is not within their vocabulary. This means that principals with internal locus of control are more likely to manage their stresses for they believe that whatever the outcome of the events in their schools is as a result of their own resource fullness and ability.

On the other hand principals with external locus of control believe in external forces for their success. They feel that they are victims of circumstances. They often look outside themselves or believe their limited intellect is the reason for their failures. Principals with an external locus of control believe that their success is a function of chance rather than a predictable result of preparation. They often lack the perseverance needed to complete a task. Externals believe in others to realize their potentials and to achieve in a given situation. On the relationship between external locus of control and stress management some participants reported that principals with external locus of control depends on others to for their success and upward mobility. For example from excerpts below which were:-

You know in a school management outside forces can interfere with you even if one wants to be productive. For example our area M.P would want his cronies to be in the B.o.M even if they are not qualified. At times I just ignore and become relaxed. Sometimes community members are too hard on me, I just sit back and watch or seek for assistance. As a principal I have my limits, if things are not going my way and I do not get backing from other stakeholders, I just sit back and watch or look for a transfer to another school. (Principal 9)

From the above excerpts it is evident that externals ignore challenging situations and are ready to give up. This finding is in agreement with Berkel (2009) in Canterbury who noted a strong association between external locus of control and high reward dependence and were more inclined to engage in emotional focused coping while high self-directed principals in more problem solving. On the same note principal 10 reiterated that:-

It is challenging to manage teachers, board of management, parents association, over demanding parents, overloaded curriculum. One may give up and look for employment elsewhere or step down as a principal. (Principal 10)

From the excerpt it can be realized that principals who have external locus of control can easily give up under challenging circumstances. Externals do not have the guts to persevere stressful situations. This finding is in agreement with Salami (2011) in Pakistan whose study found out that personality and social support jointly and separately predicted dimensions of burn out. Principals with external locus of control are more apt to respond to stress as they are more likely to concentrate their attention on obstacles rather than opportunities. Most principals with external locus of control often do not take credit for their successes or failures. They are more likely to suffer stress as a result of frustrations. This means that they have poor stress management techniques and hence can easily be stressed.

4. Conclusions

The study observed that Principals with external locus of control believe in social support for them to succeed in their undertakings. This calibre of Principals believes in the approval and contribution of other stake holder, while those Principals who exhibits high internal locus of control believe in themselves to succeed in any situation in their schools however challenging the problem is. This implies that principals with internal locus of control are better stress managers than those with external locus of control. The study recommends that Ministry of Education Science and Technology should induct newly appointed principals on how to enhance positive locus of control. This would help them understand how to manage stress. This is because the study findings were that locus of control influences stress management among high school principals.

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