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School Leadership: Role of Age and Gender in the Principal's Religiosity

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Abstract

This study explored the principals' age and gender as factors in his religiosity and leadership. Concerns have been raised on the leadership of secondary schools in Nandi County. Lack of good leadership in sub county, county and even extra county schools has lead loss of property in these schools and if this is allowed to continue, some schools may be forced to close down. Would a principal's religiosity help? Is religiosity affected by age and gender? Ex- post facto research design guided the research whose target population was principals, teachers and student leaders of secondary schools in Nandi County. Stratified and simple random sampling was used to sample schools, teachers and student leaders. The study used three data collection methods; questionnaire, interview schedule, and content analysis guide. Experts were consulted to determine the content validity of instruments. Reliability was determined by use of Cronbach's alpha technique giving a value of 0.715 and Hypotheses 1&2 on age and gender were tested using t-test and analysis of variance. To determine relationship between religiosity and both age and gender, t- tests was carried out. The findings showed that one's religiosity did no change with age, but it depended on gender. Female principals would be preferred in relation to integrity concerns. Principals should meet a minimum requirement in terms of education, experience and level of religiosity to be allowed to run schools. The findings of the study may be applied in drafting a better policy on principals' appointment.

Key words: *Principal, Religiosity, Age, Gender, School Leadership.*

1. Introduction

In many countries of the world, principals are vetted from teachers of immense experience, commitment and high degree of loyalty and integrity (Ken 2005 p. 68). Breeze (2002) found that in Germany, Korea and Australia, special procedures are used to select principals. Apart from being strong in Christian faith, the candidate must be good in planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating and controlling. According to St Thomas Aquinas, an excellent head teacher is one who aligns his faith with reason. A principal should be one, who recognizes that education entails the development of qualities of soul, (Summa Theologia: 05. Pars Prima).

However, in many countries of Africa, the guidelines on the appointment of secondary school principal leave room for manipulation. Education practices are indeed affected by policy guidelines. Perhaps the biggest challenge has been the lack of connection between desired practices as espoused in policy and the actual education practices on the ground. In the study undertaken by the World Bank (2013), in countries such as Kenya, Ghana, Malawi Ethiopia and Mozambique in their efforts to go universal in Education have affected policies to enhance access, equity, quality, retention and relevance. These policies include: (a) Implementation of FPE and FDSE, (b) Expansion of buildings in Day Secondary Schools, (c), Increasing class sizes from 40 to 45, (d) Expanding bursaries and scholarships to students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, (e) A minimum of 3 streams in each school (f) Enforcing re-entry policy for girls who drop out due to early pregnancy or marriage (g) Staffing norms to ensure efficiency and cost effective utilization of teachers (h) Boarding schools in ASALs and enhancing security in clash torn areas.

In Kenya the Teachers Service Commission appoints principals from amongst experienced teachers who have shown interest in administrative duties. They should have been effective in class, actively involved in co-curricular activities and must have served as Deputy Heads for at least three years, provincial and county education offices are interested

in the appointments because of their supervisory role in the leadership of education. Religious and other sponsors are usually interested in who becomes the principal in order to inculcate and preserve their religions and moral values. On their part, politicians are interested in order to protect their political influence or to advance their political career. Vacancies are normally advertised and requirement clearly indicated.

Unfortunately, the procedures for the selection of principals are not followed on the ground. The Catholic Church for example stipulates that TSC will appoint principal after appropriate consultations (Kenya Episcopal conference 2014, P23). Under the Education Act (2013), the government decentralized teacher's recruitment to the counties. But since its inception in 2003, the exercise has been marred by constant complaints of irregularities. Recruitment of teachers and head teachers were biased, corrupt, tribal and not based on merit. Many principals are appointed on either political, religious or nepotism grounds (Sang and Otunga, 2006). Barbules (2009) showed that many schools keep their interview dates secret so as to achieve regional motives such as short-listing candidates from the region. Corruption manifests itself as bribery, embezzlement, fraud, extortion, abuse of power, nepotism, conflict of interest, insider trading or abuse of privilege information and favoritism, (Lewis, 2011).

According to St Thomas Aquinas, the principal is the Captain of fishers of men (Summa 03 Pars prima Tasia). His employer expects a high degree of performance, loyalty and integrity. He should conduct himself in a way that creates a good public image. He should be alert and more outstanding teacher among the staff, putting his personal matters second to his official duty. He should respect his responsibility and prove by actual performance that he is actually qualified for the post. He must shun the temptation to abuse and must uphold the ethical code of the teaching profession. Professionally, a teacher is more than a mere worker, his work demands a high sense of responsibility and mature behavior (Stronge, 1993). So the head teacher must be a good example of sound morals and integrity. The criteria should include spiritual attributes because according to St Thomas Aquinas, the principals who brought their spirituality into their professional functions felt confident to speak and act appropriately to relational and decision-making situations that they faced on daily basis (Troyer and Cullingford, 2002).

The definition of religiosity may not be very clear to many mainly for two reasons; first the ordinary definition in English language is found to be synonymous with such terms as religiousness, orthodoxy, faith, belief, piousness, devotion and holiness. Some studies consider these to be dimensions of religiosity. Secondly, religiosity crosses several academic disciplines, each looking at it from a different vantage point (Bergan, 2000). A theologian may see it from faith, a religious educator focuses on orthodoxy and belief and psychologists sees it as devotion and holiness. Religiosity refers to the importance of religion in a person's life. Identifying with a given religion is only one measure of religiosity.

According to Glock (Hardy,2005), religiosity has five distinct dimensions; ideological religiosity describes an individual's degree of belief in religious doctrine, experiential religiosity refers to the strength of a person's emotional ties to a religion, ritualistic religiosity refers to the frequency of a ritual activity such as prayer and church attendance, intellectual religiosity refers to a person's knowledge of the history and doctrines of a particular religion and finally, consequential religiosity(of concern to this study) has to do with how strongly religious beliefs feature in a person's daily behavior. A person displays his degree of religiousness in the way he handles people, issues, the way he behaves before others, his utterances, his attitude, his honesty and other operational characteristics. In this study, consequentialist religiosity is viewed from philosophical point of view, where aspects of religiosity are experiential and include belief acceptance, hopeful, industrious, active, happy, approachable, diligent, inspiring, objective, lovely, pleasant, optimistic, warm, kind, cooperative, humble, obedient, Loyal, faithful, applicability of doctrinal knowledge, a God fearing conduct, honesty, trustworthy, friendly and sociable, (Kucukcan, 2010).

Religiosity may be seen extrinsically or intrinsically. Extrinsic religiosity is the self-serving and utilitarian outlook in religion that provides the believers with comfort in salvation (Hardy, 2005). These people usually use religion for their own personal gratification for example self-justification, sociability and status. A person with intrinsic religiosity on the other hand internalizes the creed of his faith and finds his ultimate motive in life. They harmonize their needs with their beliefs making them to be religious in one way and not necessarily in the other (Covey, 2001).

Religion and religiosity matter a great deal in school leadership because of the impact religious practices have on social stability. Poor school leadership implies that many students with good scholarly potential will be wasted and the country at large will lose human resource. While it is evident that the school administrators have a vital role in cultivating a positive school culture, little is known about how the principal's religiosity correlates with his age and gender. Furthermore, none of the studies have been conducted in Nandi County and none has addressed integrity

concerns. Therefore, this study explored on the forces that enhance good leadership of public secondary schools in Nandi County, Kenya.

This study was guided by the following question;

1. Is there a relationship between the principal's religiosity and his/her age, and gender?

Research Hypotheses

- H1 There is a relationship between principal's age and religiosity
- H2 There is a relationship between principal's gender and religiosity

2. Methodology

This study used *ex-post facto* research design. It can be referred to as 'investigation after the fact', or 'after the fact' research. The target population for this study included all principals, teachers, student governors, and chaplains of public secondary schools in Nandi County. Secondary school education was chosen because it is the researcher's contention that role modeling and behavior modification is critical at adolescent states of learners (at secondary level). Following the stratified and random sampling techniques used to obtain the schools, the researcher considered all the principals of the sampled schools to participate in the study. The principals fairly represented all the types of schools in the county. Although the choice of sampling units depended on the judgment of the researcher, it was important that the sample was representative of population.

To provide equal representation for both male and female teachers, stratified sampling techniques were employed followed by simple random sampling to obtain 7 teachers from each school. A sample size of (7x37) that is 259 teachers participated in the study. However, some of the teachers did not return the questionnaires.

To select student governors and chaplains, criterion sampling was used. This is a design based on choosing individuals or assigning proportions of people because of good evidence that they meet some criteria (Gill, 2010). Student leaders meet the criteria of representing their classes. Five student leaders from form 2 and five from form 3 were sampled. Form two and three are chosen because these groups are well adjusted to the school culture and are most sensitive to social innovations, (Salkind, 2010). A total of 370 student leaders participated. All the chaplains of the sampled schools also participated in the study. In case the chaplain was not there, the priest or pastor, who prays for the students, took part. Some questionnaires were considered spoilt.

In order to obtain the required information for the study, four types of research instruments were used namely; questionnaires, content analysis, interview schedule and checklists. A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. Each person is asked to respond to the same set of questions in a predetermined order (Salkind, 2010). Its use is a good way of collecting primary data. Secondary data is obtained from other sources for example internet or books.

To ensure content validity of instruments results, two experts (an associate Professor and a senior lecturer) in the area of specialization, went through to see whether the questions are related to the research questions and whether they were appropriate to the target group. A lecturer, who is also an expert in measurement and evaluation also helped to validate. In addition, a senior principal of county school and a priest assessed the appropriateness of items in relation to the research questions on religiosity. Feedback was used to revise the items starting from those addressing each variable to those addressing the relationship between variables.

A pilot experiment was conducted two weeks earlier in a total of five schools, one from each sub county, but not those who formed part of the final sample. With assistance from the deputy principals of the schools, the questionnaires and checklists were issued to two schools in the first day and to three schools the following day. After three days, there was almost 100% script return, 5 principals, 5 chaplains, 35 teachers and 45 student leaders. However, responses from one school were non-usable (incomplete and misrepresenting), and so only four schools were used to pilot the instruments. A few adjustments on the teacher's questionnaire were made as necessary. Consequently, the design of the full-scale project was adjusted as was necessary.

The researcher did a stability test using the test-retest method on four sub-county schools. The test was administered twice to the same respondents and then the results from the first and those of the second tests were correlated using spearman's correlation, which yielded 0.687 indicating that the questionnaire items were reliable.

Based on the findings, generally principals are people of good character and scoring well on religiosity. A few cases however 25 (9.3%) consider their principals as don't cares, 6 (2.2%) hostile and 5 (1.9%) thieves. This implies that small fractions of heads are not religious and an equally small number is highly religious.

In all, the principals, chaplains, teachers, student governors were asked to rate principals' level of religiosity. From the findings, it was evident that most principals are not religious. Although principals rated themselves highly religious, other respondents seemed to disagree with their report. For instance, only 73 (33.2%) of teachers, rated principals as religious while the rest disagreed. This therefore implied that most principals are not religious. This finding raises some concern, in that, a major part of professional training for teachers is in morality and virtues, which are the very core of education. Those troubled schools where corruption and injustices are present and where the duty of care seems to be ignored, are led by heads of low religiosity.

The current study made expansive use of the variety of principals' characteristics which were consolidated in order to evolve a composite picture representative of the overall professional opinion of the principal. The target population rating criteria consisted of principals whose questionnaire enabled them to rate themselves (and in some cases oral interview), a teacher rating in which in which teachers in the principal's school were allowed to evaluate their principal based on his characteristics, managerial and instructional performance, a chaplain (bishop or pastor) rating of the principal and student governors' rating from the learners' point of view. The variables chosen are generally observable by all raters and that it was the researcher's contention that the position of the rater would have an influence on the variables, thus intelligently evaluating the principal.

3. Findings and Discussions

Tests of Hypotheses

i. There is no Significant Relationship between Principal's Age and Level of Religiosity.

Previous study by Amy et al showed a significant, non-linear increase in religiosity with age for ordinary set of people. They were less religious when they were young, but their level of religiosity improved with time. But this study sought to check the effect of age on the religiosity of principals of secondary schools.

This hypothesis was tested using ANOVA test to establish relationship between principals' age and level of religiosity. The F-ratio was statistically not significant because the F-value (0.009) was far less than the critical value (0.924) needed to reject the null hypothesis. The results are presented in table shown.

ANOVA Summary table

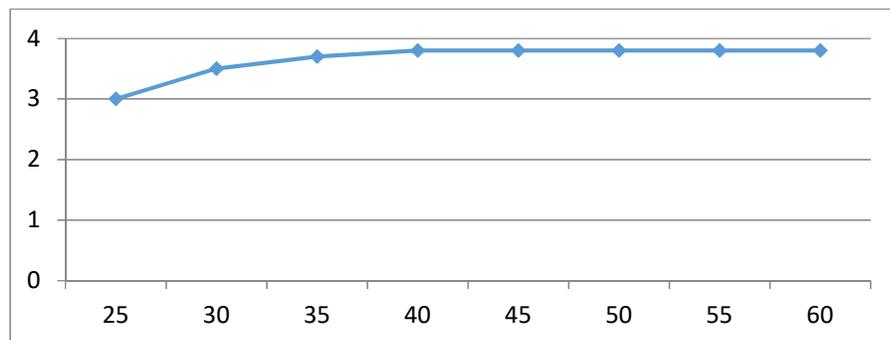
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.004	1	.004	.009	.924
Within Groups	12.163	28	.434		
Total	12.167	29			

Not Significant at 0.05 level, critical value $0.009 < 0.924$

This indicated that there was no significant difference between religiosity scores of principals of different age groups. This implies that regardless of how old a principal is, his or her attributes such as honesty, transparency, trust, love and integrity tend to remain the same. A honest person is a honest person. Those principals who are less than 29 years displayed same characteristics as those of over fifty years.

A graph of religiosity against age categories would be as shown below.

Religiosity against Age.



Y-axis-----religiosity
X-axis.....age categories

This is slightly different finding from the research by Amy (1999) which found religiosity to increase with age. Other researches show that changes in religiosity with age, may differ for Catholics and protestants and for men and women. The research findings did not support the hypothesis.

ii. There is no Significant Relationship between Principal’s Gender and Level of Religiosity.

A study by Albaun (2006) regarding college students’ religiosity and their gender differences revealed that female survey participants rated high in business ethics attitudes compared to their male counterparts. Also, according to Nicholus (2013), there is a positive relationship between religiosity and traditional gender role beliefs. The association between religiosity and happiness of both genders showed no significant differences between male and female persons on happiness and religiosity scores.

In this study, independent sample t-test was carried out to test hypothesis on the relationship between principals’ gender and level of religiosity. The t-test was statistically significant because the t-value (15.425) was far much greater the critical value (0.000) needed to reject the null hypothesis. The results are presented in table below.

Relationship between Principals’ Gender and Level of Religiosity

One-Sample Test						
Test Value = 0						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
gender	15.425	29	.000	1.267	1.10	1.43
Principals' level of religiosity	15.503	29	.000	1.833	1.59	2.08

Significant at 0.05 level, critical value 15.425>0.000

This indicated that there was a significant relationship between principals’ gender and level of religiosity. As observed from the principals on their own level of religiosity, moral attributes, and church activities and also on the chaplains and the teachers’ rating, it is true that religiosity relates to gender. Among the 18 principals rated highly by teachers and the 11 rated highly by chaplains a greater percentage are female principals. The principals who took part were 22 males and 8 females. 7 out of 8 were rated highly religious by both teachers and chaplains. The students rated small the female principals are highly religious but only a portion of the 22 male principals were viewed as religious. This means that based on religiosity (where high religiosity is one in possession of such traits as kind, pleasant, forgiving loyal considerate since, trust, integrity, faith and inclusion) female principals are of a greater advantage for consideration as school principals than their male counterparts. These results are similar to those observed by Coleman (1996) where female managers were better as they possessed feminine traits such as caring, loving, intuitive and concern for others. The research findings supported the hypothesis.

In this study, analysis of research data revealed that one's religiosity does not depend on age but gender. Although this may differ with other studies, these findings have shown that people tend to remain with their level of characteristics or religiosity as they grow old, that is, a honest person for example remain honest, a person with cheating tendencies tend to remain that way. On the other hand, females have a higher level of religiosity than males, *ceteris paribus*. In this regard, female teachers have higher chances of getting principal appointments than their male counterparts when religiosity, as a determinant is considered.

4. Conclusions of the Study

In view of the summary of findings listed, the study concludes in order of research questions as follows: 1. Majority of the principals in Nandi County have low level of religiosity, suggesting that they do not meet the character expected of a school principal. Four of the thirty principals did not deserve to be heads 2. There was no significant relationship between a principal's age and his level of religiosity. Older principals displayed same characteristics as the younger ones. 3. There was a significant relationship between the principal's gender and level of religiosity. Female principals have a higher level than their male counterparts.

Whereas age, gender educational qualification and experience are important qualification and experience are important considerations in the selection and appointment of principals of schools, the level of religiosity of the candidate is of greater importance in the ultimate success of the school. A principal characteristic must stand out of all requirements as he is the controller of school's internal environment management and discipline of school. Religious life skills such as honest discipline, humble, forgiving, kind and pleasant should be enhanced among students by being a good example.

The findings indicate that principals running schools in Nandi County were not well vetted in terms of character as indicated by chaplains and teachers. Leadership of schools is an important matter because it is through such engagement that quality education is realized. As results show good management goes with high level religiosity. There is need to strengthen this requirement in the procedures of appointment. Schools were principals have questionable characteristic, have high wastage, declining completion rate and poor performance.

5. Recommendations

The research came up with pertinent issues which if addressed would greatly improve the leadership of secondary schools in Kenya and beyond. Based on the findings, conclusions and the associated literature review of the study, recommendations are made for the attention of scholars, leaders and policymakers. In particular reference, the Teachers Service Commission should consider more critically the following areas as they appoint principals of secondary schools:

First, from educational point of view, the findings concerning the educational achievements of the principal show that some principals do not have what it takes to be a secondary school principal. A specific threshold outline to improve the existing criteria is needed for the minimum education, professional training and skills needed for a prospective candidate. This implies that the position should be seen and treated as that of any other CEO and competent vetting procedure be carried out on candidates.

Second, study literature and hypotheses result also show that a competent team of Quality Assurance and Standards Officers in each county need to monitor and report on the progress and competence of principals using evidence-based approach (EBA) and other reports from administration and examination departments. Assessment should be in relation to age, gender and religiosity among other constructs deemed necessary.

Kenya is a religious country and school is the nursery where the country nurtures good virtues, therefore, the overall goal is to measure a principal's individual religious salience to a given level of religiosity to qualify as a principal. A body of experts may form a team to carry out this process.

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