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Evaluating the Work Environment in Schools

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Keywords:

Work
Environment,
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This study was on the work environment in schools in Kitgum District. The objective was to establish the relationship between the work environment and teachers' performance in secondary schools in Kitgum District. The study was conducted using a descriptive survey design; data was collected using an interview guide, document analysis and observation from 171 respondents. Interview data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, data from document analysis and observation were analysed narratively, and descriptive statistics analysis was used to determine the level of teachers' performance and work environment in secondary schools. The findings were presented in the form of tables and narratives from interviews. The findings revealed a positive perception of the school administrators' efforts in managing the work environment. Areas for improvement include addressing challenges related to social behaviours, instilling institutional values and providing adequate facilities. Thus, the study recommended for provision of training for school leaders to enhance their leadership skills, ensuring a more positive perception among students. Development of targeted interventions to address challenges such as poor working conditions, job insecurity and negative social behaviours.

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INTRODUCTION

While opportunities and threats are external to the school, some strengths and weaknesses are internal, despite the worldwide efforts to put in place specific standards and the minimum basic requirements for all, teachers' performance remains a threat worldwide (Massoudi & Hamdi, 2017). Teachers do not produce a customised syllabus for the school's circumstances. They do not produce schemes of work and teaching notes, they poorly administer tests and assignments to assess learning achievements, the teaching and assessment are geared towards passing national examinations in total disregard to other objectives of the curriculum, such as talent identification and promotion of moral values, practical skills and participation in socio-cultural activities (DES, 2013). The work environment is largely purported to be of significant contributor to this alarmingly low standard of performance of teachers. It is therefore apparent to investigate the roles of the work environment on teachers' performance in secondary schools in Kitgum district.

Historical Background of the Study.

Stronge (2011) observes that the quality of teaching is the most significant in-school factor affecting student outcomes. This, therefore, means that there is still low teacher performance in schools, and he further claims that there is strong evidence that better accommodation, appraisal and feedback lead to targeted development that can improve teachers' performance. Prasad (2004) observes that there is an external and internal environment. The external environment is manifested through government policies, the political conditions, legal framework, socio-economic circumstances, cultural aspects, technological changes and competition as a result of liberalisation. According to Prasad (2004), factors external to the school will offer opportunities and threats. He goes on to say that understanding the opportunities and threats will enable the strategist to plan on taking optional responses to these opportunities, while at the same time, one can

develop an early warning system to prevent the threats or even develop strategies which can turn the threats to the organisation's advantage. At the same time, in the work environment, there are specific aspects, also referred to as the operating or direct-action environment (Prasad, 2004). These aspects affect individual schools differently, as they exert significant influence on decision making, input acquisition and utilisation, performance process, and the ultimate results (student grades, staff and student discipline, as well as other school performance measures). These are factors such as the number and quality of teachers, availability of teaching materials, nature of the classroom environment, inspection and supervision, and staff motivation, to mention a few.

According to the Ministry of Education and Sports (ME & S, 2008), a person who successfully completes a teacher course of training approved by the ministry responsible for education shall be entitled, on application, to be registered as a teacher. Thereafter, that teacher is posted to a school to commence engagement in the teaching profession. This presupposes that the person is competent to perform school routines. The facts on the ground are contrary to the expectations of the act. Several teachers are on record for performing poorly or even not performing at all; the school routines. Nduhikire (2011) rightly says, "globally, teachers' performance has become a major problem." She further quotes a report of the California School of Administration, which says that, "in the last two decades of education reform, teachers have been viewed as central to both problems of education and their solutions". Malunda (2017) observes that there is a great concern about teacher classroom behaviours that facilitate learning in public secondary schools in Uganda. He further asserts that, "a great variation exists between what teachers do in the classroom and what they are expected to do as stipulated by the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) and National Curriculum Development Centre (DES, 2013).

The Government of Uganda (1992) observes that in the 1960s, “Uganda’s education system was among the best on the African continent with the best teachers’ performance, teaching focused on the learners’ competences and fostered higher order thinking skills”. Malunda (2017), as cited in Ssekamwe and Lugumba (2010), says that teachers at different levels of education were equipped with adequate skills tailored to the job market. The Government White Paper (1992) attributes the decline in the quality of education at all levels to wars and civil strife during the 1970s and 1980s, which led to the neglect of educational institutions. It further states that “the quality of teaching suffered because scores of teachers fled the country, while the morale of those who remained declined. Therefore, the study will uncover the conditions and circumstances that have led to the continued poor performance even after the key recommendations of the White Paper and the resultant government responses. For example, in light of the government's White Paper, the government introduced major reforms in education in order to re-establish the quality of education and accelerate development. However, till now, there is dismal teacher performance churning out students who are not competent enough to be absorbed by the job market. Khisa and Lanyero (2009) observed that many students completing secondary school under the USE are unable to speak and write English, even when they are taught and assessed in English, indicating the low quality of teaching despite high enrollment numbers. They note that the indicators of the quality of teaching are rampant examination malpractices, increased note-taking, learning during holidays, coaching, examination-oriented teaching and part-time teaching by many teachers.

The observed poor teachers’ performance is a result of the factors within and outside the school, which this research refers to as the work environment. The work environment consists of conditions, circumstances and influences affecting the school in its totality or any of its subsystems (Prasad, 2004). To effectively, meaningfully and dependably

uncover the work environment's impact on teacher performance, there is a need to first undertake environmental scanning. Mayanja (2017) defines environmental scanning as a process through which an organisation monitors and comprehends various environmental factors and determines the opportunities and threats that are provided by the identified factors. Thus, monitoring the environment -environmental search - enables one to identify opportunities and threats that positively and /or adversely affect. Prasad (2004) defines an opportunity as a favourable condition in an organisation’s environment which enables it to strengthen its position. A threat is an unfavourable condition in an organisation’s environment which causes a risk for or damage to the organisation’s position. Thus, in a school setting, some conditions favour (enablers) the teachers to perform better in the process of delivering quality educational services. At the same time, there are situations /influences that make the teachers not perform to the best of their expectations (constraints).

While opportunities and threats are external to the school, there are also strengths and weaknesses that are internal to the school. Prasad also defines strength as an inherent capability of the organisation which it can use to gain a strategic advantage over its competitors, while a weakness is an inherent limitation or constraint of the organisation which creates strategic disadvantages for it. Thus, strengths are the internal factors /conditions that the school uses to propel itself above other actors – schools - in the education sector. Weaknesses are those conditions that make it difficult for the school to rise above the performance of other schools. Therefore, teacher performance, which is greatly influenced by the work environment, offers opportunities and threats as well as strengths and weaknesses that significantly affect the school’s competitive position. In a nutshell, the work environment is an enabler /facilitator of good and admirable performance, but at the same time also has some attributes that may constrain the teacher’s effective and dependable performance.

Statement of the Problem

According to Ugandan policy on education, schools are expected to provide quality education (MOES report, 2011; Government White Paper, 1995). Based on the above policy, a number of secondary schools resorted to enhancing the work environment through building teachers' houses, giving food baskets, support supervision, compassionate support, capacity building and provision of teaching and learning materials to influence teachers' performance (DEO, 2020). Despite the possible strategies put in place, the concern for Kitgum District secondary schools is that there have been escalating poor teacher performances in secondary schools. Teachers have resorted to riding bodaboda, betting, drinking and some of them dating their students. If this situation is allowed to continue, then the education goals of the country may fail, and poor teachers' performance will continue to prevail in secondary schools in Kitgum District (Report from Kitgum District Education Officer on Schools' Performance). The exhibited teachers' behaviours and actions are not simply defiance of the established standards of competence and behaviour; rather, these are in response to the dynamic environment in which the teachers work, i.e. reactive management. Although there are many factors that could explain the problem of low teachers' performance in secondary schools in Kitgum District, this study intends to explore whether work environment, working conditions, job security, physical features, leadership styles, company policies and protocols, company's values, employees' opinions and social behaviours could explain the problem of low teachers' job performance in secondary schools currently in Kitgum District.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between work environment and teachers' performance in schools.

Research Objective

To establish the status of the work environment in secondary schools in Kitgum District

Research Question

What is the status of the work environment in secondary schools in Kitgum District?

Scope of the Study

Content scope. This study took the perspective of work environment theory and practice, which entails the internal aspects of the school setting such as school policies and procedures, rules and regulations, supervisory style, staff welfare package, interpersonal relations with supervisors, colleagues and subordinates, and the classroom environment. Singly or collectively, these aspects of the internal environment do affect the nature and extent to which the teacher adequately performs the assigned tasks. On the other hand, the external environment, such as Ministry of Education policies, laws, rules and regulations, remuneration package, prospects for training and development, district management and operational framework, and relationship with the school's local community, will also have a noticeable effect on the teacher performance of school routines. The teacher's performance of school routines entails tangible and intangible results emerging from the teacher handing out assigned tasks. They may be in the form of the grades scored at the end of each level of education (O' and A' level), holistic growth of learners, school image and prestige, school competitive advantage and the extent of the student catchment area.

Geographically. The study covered selected secondary schools in Kitgum District - public and private. Kitgum district was selected because of the ease of getting access to the people and the research study sites. Access to people -respondents and study sites- requires approval and permission to undertake the study. The approval may be at multiple levels, such as permission from district administrators,

head teachers, teachers, parents, students, community leaders and members. The researcher's work station being within the district, he is of the view that it is possible to approach the various authorities to get approval and permission to undertake the study.

Time scope. This study covered the period between 2015 and 2022. This period was deemed adequate enough to get highlights on the schools' performance trends in selected schools. In the study carried out by the New Vision newspaper, Businge (2017) observed that, "during some years some of the schools' performance drops, improves or is maintained". The five-year period gave the researcher ample opportunity to identify the fluctuations or stability in the performance trends. Ultimately, the researcher was in a position to relate the stability or fluctuation in performance to the work environment. The study is being undertaken at this time because prior to 2015, the main scapegoat for educational performance in the study area was explained by a single factor, the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) war and its effects in Kitgum in particular and the Acholi sub-region in general. It was also pertinent to carry out the study at this time because Kitgum district schools are performing relatively poorly than other parts of the country, especially the Kampala metropolitan area.

Significance of the Study

The study is expected to give feedback to the Ministry of Education and Sport on teachers' performance.

This study is expected to help guide school administrators in the design of organisational schemes and create new techniques for performance rating.

The study is also expected to alert administrators at secondary schools in Kitgum District to the weaknesses in the current teachers' performance appraisal system and to have a clearer understanding of their duties in order to meet strategic educational goals and objectives.

Assumptions of the Study

The study assumed that the data collected provided a true reflection of the real situation on the ground and that respondents actively participated in the study without any constraint to provide relevant information that was representative enough.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Herzberg (1966), Maintenance theory or Hygiene Theory (Two-factor Theory) informs this study. Herzberg believes that motivational factors are intrinsic; growth, advancement, recognition, and achievement relate to job performance or satisfaction. Hygiene factors, on the other hand, are extrinsic and are associated with dissatisfactory job factors such as organisational policies, conditions of service and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, two-factor theory postulates that job performance or satisfaction is hinged on the feelings of individuals concerning the job they do, such as task achievement, recognition, advancement, responsibility and work. These are regarded as satisfiers or motivators that will motivate an individual to achieve organisational goals. Herzberg concluded that a work environment that satisfies employees is different from the aspects that dissatisfy them. The theory points out that improving the environment in which the job is performed motivates employees to perform better. On the other hand, no satisfaction is determined by the feelings of individuals concerning the job; work conditions, salary, job security, organisational policy, supervision, and personal status, among others, are regarded as hygiene factors. Herzberg's theory has implications for teachers' job performance in teaching and learning in Kitgum secondary schools. The existing literature has identified major influential factors such as working conditions, allowances, salary, recognition, administrative support and students' behaviours which lead to teachers' superior performance and their retention (Mary, 2010).

According to Yariv (2011), some factors which contribute to deterioration in teachers' performance include: Unsuitable success plans with too high or meaningless expectations would inevitably result in poor performance. In addition, there are contradictory success strategies, as unclear position clarification and misunderstanding of goals or objectives. The above theory was preferred over other theories as it directly relates to the study variables as explained above.

In addition, poor management skills and a lack of adequate supervision and structured feedback, as well as low motivation and weak skills, among other factors, cause low performance by teachers. However, the study of Bakker, Albrecht and Leiter (2011) reveals that job performance is influenced by work engagements, which are the combination of the willingness to work, such as dedication, involvement and commitment, as well as the capability to work, which requires energy, strength and stamina. The research by Al-Omari and Okasheh (2017) suggests that improving the working environment will motivate employees to enhance performance in achieving the desired outcomes and goals of the organisation, thereby increasing employees' satisfaction. Usop et al. (2013) concluded in their study that the more teachers are satisfied with their jobs, the more productive they will be at work. These authors further noted that satisfied teachers would normally develop and maintain high levels of performance. This is corroborated by the study of Bleik (2013) that satisfied teachers tend to perform better in their jobs.

Empirical Review

Work Environment in Schools

According to UNESCO (2018), the 13th Session of the Joint ILO–UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART) noted that the high degree of turnover in teaching staff is attributed to the deteriorating working conditions.

Akin to the CEART findings, research by Ingersoll et al. (2017) highlighted a diminishing prestige of the teaching profession together with a dissatisfying working environment as the prevailing reason for both teacher shortage as well as teacher turnover (European Commission, 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2017). Sutchter et al. (2019) further highlights that inadequate working conditions of a school undermines the status of the profession and of which recruiting of more teachers cannot solve the turnover problem as long as large numbers of the new teachers will be leaving schools because of poor working environment and this has been supported by the research findings of (Geiger & Pivovarov, 2018). The above findings help in enriching this study's literature review and deep understanding of what happens in other countries. However, it is general as it doesn't specifically report on particular cases per country. This study, therefore, intends to investigate the case of work environment and teachers' performance in secondary schools in Kitgum District, Uganda and report as well in the year 2023.

Decline in the working conditions of teachers is a global phenomenon, and it is more pronounced in low-and middle-income countries (LMIC). Researchers and academicians have additionally highlighted that the rapid expansion of education in developing countries has led to worsening working conditions due to oversized, multi-grade classes (Lassibille, 2016; Singh & Bangay, 2014; Ramachandran et al., 2018), long hours, and double shifts (Urwick & Kisa, 2014). However, the above report is general in the low-income countries without citing particular cases to help us better understand the case of our secondary schools in Uganda. This study seeks to investigate the work environment and teachers' performance in secondary schools in Kitgum District, Northern Uganda and report on it in the year 2023.

DeCremer (2012) reported that in the United States of America, the quality of the work environment has an impact on the employees' self-esteem and job

satisfaction and, hence, performance, because workers are the most variable and the least easy to understand and control of all management resources. DeCremer argue that employers are sometimes baffled when their highly rated employees underperform as others reign and leave. Management fails to understand why some employees are not committed to the organisation, even though they have proactively implemented fair compensation policies and human resource practices to motivate and retain them. It can be costly if employees are not committed to their jobs, and if they lack the motivation in their work environment to exercise their full potential. The above relates to these study objectives but differs in its content scope as it was conducted in the business setting, aimed at understanding behavioural changes for ethical approaches. This study seeks to investigate the relationship between work environment and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Kitgum District, which is still a gap to fill.

In West Africa, the work environment significantly influences teacher commitment. Committed teachers who are highly motivated in terms of a conducive work environment contribute their time and energy to pursue school goals and are increasingly acknowledged being the primary asset available to the school. They provide the intellectual capital that, for many schools, has become their most critical asset. Furthermore, teachers who share a commitment to the school and their collective wellbeing are more likely to generate the social capital that facilitates school learning. Therefore, an un-conducive work environment creates a feeling of not being fulfilled and may affect their input in the organisation (Ushie et al., 2015). Bullach, Lunenburg and Potter (2012) noted that knowing the culture of an organisation allows employees to understand both the organisation's history and current methods of operations, which foster commitment to the organisation's philosophy and values, as well as serve as a control mechanism to channel behaviours towards desired behaviours. All

the above studies were conducted in different countries and way back in the years 2012 and 2015, leaving this study with time and geographical gaps to fill. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the relationship between work environment and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Kitgum District.

Arif and Faroogi (2014) reported that the Pakistani work environment has both positive and negative impacts on employees' job performance and argued that employees who balance between their work and life are more satisfied with their job performance, which benefits the organisation and individuals. Arif and Faroogi asserted that on the part of the organisation, there is an increase in productivity, commitment and better teamwork among the employees if the work environment favours employees. A favourable work environment makes the individual have more value, reduces stress and helps them to have balance in their daily life and work. Thus, it shows that the employees' work and life balance affects employees' satisfaction and their commitment to the organisation. The study relates to these study objectives. However, it has content and geographical gaps as it was conducted among university teachers and their organisational commitment in Pakistan, way back in the year 2014. This study intends to bridge the gaps by investigating the relationship between work environment and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Kitgum District, Northern Uganda and report on it in the year 2023.

According to Arogundade and Bolarinwa (2011), in Kwara State, a lack of good physical conditions reduced the morale and affected the attitude of teachers. Arogundade and Bolarinwa, therefore, recommended that for teachers' performance to be maximised in service delivery, they need quality physical working environment with required resources: Physical working environment constitutes the physical setting in which teachers perform their duties; office accommodation, instructional materials, lighting, temperature

conditions, workshop equipment, library resources, classroom space, information and communication technology facilities among others.

According to Onuka (2012), factors external to the school can offer opportunities and threats. He goes on to say that the understanding of the opportunities and threats will enable the strategist to plan to take optional responses to these opportunities, while at the same time, one can develop an early warning system to prevent the threats or even develop strategies which can turn the threats to the organisation's advantage. These aspects affect individual schools differently, as they exert significant influence on decision making, input acquisition and utilisation, performance process, and the ultimate results (student grades, staff and student discipline, as well as other school performance measures). These aspects lead to is referred to as the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation. The study on the influence of the environment on job performance in the work setting has been mainly conducted in other areas, other than the education sector, if any, little has been done. The study, therefore, will endeavour to highlight some aspects of the environment that have a significant influence on teacher performance in some selected schools. This will aim at giving some explanation of the causes of varied teachers' performance despite having attended similar training institutions and attaining equivalent qualifications.

Naharuddin and Sadegi (2013) reported that a conducive work environment can provide comfort and security for teachers in carrying out the instructional and non-instructional duties. It could aid teachers to perform their job and obligations effectively, whereas an unconducive work environment would do the exact opposite. Naharuddin and Sadegi further argue that teachers with optimal performance can significantly impact the future of their learners and attain the lofty educational goals. However, it is observed that teachers' job performance is not optimal, and this could be as a result of inadequate provision of

physical resources as well as the superficial relationship which impede collegiality among teachers (Naharuddin & Sadegi, 2013). Naharuddin and Sadegi's study findings relate to this study's objectives. However, it has geographical, time and content gaps as it was conducted in Nigeria in the year 2013 and within primary schools, leaving this study to investigate the work environment and teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Kitgum District in the year 2023.

Oswald (2012), in his study on the effect of working environment on workers' performance in Tarime District, Tanzania, reported that the physical component of the work environment has the strongest effect on the performance level of employees. Oswald argues that the level of distraction (noise), work interaction and privacy are not considered important by workers. These findings can be generalised to secondary school teachers as they have similar social, physiological, biological and other essential needs. A conducive work environment can provide comfort and security for teachers in carrying out instructional and non-instructional duties. It could aid teachers to perform their job and obligations effectively, whereas an unconducive work environment would do the exact opposite. The above research has been conducted on the work environment and teachers' job satisfaction and teachers' performance in primary schools, which is a gap for this study to fill. This study, therefore, seeks to fill the gap by investigating the relationship between work environment and teachers' performance in secondary schools in Kitgum District, Uganda and report on it in the year 2023.

Malunda (2017) observed that "there is a growing concern about teacher classroom behaviour that facilitates learning in public secondary schools in Uganda" and reported that a "great variation exists between what teachers do in the classroom and what they are expected to do as stipulated by the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) and the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC).

He goes on to cite indicators of the deviations from the expected, such as not being creative or innovative, rarely using learner-centred instruction methods, concepts taught not related to everyday life, and teachers going to class without lesson plans. All these lead to the student cramming to pass the national examinations. While the observations are pertinent about what is happening in the secondary schools, Malunda does not make efforts to explain the causes of teachers' failure to perform as expected. Therefore, the study will make efforts to highlight the conditions, circumstances and influences that enable or hinder the teachers' performance in the school setting.

According to Budi (2020), workgroup encouragement affects teachers' job satisfaction and career aspirations mostly determined by social factors, such as the school's culture, the principal's leadership, and connections among co-workers. Budi argues that improving these social conditions involves building relational trust between teachers and school leaders and engaging teachers in co-constructing the social context of their work. The secondary school environment includes the social relations of "teachers with students, teachers with other teachers, teachers with parents and with their school principal".

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

The study employed a mixed research approach. The approach enabled the researcher to collect reliable data from both kinds of respondents. Creswell (2012) argued that, qualitative approach helps to collect and analyse non-numerical data for objectives one, two and the relationship. Therefore, the researcher was able to obtain a deep description

of the data from the area of study through observation, interview and document review.

Research Design

A cross-sectional research design was employed in this study, and it was done through the formulation of the research questions, designing the questions, conducting the research and analysing the results. The research design was considered appropriate as data can be collected from many different individuals at a single point in time. The choice of the design was because of its ability to provide an in-depth description of events, a set of attitudes and opinions from a fairly larger group of respondents and within a limited time (Ria, 2020). The approach enabled the research to highlight trends in teachers' performance in response to the constantly changing environment. It also helped the researcher to determine individual opinions about issues, concerns and controversies in the work environment and the implications for teacher performance of school routines.

Study Target Population

The study population of 171 were reached (head teachers and teachers). These provided the information about the various elements of the work environment as well as about teachers' performance. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a minimum of 50% and a maximum of 70 participants are enough for the interviews and study.

Study Sample

The study populations reached were 171: Head teachers and teachers. They provided the information about the various elements of the work environment as well as about teachers' performance. Point of Saturation was used to determine the Sample Size.

Table 1: Sample Size

No.	Item	Target	Sample size	Sampling Technique
1	Head teachers	22	20	Purposive Sampling
3	Teachers	272	151	Simple Random Sampling
	Total	294	171	

Source: KDEO (2022)

Sampling Techniques

Purposeful sampling was used to intentionally select head teachers and deputy head teachers, while simple random sampling was used on teachers to select the samples. Purposive sampling was used to select head teachers due to the positions they hold at schools and manage all the school activities. Point of saturation refers to the point in data collection when no additional issues or insights are identified and data begin to repeat, so that further data collection is redundant, signifying that an adequate sample size is reached. The point of saturation was preferred on teachers and students because saturation is an important indicator that a sample is adequate for the phenomenon studied. The data collected captured the diversity, depth and nuances of the issues studied and, thereby, demonstrated content validity (Francis et al., 2010).

Data Collection Techniques

Observations. The researcher used observation on work-related activities, environment and on attributes of teachers' performance from the observable phenomena during data collection.

Interview. Semi-structured interviews were used by the researcher himself to gather qualitative information on the primary data from 15 head teachers and 15 deputy head teachers of secondary schools. Interviews of this type were suited to working with small samples and were useful for studying specific situations or for supplementing and validating information derived from other sources used for making safety diagnoses (Kothari, 2011).

Document Analysis. The researcher evaluated all the electronic and physical documents and interpreted them to gain an understanding of their meanings and contribution to teachers' job performance in secondary schools in Kitgum District.

Data Collection Instruments

Interview Guide. This was a preferred method of qualitative data collection for: ease of obtaining

personalised data, ability to observe and or record non-verbal cues, probing opportunities and a high return rate (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Qualitative interviews gave a new insight into a social phenomenon as they allowed the respondents to reflect and reason on a variety of subjects in a different way (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The interview schedule helped in the identification of key themes and sub-questions and gave the researcher a sense of order from which to draw questions from unplanned encounters (Kothari, 2011). Further, using a structured method, relevant questions were shared in advance and helped in the collection of rich data.

Observation checklist. The observation checklist was used to collect data on the study variables for this study. A document analysis guide was used to review the relevant documents containing information regarding the work environment and teachers' performance.

Document Analysis Check List. The document analysis checklist was used to collect the required data that validated the responses from the interviews.

Quality Control

Validity. The researcher used expert judgment in which two experts knowledgeable in the subject content were identified from the department of education management and administration to rate the validity of the instruments on a scale of 1-Not relevant, 2- Fairly relevant, 3 Moderately relevant or 4- Very relevant. The researcher then used the data to compute the content validity index using the formulae.

$$CVI = \frac{\text{Items rated quite relevant/very relevant}}{\text{by both rates}}$$

Total number of items in the questionnaire

$$CVI-R = \frac{\text{(Number of items rated as 3 or 4 on the Likert scale)}}{\text{(Total number of items)}} \text{ for relevant validity.}$$

$CVI - C = (\text{Number of items rated as 3 or 4 on the Likert scale}) / (\text{Total number of items})$ for clarity validity

$$CVI-R = 46/47 = 0.98$$

$$CVI-C = 36/46 = 0.87$$

$$CVI = (0.98-0.87)/2 = 0.87.$$

According to Kothari (2011), for any instrument to be valid, the CVI obtained would be within the accepted statistical range of 0.7 to 1.00.

Reliability. According to Creswell (2012), the reliability of the instruments was determined through the test-retest reliability technique. In this study, reliability was tested using the test-retest method, in which the instrument was administered to a sample of 10 respondents in the pilot study. The piloted respondents were included in the study. The researcher then administered the same instrument to the same respondents on the fourth night. The scores from the two instruments were analysed using SPSS version 23 to get the Cronbach's reliability coefficient. According to Amin (2005) and Kothari (2011), if the Cronbach of a pilot test is equal to or greater than 0.7, then the instrument is considered to be reliable.

Data Analysis

Data were collected, sorted and coded using SPSS. Upon collecting the raw data from the field, the researcher carried out data editing, after which the data were coded on the spreadsheet. Research questions one and two were analysed using mean value and standard deviation, and descriptive statistical analysis was also done, which made the meanings of respondents' individual stories. That was preferred as it allowed the researcher to highlight important aspects of respondents' stories and critical points that can best resonate with readers of this research. Data from the observation were analysed narratively. Objective three was analysed using Pearson Correlation using data from objectives one and two. That allowed the researcher

to predict the significance of the relationship between work environment and teachers' job performance in secondary schools. Pearson was chosen to test statistically the nature of relationships/ associations between variables (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

Administration Procedures

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Dean, Faculty of Education and Humanities of Gulu University then proceeded to the field to collect the study data necessary from the schools chosen for the study. The pre-field visits were made to help identify respondents, seek their consent and make relevant appointments for eventual data collection. While in the field, the researcher self-administered questionnaires in a convenient place as deemed fit by the school administration. The language to administer the tool was English since it is officially used as a medium of communication at schools.

Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality was considered ensuring that the identity of the respondents remains anonymous by using code identifiers during data analysis and reporting. Creswell (2012) put it that the anonymity of the respondents must be maintained from the respondents, and the data gathered from them must be treated as confidential. In this study, the willingness of the respondents to participate in data collection was given high priority in order to protect them from any harm and ensure informed consent. Respondents were assured that the results of the study would be disseminated for use by educational stakeholders for academic purposes only.

Anticipated Limitations and Delimitations

This study was limited to secondary schools in Kitgum district, and data were collected qualitatively and were feared to have significant effects on the study results. However, more than one method was used to triangulate results to delimitate.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Description of demographic characteristics were structured in terms of respondents' age group, gender, marital status, number of years spent in

teaching and level of education. The findings below provide a summary of the demographic characteristics of respondents in terms of age group, gender, marital status, years spent at work and level of education based on responses from 171 respondents.

Table 2: Showing Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Age group				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 25-35 years	47	27.5	27.5	27.5
36-45 years	78	45.6	45.6	73.1
46-55 years	33	19.3	19.3	92.4
56 and above years	13	7.6	7.6	100.0
Total	171	100.0	100.0	
What is your sex				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	95	55.6	55.6	55.6
Female	76	44.4	44.4	100.0
Total	171	100.0	100.0	
Marital Status: 1=Married, 2=Single & 3=Widowed				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid married	119	69.6	69.6	69.6
Single	52	30.4	30.4	100.0
Total	171	100.0	100.0	
Number of years spent working				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2-4 years	14	8.2	8.2	8.2
5-7 years	56	32.7	32.7	40.9
8 and above	100	58.5	58.5	99.4
4.00	1	.6	.6	100.0
Total	171	100.0	100.0	
Level of education				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Diploma	28	16.4	16.4	16.4
Degree	138	80.7	80.7	97.1
Master	5	2.9	2.9	100.0
Total	171	100.0	100.0	

The distribution across different age groups shows that the majority of the respondents are still in the group of active age bracket (73.1%), and the minority are aged 56 years and above, closer to retirement (27.5%). This suggests a majority of the respondents (around 73.1%) are between 36 to 45 years old, with significant representation also from

the 25-35 years' age group. The findings indicate a slight majority of male respondents (55.6% and 44.4%) and females showing a slight gender disparity at work in different secondary schools in Kitgum District. Meanwhile, the majority of respondents are married (69.6%). This shows that a significant portion of respondents have been

working for 8 years or more (58.5%), followed by 32.7% who have worked for 5.7 years and the minority, 8.2% worked for 2-4 years. Most respondents have at least a degree (80.7%), with a smaller proportion having a diploma (16.4%) or a master's degree (2.9%).

Arguably, the demographic characteristics indicated a sample with a majority of middle-aged, married individuals, predominantly male, who have spent a

considerable amount of time in their careers and have attained higher education levels, primarily degrees. These findings can help understand the profile of the surveyed population in various demographic aspects.

Status of Work Environment in Schools

Table 3 below indicates findings on the status of teachers' perceptions regarding work environment in secondary schools in Kitgum District.

Table 3: Showing the Status of the Work Environment in Schools

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Work Environment in Secondary Schools	151	2.00	4.00	3.0964	.39251
Valid N (list-wise)	151				

These findings in Table 3 above provide a summary of the work environment ratings in secondary schools, based on data collected from 151 respondents. Findings revealed the mean rating as 3.0964, which is slightly above the midpoint of the scale. This average suggests that the overall perception of the work environment is somewhat positive. Similarly, a mean of around 3.1 indicates that, on average, respondents feel that the work environment is adequate but not exceptional. This moderate rating points to a generally acceptable work environment, but with evident areas that could be improved to enhance the overall experience for employees.

On another note, the findings showed the standard deviation of 0.39251, which is relatively low and signifies that the ratings are closely clustered around the mean. A low standard deviation means that there is little variation in the respondents' perceptions of the work environment. Most respondents have rated the work environment similarly, indicating a shared view or consensus.

The consistency in the ratings, as evidenced by the low standard deviation, suggests that the respondents generally agree on their perception of the work environment. This consensus around an average rating indicates that there are no extreme

outliers in the perception of the work environment, meaning that most respondents do not have vastly different views. The moderately positive average rating points to a stable work environment but highlights potential areas for improvement.

The findings suggest that the work environment in secondary schools, as rated by 151 respondents, generally falls between a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 4, with an average rating of approximately 3.1. The low standard deviation suggests that most respondents have similar views on the work environment, indicating a consensus around the average rating. The results point to a moderately positive perception of the work environment, though there is room for improvement to achieve higher ratings.

DISCUSSIONS

This study explored seven areas of the status of work environment in secondary schools in Kitgum District, and the focus was on establishing whether secondary schools adhere to work environment, like working conditions, job security, physical features, leadership style, institutional policies and protocols, institutional company values and employee opinions. The findings indicated a moderately positive status of the work environment in

secondary schools, with room for improvement. By addressing the identified areas for improvement, schools can contribute to achieving the SDGs related to quality education, gender equality and decent work. Enhancing the work environment for teachers will not only improve their job satisfaction and performance but also positively impact student outcomes and overall educational quality. Investing in a supportive and enriching work environment is crucial for sustainable development and achieving the broader goals set out in the SDGs (UN Women, 2021). For instance, the consistency in responses (low standard deviation) showed a shared perception among respondents, which suggested a common experience of the work environment. Also, the information obtained from interviews with the twenty Head teachers revealed that most of the secondary schools in Kitgum District (study area) are making efforts to promote a conducive status of work environment. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 global goals established by the United Nations in 2015 to be achieved by 2030 (UN Women, 2021). They cover a broad range of sustainable development issues, including education, gender equality and decent work. The findings on the work environment in secondary schools relate to several of these goals, particularly those focused on quality education, decent work and gender equality.

Discussions on the Document Analysis Checklist

The high prevalence of positive responses across all checklist items suggests a generally well-equipped and organised environment in the surveyed secondary schools. The checklist covers critical aspects of school management, including infrastructure (classrooms, staff accommodations, staffroom), administrative processes (enrolment register, discipline record book), and human resources management (teachers' records on recruitment). The findings imply that these schools are likely to have a solid foundation in place for effective teaching, learning, and administrative processes. However, it's essential to note that the

absence of a negative response does not necessarily imply an optimal or exhaustive implementation of these aspects; it merely indicates their presence. Further, contextual details about the quality and utilisation of these resources would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the overall effectiveness of the educational environment in these schools.

The results of this research align with the findings of other scholars discussed in the literature section. For example, Bullach, Lunenburg, and Potter (2012), DeCremer (2012), Ushie et al. (2015) and Naharuddin and Sadegi (2013) all observed that being familiar with an organisation's work environment and culture enables employees to comprehend the organisation's historical background and current operational approaches. This understanding promotes a commitment to the organisation's philosophy and values, serving as a control mechanism to guide behaviours towards achieving desired performance and meeting organisational goals and objectives.

While understanding an organisation's status of work environment and culture may provide some insight into its history and operations, it does not necessarily guarantee a direct correlation with employee commitment or enhanced performance. There may be instances where employees, despite having a thorough understanding of the organisational culture, might not be fully committed or may not exhibit the desired performance. Factors such as individual motivations, personal values, and external influences could play a significant role, and relying solely on organisational culture as a control mechanism might oversimplify the complex dynamics that contribute to employee behaviour and performance. Additionally, different organisational contexts may yield varying results, and a one-size-fits-all approach may not be applicable across diverse industries and settings.

The majority of participants in the study demonstrated awareness of the work environment, while the minority lacked such understanding. Job

security was recognised as a priority by 72% of head teachers, whereas only 50% viewed leadership style positively. The study revealed that all aspects were addressed, with particular attention given to leadership style. Primary challenges encountered by secondary schools encompass poor working conditions, job insecurity, and unfavourable leadership. Desirable attributes of a favourable work environment included positive leadership, collaborative teamwork and transparent communication. Challenges identified comprised staff apathy, subpar performance, negative interpersonal dynamics, and inadequate working conditions. This perspective resonated with the findings of Bullach, Lunenburg and Potter (2012), DeCremer (2012) and Naharuddin and Sadegi (2013), who underscored the importance of a supportive work environment in providing teachers with comfort and security to fulfil their instructional and non-instructional responsibilities effectively. Conversely, an inhospitable work environment would impede teachers' ability to carry out their duties competently.

CONCLUSION

The findings provide valuable insights into how the work environment in secondary schools is perceived by the respondents. The moderately positive average rating, coupled with the low standard deviation, suggests a generally shared view that, while the work environment is adequate, there is potential for improvement. By addressing areas of concern and enhancing positive aspects, secondary schools could improve the overall work environment and, consequently, increase the ratings in future assessments.

Recommendation

Schools and educational policymakers could consider investing in improving the work environment for teachers. This may include enhancing facilities, providing adequate resources, fostering supportive relationships among staff, and promoting a positive school culture.

Suggestion for Future Study

This research has not covered all the aspects of the work environment and teachers' job performance in secondary schools; the researcher suggests further areas in the following;

Another study can be done on qualitative research to understand the specific factors that contribute to both high and low performance ratings. This could involve interviews, focus groups, and case studies to gather deeper insights into the challenges and successes faced by teachers.

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