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Supportive Leadership and Teachers' Team Cohesion in Government-Aided Secondary Schools in Kayunga District, Uganda

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of supportive leadership on teachers' team cohesion in government-aided secondary schools in Kayunga District, Uganda. It examined whether empowerment of subordinates, inspiring them and providing them fair treatment significantly influenced teachers' team cohesion. Employing the quantitative approach, the study adopted a correlational research design. The study involved 209 teachers who provided data using a self-administered questionnaire. Descriptive statistics revealed that the team cohesion levels of teachers and leadership support in the schools were high. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation modelling (PL-SEM) results indicated that while empowerment of subordinates by leaders and inspiring them positively and significantly influenced their team cohesion, fair treatment positively but insignificantly influenced cohesion of teachers. It was concluded that empowerment by the leaders is necessary for teachers' cohesion, inspiration of leaders is a prerequisite for teachers' cohesion, and high fair treatment is not necessarily essential for cohesion of teachers. The study recommends that head teachers should empower teachers to enhance their team cohesion, they should also provide inspiration to the teachers to improve their team cohesion, but should not prioritise fair treatment above other factors.

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Introduction

The concept of team cohesion describes the members' attraction and bond to one another (Cartwright & Zander, 1968). It is the shared attraction, bonding, or sense of pride among team members (Grossman et al., 2021). The concept of team cohesion garnered attention in the 1930s and 1940s when social psychologists began examining group dynamics. It was argued that interactions among group members significantly impacted the overall group effectiveness (Lewin et al., 1939; Lewin, 1941). The importance of team cohesion became particularly pronounced during World War II, as it was found to be crucial in enhancing unit effectiveness (Goodwin et al., 2018). Schachter (1951) explored the dynamics of group cohesion and reported that cohesive groups tend to exert more pressure on deviants to conform and if they refuse to conform, they are more likely to be rejected. This suggested that cohesion shaped member behaviour in

organisations. Tuckman (1965) explained the development of cohesion in his forming, storming, norming, and performing model. He explained that in the norming phase team members established cohesion involving developing a sense of unity, cooperation, and shared commitment to goals. Cartwright and Zander (1968) explained that team cohesion includes both attraction to the group and commitment to groups roles or tasks. This introduced the concepts of group and task cohesion.

Bollen and Hoyle (1990) described perceived cohesion in terms of sense of belonging and feelings of morale. Sense of belonging described the individual's perception of their relationship with the group, including feelings of being accepted, valued, and integrated while morale denoted the individual's emotional state and attitude towards the group exhibited by positive emotions, group pride and motivation. In this study, team cohesion was defined as referring to task, social (Cartwright & Zander, 1968), belonginess and morale (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990). To note, team cohesion is important for organisations such as schools because it fosters a "we-ness" mentality in teams, where each member is dedicated to the team's general objectives and aware of their specific position (Oparinde, 2022). According Grossman (2021), cohesiveness of a team means that not only are group goals met but everyone feels like they have contributed to the overall success of the group.

Despite the acknowledged importance of team cohesiveness, globally, it remains low among teachers. For instance, in the schools USA, teachers in most schools work in isolation, separated from other teachers, making it difficult to benefit from their colleagues' expertise or to share their expertise with others about how to help more students learn. This way of structuring schools has often been referred to as the "egg crate" model: compartmentalized, lonely and not optimal for students or teachers (Schleifer et al., 2017). In the UK, a similar pattern exists, with low levels of collaboration contributing to high teacher turnover. Typically, in the UK collaboration is confined to teachers within the same grade level (Wullschleger et al., 2023). The contrast is in Australia where there have been efforts to actively to promote teacher cohesion through systemic changes. In 2008/2009, the Australian government introduced a policy mandating the joint teaching of two subject teachers at the lower secondary level. This system requires each teaching team to consist of two regular teachers per subject, fostering greater collaboration (Krammer et al., 2018).

In schools in Africa, the challenge of teacher cohesion is particularly pronounced. In Nigeria, for example, disagreements and conflicting interests make it difficult for unions to effectively represent the collective voice of teachers (Shaw, 2019). In South Africa, racial segregation often manifests in schools (Roberts, 2021). In Kenya, low cohesion persists largely due to the widespread influence of ethnicity (Kida & Simiyu, 2025). In Ugandan schools, it is common for teachers to work in isolation, even with head teachers often managing responsibilities on their own without including teachers (Nabbanja, 2022). The Uganda National Teachers Union (UNATU), once a powerful force, has been weakened by internal divisions, which have deepened over issues such as salary discrepancies between science and arts teachers, as well as nepotism, greed, and personal egos (Kisekka, 2022). Furthermore, the government's implementation of disparate pay, with science teachers earning approximately 4 million shillings and their arts counterparts receiving less than one million has caused divisions reducing

collaboration (Wanyenya, 2025). These developments point to a significant existence of low cohesion within government-aided secondary schools in Uganda.

A number of scholars (Bitz, 2024; De Clerck et al., 2025; Paganin et al., 2023; Shaw, 2019; Yelamanchili, 2019) have sought to identify predictors of employee team cohesion. For instance, Bitz (2024) revealed that in U.S. schools, teacher cohesion was affected by leader's respectful affect, staff empowerment, investment in socialisation, and the fostering of a culture for learning. De Clerck et al. (2025) reported that autonomy support was important for fostering cohesion within volunteer groups of nonprofit sports clubs in the Flemish region of Belgium. Paganin et al. (2023) found that transformational leadership promoted team cohesion in Italian schools while Shaw (2019) linked cohesion in Florida schools to a leader's commitment to building a cohesive and team-oriented organization. Similarly, in a study involving sales persons, Yelamanchili (2019) reported that supportive leadership had a significant positive direct effect of on perceived team cohesion. While predictors such as leaders' respectful affect, investment in socialization, a culture of learning, transformational leadership, and satisfaction with leaders' team-building efforts have been identified in school contexts, supportive leadership has primarily been examined in contexts outside of schools. Still, all the studies were in carried out in contexts outside the developing context of Africa including Uganda. These gaps called for this study involving teachers in the context of secondary schools in Uganda. Supportive leadership was operationalised as conceived by Al-Hadrawi (2023) to refer to empowerment, inspiring and fair treatment of employees. Therefore, this study tested the following hypotheses with respect to supportive leadership and team cohesion of teacher;

H_1: Empowerment has a significant influence on team cohesion of secondary teachers.

H_2: Inspirational has a significant influence on team cohesion of secondary teachers.

H_3: Fair treatment has a significant influence on team cohesion of secondary teachers.

Literature Review

The literature review provides an overview of the theory on which this study was hinged that is the Perceived Organisational Support Theory. The review also synthesized empirical studies examining the impact of supportive leadership on teachers' team cohesion, identifying gaps in the existing research which were the basis of this study.

Theoretical Review

This study was grounded in the Perceived Organisational Support Theory (POST) by Eisenberger et al. (1986) which posits that employee perception of perceived organisational support, which suggests that their related well-being is fully taken into account, is based on how much they believe their contributions to the organisation are valued (Alcover et al., 2018). POST posits that people's sense of an organisation's support increases their commitment to the organisation in order to get favourable reciprocation. Perceived organisational support guarantees to the employees that the organisation will provide necessary support and will not leave them alone in stressful situations. Consequently, employees will most likely be satisfied with their job and reciprocate the organisation's support with positive attitudes (Sungu, et al., 2019). Such

work attitudes include team cohesion. Perceived organisational support includes perceptions about empowerment, inspiring, and fair treatment (Al-Hadrawi, 2023; Krishnan, 2020). This study examined how supportive leadership in terms of empowerment, inspiring, and fair treatment influenced teachers team cohesion. This study sought to contribute to the understanding of how head teachers can play a supportive role in fostering team cohesion among teachers to enhance their work effectiveness.

Supportive Leadership and Team Cohesion.

Supportive leadership is the extent to which leaders support employees through active involvement in resolving difficult situations and being open, honest, and fair in their interactions (Siami et al., 2023). Supportive leadership entails a leader nurturing and supporting members to be as desired (Ludigo et al., 2023). Supportive leaders affect their subordinates' sense of association and involvement with the organisation (Jameel et al., 2023). Thus, supportive leadership an important antecedent of individuals' psychological and motivational states including sense of team cohesion (Siami et al., 2023). According Al-Hadrawi (2023), supportive leadership encompasses empowerment, inspiring, and fair treatment. With respect to empowerment, it is the leaders' behaviour to delegate power, provide work autonomy, training, and information to subordinates to increase their motivation. The leader focuses on self-development of subordinates (Supriyanto et al., 2023). Different scholars (Abbas & Al-Daamee, 2019; Mutonyi et al., 2020; Riisla et al., 2021; Salloum et al., 2022; Tung & Chang, 2011) reported existence of a positive significant relationship between empowerment leadership and employee cohesion. However, none of the studies captured the Ugandan context, hence a knowledge gap with respect to organisations in Uganda. Still, the studies covered employees other than teachers, such as public sector workers (Mutonyi et al., 2020) hoteliers (Tung & Chang, 2011), health workers (Riisla et al., 2021) and family firms (Salloum et al., 2022) hence a population gap. Thus, due lack of knowledge in the Uganda context and differences in workplace dynamics, this study was deemed necessary.

Inspirational leadership is concerned with the leader providing followers with a clear sense of purpose that is energising, becoming a role model for ethical conduct and aligning subordinates with the articulated vision of the organisation (Mugizi et al., 2019). Inspiration leaders posture charismatic abilities that inspire followers and make them attain desirable expertise for exceptional performance. The leaders personalise and stimulate intellect of subordinates (Toseef et al., 2022). A number of scholars (AlTahayneh & Qatami, 2019; Bosselut et al., 2018; Anuar & Kassim, 2024; Paganin et al., 2023; Shedow & George, 2021) have reported that inspiration leadership has a positive significant relationship with employee team cohesion. However, knowledge and population gaps emerged. With respect to the knowledge gap, the context of the studies accessed is outside Africa leaving the area unexplored. For the population gap, only one study Paganin et al. (2023) involved teachers and even this study was in Italy. These knowledge and population gaps made it necessary for this study to be carried on teachers and in the Ugandan context.

Fair treatment refers to the employees' perception of equality in the processes, procedures, distribution of outcomes and interpersonal treatment and interactions in relation to how the supervisor treats them (Khaola & Oni, 2020). Fair treatment

encompasses several key areas including equitable sharing of workload, transparency in promotion, fair access to resources, and respectful treatment in decision-making. When employees perceive fair treatment, they become motivated, satisfied, and committed to their work. However, when they perceive unfair treatment their morale declines, become disengaged, and even might leave the organisation which points to low cohesion (Kaushik & Agarwal, 2024). Scholars (Ismail et al., 2018; López et al., 2015; Workman-Stark, 2020) have revealed existence of a positive and significant relationship between fair treatment to team cohesion. However, literature search revealed a knowledge gap as studies relating the same were scanty. Except for the study by Workman-Stark, 2020) in which cohesion was obliquely indicated by inclusion, the other studied fairness considering the related variables of organisational justice and authentic leadership. This thus called for this study to contribute to the body of knowledge on the relationship between the variables.

Methodology

This section is a presentation and analysis of the procedures and strategies used to collect and analyse the data. These include the research design and sample, data collection and analysis.

Research Design

A quantitative approach was employed for the collection of statistical data for numerical analysis to produce generalisable findings. A correlational research design that helped in collecting data necessary for examining the relationship between the variables, that is supportive leadership and teachers' team cohesion was adopted. Using this research design, the researchers were able to examine whether the variables covaried (Siedlecki, 2020). This helped to establish the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Population and Sample

The population comprised 302 teachers distributed in 11 government aided secondary schools in Kayunga District. From the population, a sample of 282 teachers was determined guided by the Table for sample determination by Krejcie and Morgan's (1970). However, the final sample that provided date comprised 209 (74.1%) teachers. This sample was considered sufficient because Pielsticker and Hiebl (2020) argue that a response rate of 50% or more is representative in humanities studies.

Sampling Technique

Simple random sampling random was employed by the study. This was because the technique provides each member of in a population an equal chance to be selected as a respondent (Rahman et al., 2022). The random sample was selected using a sampling frame provided by excel in the computer containing names of teachers in the schools. Simple random sampling prevented data bias as every teacher in the schools had an equal chance of participating in the study. This facilitated collection of representative data, producing generalisable findings.

Data Collection Instrument

The teachers provided data by filling a questionnaire survey that was self-administered. Section A was on demographic while section B was on team cohesion (the

dependent variable) and C on supportive leadership (the independent variable). Team cohesion was measured in terms of task and social cohesion, belonging and morale cohesion. The indicators/items of task and social cohesion were developed from the "Cohesion Questionnaire" by Ey et al. (2009) while those of belonging and morale were developed from the "Perceived Cohesion Scale" by Salisbury et al. (2018). For supportive leadership it was measured in terms of empowerment (Arnold et al., 2000), inspiration (Pates et al. 2018), and fair treatment (Lim et al., 1988). The indicators were measured using a 5-point Likert scale with one (1) as the lowest for strongly disagree, three (3) for neutral and five (5) for strongly agree. The validities and reliabilities of the instrument are presented in Tables 2 and 3 under the measurement models.

Data Analysis

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4 was carried out. Measurement models including validity in terms of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio Correlations; reliability in terms of Cronbach's alphas (α) and Composite Reliability (CR); and multicollinearity involving Value Inflation Factor (VIF) were developed. Also, a structural equation model and path estimates were developed to test casual linkages between the variables. The measurement models assessed the relationships between the variables establishing validity and reliability, while the structural models and path estimates established the relationships between the variables.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established research ethics, including informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and the careful balance of potential risks and benefits. Informed consent was sought from all participants before their involvement in the study, and each respondent was clearly informed about the purpose of the study and assured that participation was entirely voluntary. Anonymity was maintained protect the respondents during data collection. Confidentiality was ensured by reporting the findings in aggregated form which delinked the respondents from the data. Potential risks were minimized by ensuring that collected data could not be traced back to participants and the benefits of the study have been enhanced by disseminating the findings through open-access publications and conference presentations, with the aim of contributing to improvements in the education sector.

Findings

This section presents the findings that include descriptive characteristics in terms of background characteristics and the mean scores; measurement models, structural models and path estimates. These findings were the basis for analysis, subsequent discussion, conclusions and recommendations.

Demographic Characteristics of Teachers

The findings on demographic characteristics were on sex, age, education level, period served and responsibility held. These findings provided a snapshot of the diversity of the study sample that provided data. Table 1 presents the detailed data for the different background characteristics.

Table 1
Teachers Background Characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	101	48.3
	Female	108	51.7
	Total	209	100.0
Age	Below 30	46	22.0
	30-40	113	54.1
	40 above	50	23.9
	Total	209	100.0
Education	Diploma	38	18.2
	Degree	162	77.5
	Masters	9	4.3
	Total	209	100.0
Period	Less than 5 years	120	57.4
	5-10 years	63	30.1
	11 years	26	12.4
	Total	209	100.0
Responsibility	Subject teacher	92	44.0
	Class teacher	55	26.3
	Head of department	41	19.6
	Others	21	10.0
		209	100.0

The results in Table 1 on gender indicate that both gender groups were virtually equally distributed that is 48.3% male teachers and 51.7% female. This suggested that the results were representative of both gender groups. For age, the larger percentage (54.1%) of the teachers were aged 30-40 years while 23.9% were 40 years and 22.0% were below 30 years. With teachers of different age groups fairly, represented, it was inferred that the data reflected views of teachers of different age groups. Majority percentage (77.5%) of teachers possessed bachelor's degree, 18.2% had diplomas and a small percentage (4.3%) had master's degrees (4.3%). However, the data was representative of the teachers of different qualifications because in Uganda, the major qualification requirement is a bachelors' degree. Therefore, the views captured represented teachers of different qualifications. While the number of those who had served for five years and above was higher, the gap was not very high from those who had served for less years. These results suggest teachers of different experiences were equally represented. The results revealed that a higher percentage (44.0%) of respondents were subject teachers, 26.3% were class teachers, while 19.6% were head of departments, and those with other various roles were 10.0%. With teachers holding different responsibilities, it can be deduced that the perceptions in the findings mirrored different perspectives according to the positions.

Measurement Models

Average variance extracted (AVE), heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) Ratio Correlations, reliabilities and multicollinearity were tested to ensure suitability of the data for structural equation modelling. AVE and HTMT affirmed validity of the data while Cronbach's alphas and CR values ascertained reliability and VIF affirmed independence of the independent variables confirming their appropriateness in predicting the dependent variable. In addition, means were presented to show how the teachers rated their team cohesion and leadership support in the schools. Tables 2 and 3 present the results.

Table 2

AVE and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio Correlations Variables

Measures	**Means**	**AVE**	**TC**	**BL**	**ML**	**SC**	**TTC**
TC	4.01						
BL	4.15	0.512	0.864				
ML	4.08	0.527	0.642	0.561			
SC	3.98	0.543	0.634	0.643	0.697		
TTC	3.87	0.540	0.896	0.876	0.842	0.890	
Measures		**AVE**	**SL**	**EM**	**FT**	**IS**	
SL	4.11						
EM	4.12	0.531	0.713				
FT	3.99	0.539	0.795	0.730			
IS	4.22	0.559	0.882	0.899	0.898		

BL=Belonging, EM=Empowerment, FT=Fair Treatment, IS=Inspiration, ML=Morale, SC=Social Cohesion, SL=Supportive Leadership, TC =Team Cohesion, TTC=Task Cohesion

The mean scores in Table 2 indicate that on all aspects of teacher cohesion (belonging [mean = 4.15], morale [mean = 4.08], social cohesion [mean = 3.98) and task cohesion [mean = 3.87]), the teachers rated themselves high because all the means were close code four that denoted agreed. The overall mean score for team cohesion was 4.01. Similarly, the teachers rated leadership support in the schools high with the overall mean score of 4.11. The mean scores for the different leadership support practices were all high (empowerment [mean = 4.12], fair treatment [mean = 3.99], and inspiration [mean = 4.22]). For AVE which tests convergent validity, all the values were above the minimum threshold of 0.5 (Shrestha, 2021). This suggested that the constructs of teacher cohesion and leadership support converged on them, hence were their appropriate measures. Also, all the HTMT ratios of correlation were below the maximum value of 0.90, suggesting that the constructs for the independent variable satisfied the discriminant validity requirement, hence each construct could predict the dependent variable independently (Hair Jr. et al., 2020). Therefore, the data collected was suitable for structural modelling.

Table 3

Reliabilities and Value Inflation Factor for Study Constructs

Measures	α	CR	VIF
BL	0.862	0.893	2.590
ML	0.848	0.885	2.340
SC	0.717	0.825	1.558
TTC	0.713	0.824	1.556
EM	0.888	0.910	2.181
FT	0.854	0.890	1.883
IS	0.911	0.926	2.349

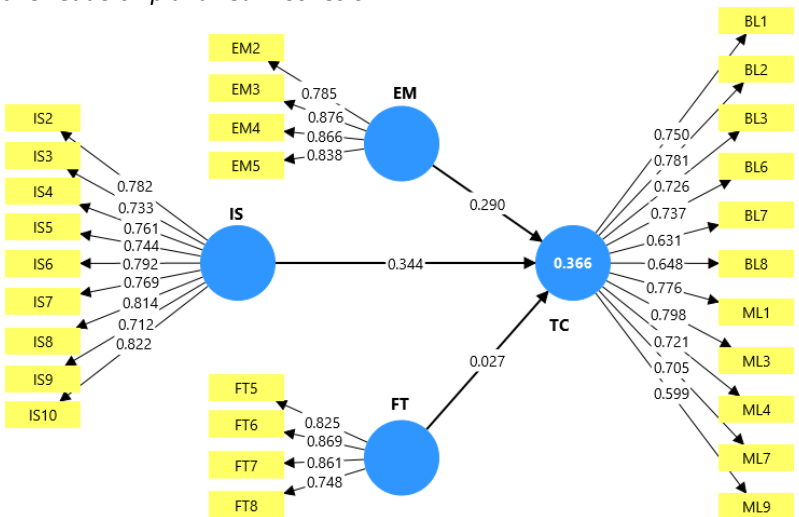
The reliability values in Table 3 indicate that the indicators of the constructs measuring teacher cohesion and leadership support were reliable. This is because the Cronbach's alpha and CR values were all above the minimum of 0.70, confirming the reliability of the measures (Hair Jr. et al., 2020). Furthermore, the VIF values confirmed the different constructs were independent because they indicated low multicollinearity levels as all the values were below the maximum value of 5 (Marcoulides & Raykov, 2019). Therefore, the different constructs and their indicators were appropriate and could be subjected to structural equation modelling.

Structural Equation Model for Teacher Support and Students' Academic Resilience

To assess the influence of supportive leadership on team cohesion, a structural model was developed. The model tested three hypotheses to the effect that; empowerment (H_1), fair treatment (H_2), and inspiration (H_3) have a significant influence on teachers' team cohesion. The structural model (Figure 1) shows the casual linkages between the variables.

Figure 1

Supportive Leadership and Team Cohesion



The structural model (Figure 1) reveals that all measures of supportive leadership, namely empowerment, inspiration, fair treatment and recognition were linked two teacher cohesion. However, indicators for empowerment were reduced to four, that is, indicators EM1, EM6-EM9 dropped. For inspiration, only IS1 was dropped while for fair treatment, indicators FT1-FT4 and FT9 were dropped. The indicators dropped were weak and did not meet the recommended threshold of 0.40 loading when using Factor Analysis (Hair Jr et al., 2020). For team cohesion, only two factors; belonging and morale loaded while task cohesion and social cohesion were dropped. Still, for belonging, indicators BL4, BL5 and BL9 were dropped. For morale ML2, ML5, ML6, ML8 and ML9 dropped. This suggested that for the schools studied, teacher cohesion was largely in terms of belonging and morale. While the structural model presents the beta (β) coefficients and the co-efficient of determination (R^2), the full results describing the casual linkages between supportive leadership and teacher cohesion are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Supportive Leadership and Team Cohesion Path Estimates

	β	**p**
Empowerment -> Team Cohesion	0.290	0.012
Fair Treatment -> Team Cohesion	0.027	0.766
Inspiration -> Team Cohesion	0.344	0.006
R^2 = 0.366		
R^2 Adjusted = 0.357		

The coefficients of determination indicate that all the supportive leadership practices contributed 36.6% (R^2 = 0.336) in the variation in teachers' cohesion. However, the results suggest that the significant factors (empowerment and inspiration) contributed 35.7% (R^2 Adjusted = 0.357). The results reveal that empowerment (β = 0.290, p = 0.012 < 0.05) and inspiration (β =0.344, p=0.006 < 0.05) had a positive significant influence on team cohesion. However, fair treatment (β = 0.027, p = 0.766 > 0.05) had a positive but insignificant influence on teacher team cohesion. While hypothesis one (H_1) to the effect that empowerment has a significant influence on team cohesion of teachers and hypothesis two (H_2) to the effect that inspiration has a significant influence on team cohesion teachers were supported, the third hypothesis (H_3) to the effect that fair treatment has a significant influence on teacher team cohesion of teachers was rejected. The respective betas (βs) suggest that inspiration had a more significant influence and empowerment followed.

Discussion

The study indicates that empowerment and inspiration have a significant influence on teacher cohesion while fair treatment does not. The results on empowerment and inspiration confirm the proposition of the POST that an organisation's support leads to employees' satisfaction with their job hence reciprocating the organisation's support with positive attitudes (Sungu et al., 2019) such as team cohesion. However, the finding on inspiration contradicted the theory suggesting that the propositions of the theory are partially supported. Still, the finding

that empowerment has a significant influence on team cohesion is consistent with the findings of previous scholars such as Abbas and Al-Daamee (2019), Mutonyi et al. (2020) Riisla et al. (2021), Salloum et al. (2022), and Tung and Chang (2011) who all reported similar findings. This suggests that empowerment is an important practice necessary for teacher cohesion.

Further, the finding that inspiration has a significant influence on teacher cohesion is consistent with a number of previous studies (AlTahayneh & Qatami, 2019; Bosselut et al., 2018; Anuar & Kassim, 2024; Paganin et al., 2023; Shedow & George, 2021). This implies that inspiration is another element of supportive leadership that promotes teacher cohesion. Nonetheless, the finding that fair treatment has an insignificant influence on teacher cohesion is inconsistent with previous scholars (Ismail et al., 2018; López et al., 2015; Workman-Stark, 2020) who all reported existence of a significant influence. However, this is because the teachers reported much higher fair treatment from the leaders than teacher cohesion. This means that the influence of leadership fairness on teacher cohesion was not commensurate to its level. Therefore, higher levels of fairness do not translate to equal teacher cohesion.

Conclusion

Empowerment by the leaders is necessary for teachers' cohesion. When school leaders empower teachers by paying attention to their work effort, involve them in problem-solving, help them to focus on their goals and consider their ideas and suggestions, their team cohesion will improve. Also, inspiration of leaders is a prerequisite for teachers' cohesion. The inspiration comes in terms of the head teacher talking enthusiastically, exhibiting high work effort, being receptive to suggestions and ideas, being passionate about work and providing the teachers with hope. Also, this is when school leaders evoke confidence in teachers, enhances their positive energy, and offers stability and direction. High fair treatment is not necessarily essential for teacher cohesion of teachers. Therefore, giving higher priority to communicating details in a timely manner, treating subordinates as equals, providing them fair and honest responses and spending time talking taking about their problems might not translate to teacher cohesion.

Recommendations

Head teachers should empower teachers to enhance their team cohesion. This should involve paying attention to teachers work effort, involving them in problem solving, helping them to focus on their goals and considering their ideas and suggestions. Head teachers should also provide inspiration to the teachers to improve their team cohesion. This should involve talking enthusiastically to them, the head portraying high work effort, being receptive to suggestions and ideas, being passionate about work and providing the teachers with hope. Head teachers should also inspire teachers by evoking confidence in them, enhancing their positive energy, and offering stability and direction. However, head teachers should not prioritise fair treatment above other factors. Therefore, head teachers should not over emphasise communicating details in a timely manner, treating subordinates as equals, providing them fair and honest responses and spending time talking taking about their problems.

Contributions

The findings are likely to make a contribution to leadership practice and policy. First, the high contribution of empowerment and inspiration in enhancing teachers team cohesion means that head teachers should emphasise involving teachers in decision-making, valuing their ideas, and motivating them through enthusiasm, confidence, and clear direction to strengthen their cohesion. At the policy level, responsible bodies such as Ministry of Education which are responsible for developing leadership and appraisal frameworks should prioritise empowering and inspirational leadership competencies rather than focusing predominantly on procedural fairness. Besides, for professional development, the findings imply that ensuring positive leader-teacher relationships is essential for collaborative cultures in schools.

Limitations

This study makes significant contributions on showing how supportive leadership contributes to teacher cohesion. However, some results were inconsistent with what was hypothesised and findings by previous scholars, specifically on the influence of fair treatment on teacher cohesion. This calls for the need by future scholars to further test this hypothesis to ascertain the accuracy of the findings. Still, the study was carried out in schools in one rural district in Uganda. Thus, future research can be done in schools in different districts including semi-urban and urban ones. Further, the study was undertaken using the positivist research approach. For in-depth analysis, future studies should involve the qualitative approach.

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