

Self-esteem and Teacher Engagement in Primary Schools, in Jinja City, Uganda

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Abstract

The study examined whether self-esteem is a significant predictor of teacher engagement. The study was guided by the cross-sectional research design. The study participants comprised of 408 primary school teachers of northern division in Jinja city covering nineteen primary schools. The simple random sampling was used to select 196 primary school teachers selected from the 408 teachers who teach in primary schools in northern divisions found in the Jinja City. The results indicated that link between teacher self-esteem and engagement was negative and insignificant and as such, the hypothesis was accepted. Self-esteem was studied in terms of competition, approval from others and academic competence. For competition only two items (CO1 & CO2) out of five loaded above 0.5 and three items (CO3, CO4 & CO5) did not load above threshold level of 0.5. For approval from others, all the five items that measured it loaded above 0.5. For academic competence, all the five items that measured it loaded above 0.5. Teacher engagement was studied in terms of absorption, dedication and vigor. For absorption, all the four items that measured it loaded above 0.5. For dedication, all the four items that measured it loaded above 0.5, while none of the items for vigor loaded above 0.5. The study concluded that Teacher's self-esteem enhances their engagement especially when teachers feel worthwhile when performing better than others on a given task or skill, if they come to know that they are better than others, give themselves a sense of respect, when they feel academically better about themselves while knowing they are doing well academically, and feel bad about themselves whenever their academic performance is lacking. The study recommended that in order to promote teacher engagement, there is need to enhance teacher's self-esteem by making teachers feel worthwhile when performing better than others on a given task or skill, if they come to know that they are better than others, give themselves a sense of respect, when they feel academically better about themselves while knowing they are doing well academically, and feel bad about themselves whenever their academic performance is lacking. Further, what others think about then has no effect on what they think about themselves.

Keywords: Self-esteem, teacher engagement, academic competency, academic performance.

Introduction

Studies (Anthony et al., 2023) have related academic self-confidence and teacher competence. Jabeen et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between self-esteem and teaching competence among secondary school teachers in Pakistan. Regression analysis showed that self-esteem had a positive and significant effect on teacher competence. In their study conducted

in (Micheal et al., 2023), they investigated the role of intelligence and self-concept for teacher competence. The findings showed that self-concept influenced teacher competence. However, these two studies revealed a contextual gap as they were conducted alongside a primary school context where teacher competencies are measured distinctly due to

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operational differences (Seth & Ntirandekura, 2022). In a study conducted in Casablanca at Hassan II University (Micheal et al., 2023), they investigated the effects of academic performance on students' perceptions of competence and self-esteem in training. The results showed that self-esteem affects the student's sense of competence and academic achievement. However, a conceptual gap emerged from the above study simply because it looked at student self-esteem and teacher competence but did not look at teacher self-esteem and competence. This calls for conducting the proposed study in the context of primary schools in Jinja town. Similarly, (F. Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022) studied correlations between teachers' self-esteem and academic competencies. Correlation analysis showed that self-esteem strongly influenced teachers' academic competence. Like the study (Richard et al., 2023), which was conducted in a secondary school, the study did not capture experiential self-assessment and teacher competence in the context of primary schools. Therefore, it is imperative to conduct this proposed study in the context of primary schools in Jinja District. In a moderated mediation model in China (Seth & Ntirandekura, 2022) investigated self-esteem and academic engagement among adolescents. Findings suggest that adolescent self-esteem, academic self-efficacy, and perceived social support are key factors that improved adolescent academic engagement (Victoria et al., 2023). The population gap emerged from a study that was conducted on adolescents, whose level of self-esteem and competence is significantly different from the level of

self-confidence and competence of teachers. All the above-mentioned gaps compel this proposed study to verify whether the academic self-esteem and competence of the teacher.

Scholars (F. Christopher, Komunda et al., 2022) associate social self-confidence with teacher competence. In the Philippines (Seth & Ntirandekura, 2022) investigated the competence of the classroom teacher-counselor towards the development of students' self-esteem. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between classroom teacher-counselor competencies and self-esteem of senior high school students. Furthermore, Herndon (2021) investigated the socio-emotional competence of teachers and their responses to children with challenging behaviour. Regression analysis showed that social emotional competence significantly influenced children with challenging behavior. Contextual and conceptual gaps emerge from the above studies. Contextually, the study (Richard et al., 2022) was conducted in the Philippines, where teacher competence may be measured differently from that of primary schools in Uganda. Conceptually, all studies did not address teacher self-esteem and competence in the context of primary schools. A study conducted in Thailand (Cand et al., 2022) investigated the relationships between ICT competencies, self-esteem and self-regulated learning with engineering competencies. Structural equation modeling indicated a positive relationship between ICT competencies and self-esteem. In India, Srinivasan and Pugalenth (2020) investigated the relationship between self-esteem and teaching competence of prospective

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teachers. There was no significant difference in the pedagogical competence of prospective teachers regarding gender. Similarly, studies have revealed conceptual and contextual gaps (Richard et al., 2023). Conceptually, none of the above studies were related to teacher self-esteem and competence. However, the study took place outside of primary schools. For that reason, it is necessary for this proposed study to be conducted in the context of primary schools in Jinja town. However, in India Singh (2018) self-esteem and performance competencies of secondary school teachers in the urban area of Imphal East District. Regression analysis showed that self-esteem influenced teachers' classroom performance competencies (F. Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022). The population difference emerged from the above studies because the study was conducted on secondary school teachers where the working conditions are quite different from those in primary schools. All of the above gaps call for the need to conduct this proposed study to test whether social self-confidence significantly influences teacher competence (T.

Statement of the problem

There is an arguable gap that suggests a negative association between self-esteem and teacher competence. This calls for this study to test the association between the two variables in the context of primary schools. In Finland (Kazaara & Kazaara, 2023) investigated the role of teachers in developing healthy self-esteem in young English language learners. The finding revealed that teachers significantly influenced student self-esteem. However, the study also highlighted a contextual gap, as it was conducted in Finland, where working conditions are quite different from those of primary school teachers. (Anthony et al., 2023) examined teachers' self-esteem and its effects on teaching. The results of the correlation analysis showed that self-esteem had a positive effect on teaching. The study took teaching to implicitly imply teacher competence, and yet the two are distinct. All the aforementioned gaps compel this study to verify the relationship between personal self-esteem and teacher competence (Tasha et al., 2023). Given the above

Christopher, 2022). Researchers (Fu et al., 2021; Fults, 2019; Yang, 2018; Mbuva, 2017) have related personal self-confidence and teacher competence. In their study, Fu et al. (2021) mediated the effect of self-esteem on the self-efficacy of special educators in Western China. Regression analysis showed that self-esteem positively influenced self-efficacy. A conceptual gap emerged from the above study as it only related to self-efficacy to indirectly imply teacher competence, but the two concepts are measured differently (F. Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022). This calls for this proposed study to test the link between self-esteem and teacher competence in the context of primary schools. Fults (2019) examined teacher emotional-social competencies that predict positive relationships with student learning. The results of the regression analysis showed that the emotional-social competence of the teacher negatively affected the learning of the students. The study raised conceptual and controversial gaps. Conceptually, the study took student learning to indirectly imply self-esteem, yet the two concepts are measured differently.

gaps, it was important to conduct this study to test whether personal self-esteem significantly influences teacher competence.

Objective of the study

To examine whether self-esteem is a significant predictor of teacher engagement.

Hypothesis

The study was guided by the following null hypothesis

H₀: Self-esteem is an insignificant predictor of teacher engagement

Methodology

The study was guided by the cross-sectional research design. The study participants comprised of 408 primary school teachers of northern division in Jinja city covering nineteen primary schools namely; Walukuba West Estate, St. Gonzaga, Masese Co-Education, Narambai Road, Victoria Nile, Kisima Island, Walukuba East Estate, Kisima Island I, Jinja Army Boarding, Mpumudde Methodist, Jinja Police Barracks, Spire Road, Kiira primary, Jinja SDA, Mpumudde Estates, Magwa, Kirinya Prisons, Main Streets, Lakesite and Uganda Railways primary schools.

The sample size was 196 primary school teachers selected from the 408 teachers who teach in primary schools in northern divisions found in the Jinja City. The sample size as selected based on the table for defining sample size from a given study population as developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The primary school teachers were selected they were more qualified to provide pertinent information regarding teacher self-esteem and teacher reason being they participate in the day-to-day teaching in schools.

The simple random sampling was used to select 196 study participants from the total population of 408 teachers. Simple random sampling is a statistical method of selecting a subset of individuals or items from a larger population. In simple random sampling, each individual or item in the population has an equal chance of being selected, and each selection is independent of all others (Noor et al., 2022). Teachers in the selected schools were simple randomly selected from the study population. Table 1 reveals that the study employed a Self-Administered Questionnaire (SAQ) to gather data, with instruments taken and modified from previous researchers. Previous scholars guaranteed the reliabilities and validities of variables; the variables were also assumed to be valid.

Table 1: Operationalization of Variables, Instrument, their Sources and Reliability

Variable	Nature of variable	Indicators	Source
Engagement	Dependent	Vigor, Absorption, Dedication	Schaufeli et al.2003), 17 Items
Teacher Competency	Independent	Planning, Development, Results	Moreno-Murcia et al. (2015), 17 Items

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Self-efficacy	Mediator	Others approval, appearance, competition, academic competency, family support	Crocker et al. (2003), 25 Items
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Data was analyzed inform of tables, frequencies and percentages using SPSS & STATA (Nelson et al., 2022)

Results

Descriptive Results for Self-esteem

The concept of self-esteem was studied as a four (4) dimensional-model that included family support, competition, academic competence and approval from others. Below follow results for the four concepts.

Competition

The concept of competition was studied using five (5) items. The Table 2 present the frequency and means

Table 2: Descriptive Results for Competition

Items of Competition	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Means
I feel worthwhile when I perform better than others on a task or skill	00	4 (2.2%)	00	62 (33.5%)	119 (64.3%)	4.6
Knowing that I am better than others on a task raises my self-esteem	00	7 (3.8%)	00	51 (27.6%)	127 (68.6%)	4.6
Doing better than others gives me a sense of self-respect	2 (1.1%)	8 (4.3%)	00	75 (40.5%)	100 (54.1%)	4.4
My self-worth is affected by how well I do when I am competing with others	00	12 (6.5%)	25 (13.5%)	90 (48.6%)	59 (31.4%)	4.0
My self-worth is influenced by how well I do on competitive tasks	7 (3.8%)	8 (4.3%)	14 (7.6%)	54 (29.2%)	101 (54.6%)	4.3

The results on whether respondents feel worthwhile when they perform better than others on a task or skill revealed that majority respondents (97.8%) agreed, and 2.2% disagreed, while none of the respondent was not sure. The higher mean of 4.6 imply that respondents accepted that they felt worthwhile when they performed better than others on a task or skill. On whether knowing that I am better than others on a task raises my self-esteem revealed that majority respondents (96.2%) agreed, 3.8% disagreed while none of the study participants were not sure. The mean of 4.6 on the scale implied that respondents accepted that knowing that their better than others on a task raises their self-esteem.

Regarding to whether doing better than others gives me a sense of self-respect revealed that majority participants (94.6%) agreed, and 5.4% disagreed, while none of the study participants was not sure. Relating to whether my self-worth is affected by how well I do when I am competing with others indicated that the biggest percentage (80.0%) agreed, 13.5% were not sure, while 6.5% disagreed. The higher means of 4.0 on the scale implied

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that respondents accepted that their self-worth is affected by how well they do when compete with others (Racheal et al., 2023).

On whether My self-worth is influenced by how well I do on competitive tasks indicated that majority respondents (83.8%) agreed, 8.1 disagreed, while 7.6% were not sure. The high mean of 4.3 on the scale implied that participants accepted that their self-worth is influenced by how well they do on competitive tasks. To find out how respondents ranked competition, average index was computed for the five (5) items that measured the concept. Table 3 gives the results.

Table 3: Summary Results for Competition

Descriptive		Statistic	Std. Error
Competition	Mean	4.39	0.04
	95% Confidence Interval for Lower Bound	4.30	
	Mean Upper Bound	4.48	
	5% Trimmed Mean	4.44	
	Median	4.60	
	Variance	0.35	
	Std. Deviation	0.59	
	Minimum	1.80	
	Maximum	5.00	
	Range	3.20	
	Interquartile Range	1.00	
	Skewness	-1.30	0.18
	Kurtosis	2.31	0.36

The Table 3 show a mean = 4.39 close to median 4.60 with a negative skew (skew = -1.30). This suggested normal distribution of the results. High mean meant that competition was rated to be high. The low standard deviation = 0.59 also indicated that responses were normally distributed (Nelson et al., 2023).

Academic Competence

The concept of academic competence was studied using five (5) items. Table 4 present the frequency and means.

Table 4: Descriptive Results for Academic Competency

Items of Academic Competency	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Means
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My opinion about myself isn't tied to how well I do in school	34 (18.4%)	54 (29.2%)	22 (11.9%)	43 (23.2%)	32 (17.3%)	2.9
Doing well in school gives me a sense of self-respect	00	9 (4.9%)	5 (2.9%)	92 (49.7%)	79 (42.7%)	4.3
I feel better about myself when I know I'm doing well academically	00	4 (2.2%)	4 (17.3%)	68 (36.8%)	109 (58.9%)	4.5
My self-esteem is influenced by my academic performance	15 (8.1%)	9 (4.9%)	22 (11.9%)	92 (49.7%)	47 (25.4%)	3.8
I feel bad about myself whenever my academic performance is lacking	00	10 (5.5%)	8 (4.3%)	67 (36.2%)	100 (54.0%)	4.4

The results revealed that majority respondents (47.6%) disagreed that their opinion about themselves isn't tied to how well they do in school, 40.5% agreed, while 11.9% were not sure. The mean of 2.9 implied that on average respondent did not accept that their opinion about themselves isn't tied to how well they do in school. On whether participants were doing well in school gives them a sense of self-respect revealed that the biggest percentage (92.4%) agreed, 4.9% disagreed and while, 2.9% were not sure. The mean of 4.3 implied that respondents accepted that doing well in school gave them a sense of self-respect (Godfrey et al., 2023).

On whether the study participants feel better about themselves when they know there are doing well academically indicated that the biggest percentage (75.7%) agreed, 17.3% were not sure, while 2.2% disagreed with the statement. The higher mean of 4.5 implied that the study participants accepted that they felt better about themselves when they know they are doing well academically.

Regarding whether respondents' self-esteem is influenced by their academic performance indicated that, majority (75.1%) agreed, 13.0% were not sure, while 11.9% disagreed with the statement. The high mean of 3.8 implied that the respondents accepted that their self-esteem is influenced by their academic performance. Relating to whether study participants feel bad about themselves whenever their academic performance is lacking revealed that majority respondents (80.2%) agreed, 5.5% disagreed, while 4.3% were not sure. The higher mean of 4.4 implied that respondents accepted that they felt bad about themselves whenever their academic performance is lacking. To find out how respondents ranked academic competence, average index was computed for the five (5) items that measured the concept (Brighton et al., 2023). Table 5 gives the results.

Table 5: Summary Results for Academic Competence

Descriptive	Statistic	Std. Error
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Academic	Mean		4.28	0.04
Competence	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.20	
		Upper Bound	4.36	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.37	
	Median		4.40	
	Variance		.317	
	Std. Deviation		0.56	
	Minimum		2.00	
	Maximum		5.00	
	Range		3.00	
	Interquartile Range		0.40	
	Skewness		-2.84	0.18
	Kurtosis		8.58	0.36

The Table 5 show a mean = 4.28 close to median 4.40 with a negative skew (skew = -2.84). This suggested normal distribution of the results. High mean meant that academic competence was rated to be high. The low standard deviation = 0.56 also indicated that responses were normally distributed.

Approval from Others

The concept of approval was studied using five (5) items. Table 6 present the frequency and means.

Table 6: Descriptive Results for Approval from Others

Items of Approval	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Means
I don't care if other people have a negative opinion about me	65 (35.1%)	40 (21.6%)	5 (2.7%)	59 (31.9%)	16 (8.6%)	2.6
I can't respect myself if others don't respect me	65 (35.1%)	67 (36.2%)	2 (1.1%)	38 (20.5%)	13 (7.0%)	2.3
I don't care what other people think of me	15 (8.1%)	67 (36.2%)	8 (4.3%)	59 (31.9%)	36 (19.5%)	3.2
What others think of me has no effect on what I think about myself	4 (2.2%)	27 (14.6%)	18 (9.7%)	59 (31.9%)	77 (41.6%)	3.96
My self-esteem depends on the opinion's others hold of me	35 (18.9%)	62 (33.5%)	18 (9.7%)	44 (23.8%)	26 (14.1%)	2.8

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The results indicate that they don't care if other people have a negative opinion about them, where majority respondents (56.7%) disagreed, 40.5% agreed, while 2.7% were not sure. The mean of 2.6 on a scale implied that respondents accepted that they don't care if other people had a negative opinion about them. On whether participants can't respect themselves if others don't respect them revealed that majority participants (61.3%) disagreed, 27.5% agreed, while 4.3% were not sure. The low mean 2.3 implied that study participants did not accept that they can't respect themselves if others don't respect them.

On whether respondents don't care what other people think of them indicated that majority (51.4%) agreed, 44.3% disagreed, while 4.3% were not sure. The average mean of 3.2 meant that study participants couldn't respect themselves if others don't respect them. Relating to whether what others think of them has no effect on what they think about themselves, majority respondents (73.5%) agreed, 16.8% disagreed, while 9.7% were not sure (Emmanuel et al., 2023). The mean 3.96 meant that respondents accepted that what others thought of them had no effect on what they think about themselves. On whether their self-esteem depends on the opinion's others hold of them revealed that majority respondents (52.4%) disagreed, followed 37.9% agreed, while 9.7% were not sure. The lower mean of 2.8 meant that respondents' self-esteem did not depend on the opinion's others hold of them. To find out how participants ranked support from others, average index was computed for the five (5) items that measured the concept. Table 7 gives the results.

Table 7: Summary Results for Approval from Others

Descriptives			Statistic	Std. Error
Approval from Others	Mean		4.27	0.04
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.18	
		Upper Bound	4.35	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.35	
	Median		4.40	
	Variance		0.33	
	Std. Deviation		0.57	
	Minimum		2.00	
	Maximum		5.00	
	Range		3.00	
	Interquartile Range		0.40	
	Skewness		-2.71	0.18
	Kurtosis		7.62	0.36

The Table 7 show a mean = 4.27 close to median 4.35 with a negative skew (skew = -2.71). This suggested normal distribution of the results. High mean meant that academic competence was rated to be high. The low standard deviation = 0.57 also indicated that responses were normally distributed.

Self-esteem Index

To test the how overall the teachers rated their self-esteem, an average index was created for the four (4) aspects measuring the concept that are family support (FS1-FS5), competition (CO1-CO5), academic competence (AC1-AC5), and approval from others (AP1-AP5). Table 4.22 indicate the summary of results.

Table 8: Descriptive Results for Self-esteem

Descriptive		Statistic	Std. Error
Self-esteem	Mean	4.31	0.02
	95% Confidence Interval for Lower Bound	4.27	
	Mean Upper Bound	4.35	
	5% Trimmed Mean	4.34	
	Median	4.35	
	Variance	0.09	
	Std. Deviation	0.30	
	Minimum	3.15	
	Maximum	4.85	
	Range	1.70	
	Interquartile Range	0.25	
	Skewness	-1.51	0.18
	Kurtosis	2.53	0.36

The Table 8 show a mean = 4.31 close to median 4.35 with a negative skew (skew = -1.51). This suggested normal distribution of the results. High mean meant that self-esteem was rated to be high. The low standard deviation = 0.30 also indicated that responses were normally distributed.

Self-esteem and Teacher Engagement

The third objective examined whether self-esteem predicted teacher engagement. The null hypothesis that self-esteem insignificantly predicted teacher engagement as illustrated in Figure 1

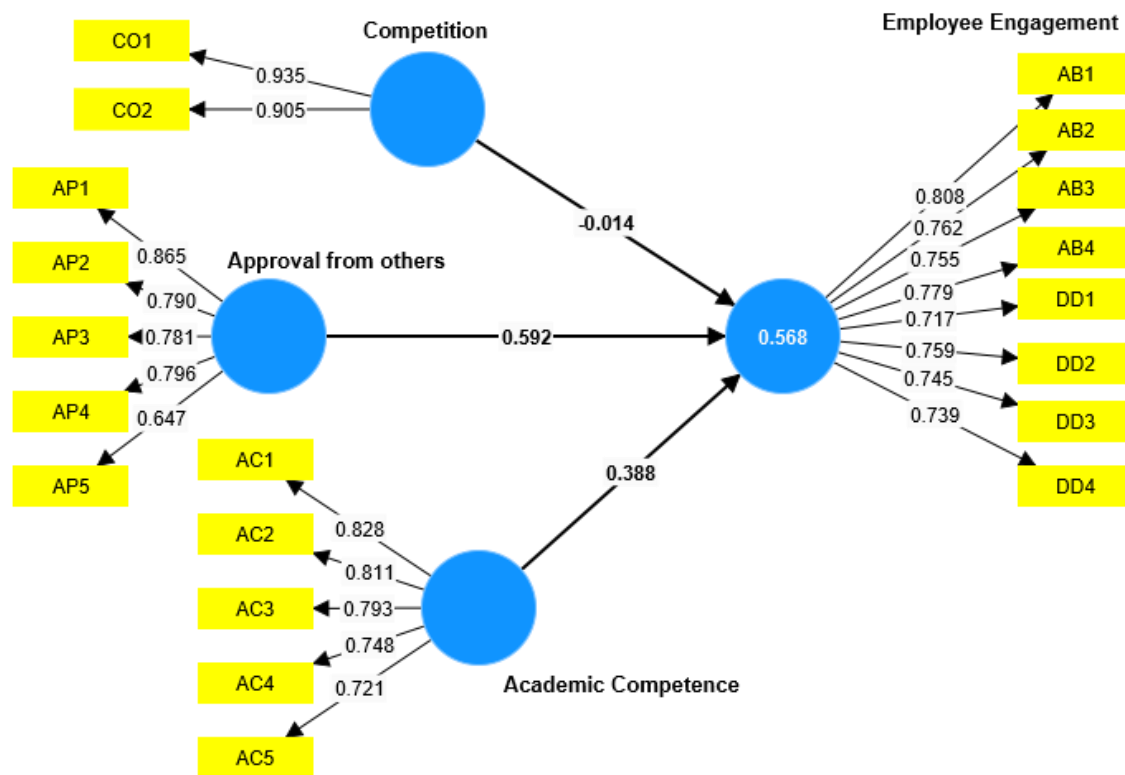


Figure 1: Structural Model Prediction for Self-esteem and Teacher Engagement

Results in Figure 1 shows that self-esteem relate to teacher engagement. Self-esteem was studied in terms of competition, approval from others and academic competence. For competition only two items (CO1 & CO2) out of five loaded above 0.5 and three items (CO3, CO4 & CO5) did not load above threshold level of 0.5. For approval from others, all the five items that measured it loaded above 0.5. For academic competence, all the five items that measured it loaded above 0.5. Teacher engagement was studied in terms of absorption, dedication and vigor. For absorption, all the four items that measured it loaded above 0.5 (Micheal et al., 2023). For dedication, all the four items that measured it loaded above 0.5, while none of the items for vigor loaded above 0.5. All the items that did not load above 0.5 were removed from the model.

Table 9: Structural Model Prediction for Self-esteem and Teacher Engagement

Self-esteem and Teacher Engagement	B	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics	P values
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Academic Competence	->	Teacher Engagement	0.388	0.378	0.134	2.890	0.004
Approval from others	->	Teacher Engagement	0.592	0.602	0.122	4.834	0.000
Competition	->	Teacher Engagement	-0.014	-0.010	0.038	0.374	0.708
$R^2 = 0.568$							
$R^2 = \text{Adjusted } 0.561$							

The results in Table 9 and Figure 1 revealed that the hypotheses to the effect that academic competence positively and significantly predicted teacher engagement, approval from other positively and significantly predicted teacher engagement, competition positively and significantly predicted teacher engagement were tested. The results revealed that academic competence positively and significantly ($\beta = 0.388$, $p=6.636$, $0.000<0.05$) predicted teacher engagement. Approval from others positively and significantly ($\beta = 0.592$, $P=0.000<0.05$) predicted teacher engagement. Further, competition negatively and insignificantly (-0.014 , $P=0.708> 0.005$) predicted teacher engagement. The R^2 implied that the contribution of the three factors namely academic competence, Approval from others and competition contributed to 56.8% on teacher engagement.

The adjusted R^2 suggested that the significant factors namely academic competence and approval from others contributed 56.1% on teacher engagement. Therefore, the coefficient of determination suggested that 43.2% of the difference in teacher engagement was accounted for by other factors not considered for in this model. This imply that if primary school teachers can put more emphasis on improving academic competence and get approval from other, teacher engagement will improve. Since the connection between academic competence and teacher engagement was positive and significant, the connection between approval from others was positive and significant and the connection between competition and teacher engagement was negative and insignificant, the hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion of the Findings

The study objective was to examine whether self-esteem is a significant predictor of teacher engagement. The hypothesis derived from this objective was that self-esteem insignificantly predicted teacher engagement. The results indicated that link between teacher self-esteem and engagement was negative and insignificant and as such, the hypothesis was accepted. However, this was contrary to the finding by majority scholars who indicated that self-esteem positively and significantly influenced teacher engagement. For example, Tisuela and.Callo (2022) examined competencies of classroom teacher-counselor towards students' self-esteem development. While, Herndon (2021) examined the social emotional competence of teachers and their responses to children with challenging behaviors. In

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Thailand, Khampirat (2021) examined relationships between ICT competencies, self-esteem and self-regulated learning with engineering competencies. Structural equation modeling indicated a positive link between ICT competencies and self-esteem. In India, Srinivasan and Pugalenth (2020) explored the relationship between self-esteem and teaching competency of prospective teachers. Nonetheless, In India, Singh (2018) self-esteem and classroom performance competency of teachers of high schools within urban area of Imphal East District. Since the finding of the study was contrary with the findings of the majority scholars, it can be inferred that the self-esteem negatively and insignificantly predicted teacher engagement.

Conclusion

Teacher's self-esteem enhances their engagement especially when teachers feel worthwhile when performing better than others on a given task or skill, if they come to know that they are better than others, give themselves a sense of respect, when they feel academically better about themselves while knowing they are doing well academically, and feel bad about themselves whenever their academic performance is lacking. Further, what others think about then has no effect on what they think about themselves.

Recommendation

The study recommended that in order to promote teacher engagement, there is need to enhance teacher's self-esteem by making teachers feel worthwhile when performing better than others on a given task or skill, if they come to know that they are better than others, give themselves a sense of respect, when they feel academically better about themselves while knowing they are doing well academically, and feel bad about themselves whenever their academic performance is lacking. Further, what others think about then has no effect on what they think about themselves.

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