

# Challenges Encountered by Secondary School Principals and Their Impact on Teacher Job Performance in Kieni West Sub-County Nyeri, Kenya

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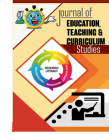


## Abstract

High school principals face numerous challenges in their endeavors to enhance teacher performance. These challenges range from supervision to organizational issues. The purpose of this study was to assess the challenges encountered by secondary school principals and their impact on teacher job performance in Kieni West Sub-County Nyeri, Kenya. Specifically, the study aimed to: examine the supervision challenges; determine the managerial challenges and determine the probable solutions to mitigate the challenges. The research was directed by Path Goal theory in 1971. The target population was 262 schools with 262 principals. Simple random sampling was employed using 30% of the target population to get a sample of 79 principals. A structured questionnaire was utilized to collect data which was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results revealed that 56% of principals faced supervision challenges which were mainly; teachers' laxity in the supervision of students' academic work at 72% followed by teachers' slackness in controlling students' discipline at 63.3%. The managerial challenges included financial constraints at 78% followed by uncooperative parents at 48%. The study concluded that the above-identified challenges may have an impact on leadership outcome by school heads and eventually teacher performance. The study recommended close monitoring of teachers and the use of collaborative leadership to improve teachers' performance and cooperation. Consequently, this may lead to improvement in students' performance.

## Introduction

For nearly a decade, public secondary schools in Kenya have consistently recorded poor academic performance among the majority of students in the national examinations. Many education stakeholders have expressed significant concern over this dire situation. The continual blame for the low academic performance of some of these students is primarily directed towards the school principals and, to some extent, the teachers. However, these accusations cannot be rationally justified without considering the leadership challenges faced by principals in their efforts to enhance teacher job performance. The



leadership challenges of principals may have a considerable impact on teachers' job performance and, consequently, on students' academic performance.

Principals and teachers form the essential foundations of effective headship in an educational institution (Parveen, et al., 2021). Werang and Lena (2014) posit that competent headship that steadily aligns school academic targets with actions forms the cornerstone for building an effective institution. Competent leaders are beneficial to both teachers and students in terms of proper school management. Leadership and school conditions are extensively identified as indispensable interventions to promote development, transformation, and innovations in capacity building in schooling and learning practices (Lee, et al., 2019; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021). Principals have a direct influence on student academic success (Wu, et al., 2020). Teachers are similarly significant, and their involvement plays a crucial role in the life of the learner (Sebastian, et al., 2019). Parveen, et al., (2022) affirm that the school administration is accountable for enabling and enhancing modern information management and fostering a conducive learning environment for optional learning and course delivery.

### **Literature Review**

Globalisation has heightened the demand for exceptional educational leaders who can effectively implement pedagogical reforms and technological advancements. School principals face numerous challenges that hinder their effectiveness in fulfilling their duties and ensuring optimal performance by teachers. These challenges include financial constraints, administrative issues, contextual factors, high student-teacher ratios, and insufficient teaching resources, among others (Consoy, et al., 2024). According to Slater, et al., (2008), the issues encountered by newly appointed principals in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and several European countries can be classified as feelings of desperation and alienation. It can be exhausting to manage the legacy, methods, and style of previous heads, handle a variety of assignments, and oversee both time management and the school budget. Managing (for instance, supporting, warning, and dismissing) inadequate staff, implementing new government policies, notably new academic programmes, or alternative school ventures, along with issues related to systems and placement management, adds to the principals' workload. All these activities create time pressures for principals and contribute to a highly charged environment that drains administrators' energy.

Jusoh (2012), in his study on trainers' job contentment in Malaysia, found that teachers' distinct characteristics, aspirations, and varying workloads pose challenges for conservatory leaders in enhancing job satisfaction. The role of the principal in Malaysian schools greatly influences teachers' performance if there is adequate managerial support (Pazim & Al, 2021). Rachmawati and Suyatno (2021) find in their study in Indonesia a connection between leaders' managerial competence and mentors' career fulfilment. Leaders' modelling and guidance enhance job performance. Mutembei (2013) affirms that headteachers often lack adequate financial education, making it difficult for them to manage money effectively in day schools. Mestry and Grobler (2006) equally posit that South Africa has a shortage of headteachers with effective financial management skills, leading to a high prevalence of fraud and monetary mishandling problems. Okeke and Mtyuda (2017) outline challenges related to teachers' job satisfaction in South Africa, which include inadequate teaching and learning resources, congested classrooms, and managerial issues. Othoo and Nekesa (2022) postulate that instructors' levels of motivation are influenced by their income. Low income demotivates tutors. There is a high possibility



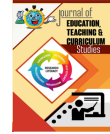
that disheartened educators will seek alternative employment, exhibit unpunctuality, absenteeism, and may fail to meet the expectations of students.

According to Abaya (2016), principals of public secondary schools are faced with challenges related to overdependence, uncertainty, and vulnerability. An investigation by Abdurashed and Bello (2015) analysed the difficulties facing school principals' authority in the northern district of Nigeria. According to the study, unpleasant leadership encounters caused principals to lose focus on the instructional supervision of teaching and learning in their schools. Further investigation showed that heads and educators require seminars and workshops to enrich individual and collective understanding, facilitate practical learning, and expand networks. Iskamto (2020) affirms that teacher performance is the product of the instructor's efforts in fulfilling the obligations allocated to them. Motivation is a critical factor necessary for teachers' productivity. Teachers can be motivated through facilitation to attend workshops and seminars or engage in short or refresher courses. However, facilitation becomes a tall order for principals due to inadequate funding from the government. Christopher, Munyua, and Okendo's (2014) inquiry into the challenges of enhancing teacher job satisfaction in secondary schools in Western Uganda asserts that supervision issues, poor working environments, and interpersonal relationships among teachers rank high on the list of factors hindering the promotion of teacher job satisfaction. Preston, et al., (2013) affirm that principals face challenges in balancing conflicting responsibilities, a lack of teachers' development, and issues related to school accountability and transformation.

Principals are charged with the responsibility of implementing structures that lead to the achievement of organisational goals. Some of these goals include improving academic standards, upgrading working conditions, raising teachers' morale, and ensuring teachers' professional satisfaction (Musyoki, et al. 2021). Job satisfaction is significantly correlated with job performance (Kanzaga & Lekule, 2023). A well-motivated teacher is a performer. Rwelamila (2019) observed that public secondary school teachers in Tanzania expressed disappointment despite government policies entrusting principals with the obligation of guaranteeing professional satisfaction for tutors.

Nyange (2013) posits that poor remuneration and meagre teaching allowances in public schools in Kenya make it challenging for headteachers to motivate teachers. Subsequently, countless tutors lodge complaints against their proprietors, resulting in diminished job performance. Nevertheless, principals do not regulate teachers' earnings and stipends; therefore, they have no control over tutors' discontent. Employers need to establish fair reimbursement policies for teachers, enabling them to provide adequate support to school management. The success or failure of an academic institution is heavily reliant on the governance and leadership style of the institution's principal (Okwatsa, 2021). According to the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) guidelines, the principal is the primary educationalist and administrative leader responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school. Therefore, he/she is responsible for generating and conducting the organisation's programme events, facility management, as well as safeguarding the welfare of both students and staff (TSC, 2018). This calls for effective collaboration and the inclusion of teachers in decision-making processes to enhance job performance.

Despite the challenges mentioned above, the principal has a primary responsibility as an instructional supervisor that involves coordinating various interrelated school initiatives while providing leadership and guidance. The intention of the instructional guidelines is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, with teachers steering the process. Alemayehu (2022) asserts that instructional supervision aids

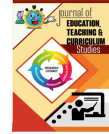


teachers' continual professional growth. The principal must structure and maintain a conducive learning environment for all school subjects. Maisyaroh, et al. (2021) support the notion that tutoring direction has a significant impact on divergences in schooling models and teaching resources. Moreover, principals need to support and reinforce teachers' efforts to execute their mandate. Regardless of the policies introduced, ultimately, the teacher is tasked with interpreting and implementing the teaching and learning process. Performance appraisals of teachers tend to be more apprehensive in nature, focusing on procedures rather than outcomes (Taylor, 2012). Principals have the obligation to provide open and effective guidance that allows teachers to demonstrate their professional skills. A study by Stein, et al. (2020) confirms a lack of professionalism from principals in instructional supervision, leading teachers to perceive the responsibility as a fault-finding exercise. Teachers lament the inadequate provision of teaching and learning facilities, which negatively impacts students' performance, contrary to the assumed ineffectiveness of teachers.

Gibbs (2022) affirms that teachers are required to endure the demands, pressures, and undesirable encounters within the varied conditions of coaching. He added that a respectable educationalist continues to devise innovative techniques in the teaching space despite hindrances and remains optimistic in the face of criticism. According to Saleem, et al. (2020), a principal should effectively articulate and implement highly regarded and specific visions for daily instructional methods to foster a positive culture that encourages exceptional teaching. Kihama and Wainaina (2019) declare that school principals should provide objective and subjective feedback to teachers. Objective feedback has a clearly visible output, such as the duration of a lesson; whereas subjective comments are based on assessments made by the head rating a teacher at the end of the year. Providing feedback helps to reinforce individual development and enhance teacher job performance.

Performance is an essential instrument in the evaluation of both staff and organisational activities. Job performance is the total anticipated value derived from workers' behaviour over a given period. In a school, job performance encompasses what teachers do to achieve the established objectives and goals. Principals need to adopt a suitable leadership style that facilitates the attainment of these goals. Supportive leadership is a style that considers the emotional welfare of team members, in addition to guiding them towards achieving their professional objectives. Lin & Ling (2021) affirm that supportive leadership provides substantial support for staff work, remuneration, and emotional consideration. The implementation of this model by the school principal could motivate teachers to work independently, communicate openly, and complete their tasks punctually.

Teacher job performance is not only limited to the academic grades of the students but also encompasses various aspects of the teacher's ability to fulfil the assigned targets. Northouse (2021) confirms that through supportive leadership, the principal can actively engage with teachers during the teaching process, providing direction, reassurance, and resources to ensure effective task completion. Sumarjo and Muhammad (2021) assert that teacher job performance should be assessed holistically based on multiple factors such as dedication to teaching, students' academic performance, collaboration with other staff, accountability for their responsibilities, proficiency and creativity in developing instructional materials, and diligence in addressing student-related issues such as disciplinary matters. Adolph (2021) adds that the supervision of student activities, the quality and frequency of student assessments, the organisation of formal documentation, and the use of class time are all aspects of teacher job performance. High levels



of teacher absenteeism impede the achievement of these objectives. Stein, et al. (2020) state that leaders who employ compassionate leadership are sensitive to the challenges faced by their followers. They are empathetic and provide appropriate solutions to their followers' concerns. However, Bakare and Oredein (2022) found that principals in public schools utilised a mix of democratic, transformational, autocratic, and transactional leadership styles, among others, in moderate proportions. Thus, principals must adopt supportive leadership to enhance teacher job performance. In supportive leadership, the principal engages with teachers to achieve effective task completion, rather than merely delegating responsibilities and expecting results.

### **Theoretical Framework**

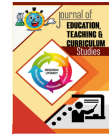
The study applied the Path-Goal theory of leadership, which was developed by Robert House in 1971 and refined by House in 1996 (Northouse, 2021). This theory proposes that an effective leader supports their team members, sets high standards, provides clear instructions, and participates in goal achievement. As a result, the workforce will be more content and productive. The theory also asserts that leaders can effectively inspire and guide their teams by outlining the necessary steps to achieve objectives, removing obstacles, and ensuring that rewards are commensurate with performance and effort. Therefore, this theory is applicable in school leadership because the principal has the responsibility of guiding teachers, offering resources and support, and ensuring that their hard work is acknowledged and rewarded.

Path-Goal theory also emphasises how crucial it is to modify leadership philosophies to suit the demands of workers and the nature of the work at hand. Hence, by providing clear instructions and eliminating uncertainty, principals can ensure that teachers are aware of the objectives, duties, and expectations. The primary objective of the theory focuses on how leaders can inspire their staff to meet group and organisational goals. The characteristics of followers constitute the second part of the path-goal theory. Followers' interpretation of a leader's behaviour is influenced by subordinate traits such as need affiliation, preference for structure, desire for control, and self-perceived task ability (Saleem, et al., 2021). The theory is significant for school principals because it allows them to understand which qualities of leadership are necessary to succeed in various situations. In other words, a leader's competence is essential in removing hindrances that jeopardise teachers' performance in achieving school objectives and goals.

### **Methods**

#### ***Research Design***

A research design is a blueprint that directs how a study will be conducted, ensuring that it effectively answers the research question. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Surveys are useful for exploring demographic characteristics, the relationship between different variables, or identifying the reasons for a particular practice (Creswell, 2013). According to Kothari (2008), a descriptive survey can be used to collect information on people's attitudes and findings regarding a variety of social or educational topics. The use of surveys was to establish the challenges faced by principals and their impact on teachers' performance.



### ***Study Location and Target Population***

The study was conducted in Kieni West Sub-County in Nyeri County, which is located to the northwest of Nyeri Town. The target population is the entire set of units for which the study data is to be used to make inferences (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). It encompasses a collection of individuals that a researcher wishes to include in an investigation because they share at least one or more characteristics. The target population consisted of 262 public secondary schools with 262 principals from whom samples were drawn for measurement.

### ***Sampling and Sample Size***

Sampling is the process of selecting a sample from the target population (Burns, 2010). Principals were selected using simple random sampling, ensuring there was no sampling bias and that the sample was entirely randomised. A sample is a group of individuals chosen from the accessible population. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2012), sample size can be established using 30% of the target population. Therefore, 79 principals were selected from a target population of 262.

### ***Research Instruments***

Research instruments are tools that aid in data collection (Kothari, 2008). The researcher used a closed-ended questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire was chosen because it allows for quick collection of information from respondents and alleviates their fears, as it can be completed without the respondent being observed. In the nearby Kieni East Sub-County, the instrument was piloted. Supervisors' expert opinions were used to determine the instrument's validity. Cronbach's alpha was used to calculate reliability, yielding a coefficient of 0.78.

### ***Data Analysis and Presentation***

Data analysis involves examining the collected information and making deductions and inferences (Kombo & Tromp, 2009). Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, and chi-squared tests. A chi-squared test was conducted to test the hypothesis. Correlation tests were also employed to establish associations between variables. Data was presented in tabular form, as well as through charts and narratives.

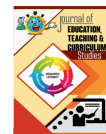
### ***Ethical Consideration***

Research involving human subjects has the potential to raise ethical issues (Creswell, 2012). The researcher took several necessary steps to ensure the ethical conduct of the study. Authorisation to proceed with the research was obtained from the relevant authorities. Before the participants filled in the questionnaire, the researcher obtained their informed consent. The respondents in the study were given the freedom to choose whether to participate, demonstrating the researcher's respect for individual autonomy. The researcher committed to using the findings solely for academic purposes.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Supervision Challenges and Teachers' Job Performance***

The study's outcomes were underpinned by its objectives. The following were the results of the first objective on supervision challenges.



*Table 1: Supervision challenges and Teachers' Job Performance*

Supervision challenges on teachers' job performance	Disagree		Not Sure		Agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Teachers have negative attitude towards work	22	28	10	13	47	59
Teachers' noncompliance of principal's instructions	32	41	12	15	35	44
Teachers' laxity on supervision of students works	20	25	2	3	57	72
Teachers' absenteeism without good reasons	39	49.4	12	15.2	28	35.4
Inadequate teachers to implement principal's directives	25	32	5	6	49	62
Teachers' slackness in controlling students' discipline	23	29.1	6	7.6	50	63.3
Average	27	34	8	10	44	56

From the results above, 56% of principals agreed that they face challenges regarding teacher job performance, while 34% disagreed and 10% were uncertain. The results indicated that most principals encountered challenges related to teachers' laxity in supervising students' work at 72%, followed by teachers' slackness in maintaining students' discipline at 63.3%, and a lack of sufficient teachers to implement the principal's directives at 62%. This implies that teachers need to be motivated to enhance their performance. Motivation encourages personnel to boost performance. Motivation naturally inspires human capital into action, thereby cultivating work productivity and efficiency (Olusola & Addeh, 2021). Oyolla (2021) states that motivation is a work-enhancing strategy that has been employed by employers since the industrial age to encourage employees to work towards a level of self-satisfaction that improves performance.

***Managerial Challenges and Teacher Job Performance***

Objective two focused on managerial challenges regarding teacher job performance. The results are presented in Figure 1 below.

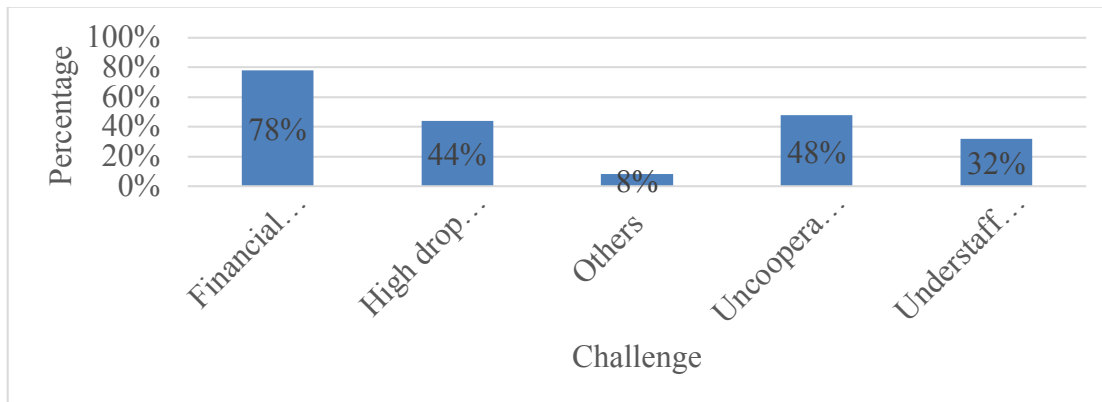
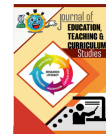


Figure 1: Managerial Challenges Faced by Principals

Findings in Figure 1 show that financial constraints at 78% are the greatest challenge facing principals in public secondary schools, followed by uncooperative parents at 48%, high drop rates at 44%, and understaffing at 32%. Financial constraints due to inadequate resources, untimely and insufficient disbursement of government funds, as well as late payment of school fees by students jeopardise successful curriculum delivery and delay the implementation of educational programmes. Teacher job performance is negatively affected when the resources needed for teaching and learning are not within reach. Rachmawati and Suyatno's (2021) affirms a relationship between leaders' managerial capability and teachers' career fulfilment.

**Probable solutions to mitigate challenges**

Figure 2 below presents the probable solutions to challenges facing principals.

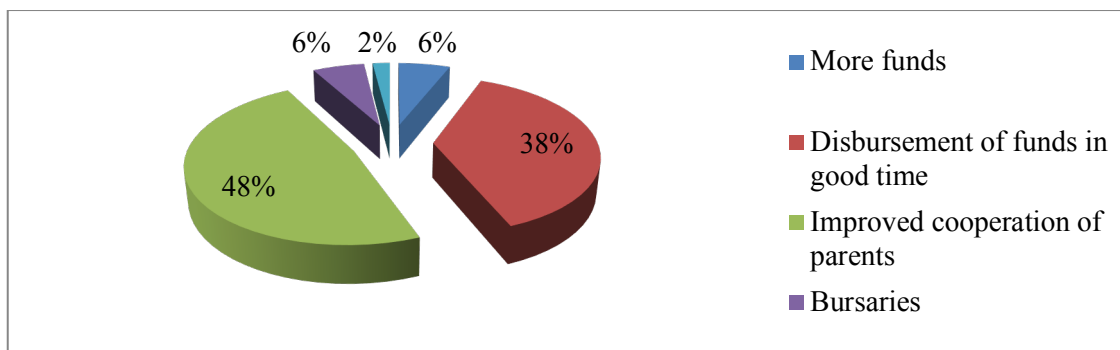
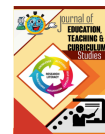


Figure 2: Probable solutions to mitigate challenges facing principals

Findings in Figure 2 indicate that 48% of the respondents agreed that improved cooperation from parents would ease challenges faced, 38% supported the timely disbursement of funds, while 6% suggested that the provision of more funds would be the solution. Joubert (2013) posits that a diverse range in terms of financial status, attitudes, values and standards of teachers and school principals contributes to inequalities in education. Moreover, parents should take it upon themselves to be available for school



programmes such as academic clinics and annual general meetings, among others, in order to consult with teachers and receive a progress report for their children. This would go a long way toward reducing gross absenteeism among students and enhancing teacher job performance.

### Challenges Encountered and Teacher Performance

A Chi-square test was conducted to assess the relationship between the challenges encountered and teachers' job performance.  $H_{01}$ : There is no statistically significant relationship between the challenges faced by principals and teacher job performance in public secondary schools in Kieni West Sub-County, Kenya. The resulting statistical relationship is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Chi-Square test between challenges and job performance

	Value	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	35.611 <sup>a</sup>	.000
Likelihood Ratio	34.985	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	20.090	.000
N of Valid Cases	79	

Statistical analysis presented in Table 2 reveals a significant association between the challenges encountered and teachers' job performance, as indicated by a chi-square  $X^2$  value of 35.611 with a p-value of 0.00 at a 95% confidence level. Consequently, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), asserting no significant relationship, was rejected, leading to the conclusion that a statistically significant relationship exists between these two variables. Thus, challenges affect teachers' performance. According to Nyange (2013), principals in Kenyan public schools find it difficult to motivate their teachers due to inadequate pay and meagre teaching allowances. Numerous teachers have filed complaints against their employer due to poor pay. These challenges lower their performance.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, principals encounter several challenges in the day-to-day management of schools, including teachers' laxity in fulfilling their duties and financial constraints, among others. The identified challenges may impact the leadership outcomes of school heads and, ultimately, teacher performance. Financial limitations can hinder the effectiveness of principals' leadership.

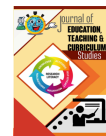
Further research could be undertaken regarding teachers' perceptions of the challenges faced by principals in Kieni-West Sub-County. Additionally, a study may explore the instructional challenges experienced by teachers in Kieni-West Sub County, concentrating on student needs, resources, and the work environment, to establish support systems that can enhance teacher performance.

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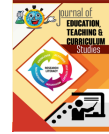
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