

Influence of Education Level on the Performance of Ward Administrators in Turkana County, Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of education level on the performance of ward administrators in Turkana County, Kenya. Following the advent of devolution, citizens had anticipated improved service delivery; however, many counties, including Turkana, continued to experience inadequate service provision. Ward administrators, who functioned at the grassroots level, were pivotal in facilitating effective service delivery. Employing a descriptive survey design, the research targeted 30 ward administrators in Turkana County, utilizing questionnaires for data collection and analyzing the data through correlation and regression analyses. The findings revealed a significant positive influence of education level, leadership, and working conditions on the performance of ward administrators, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.622$ ($p < 0.01$). Conversely, organizational support was found to be positively associated with performance but did not achieve statistical significance. The study underscored the importance of education in enhancing ward administrators' effectiveness, with 59.09% of respondents indicating a moderate to high influence of education on their performance. Additionally, the demographic analysis revealed a gender disparity, with 86.36% male respondents, suggesting a need for more inclusive leadership structures. Based on these findings, the study recommended improving educational opportunities and leadership support to enhance the overall performance of ward administrators in Turkana County. Implementing these strategies was expected to lead to more effective governance and improved service delivery outcomes for the region's residents.

Keywords: Ward Administrators, Employee Performance, Education Level, Organizational Support, Leadership, Working Conditions, Turkana County, Devolution

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Employee performance is essential for achieving organizational goals, particularly in the public sector, where efficient service delivery is crucial (Qureshi & Ramay, 2006). In Kenya, the 2010 Constitution introduced a devolved system of governance, transferring various responsibilities from the national government to county governments to enhance service delivery at the grassroots level (Republic of Kenya, 2010). This structural shift emphasized the need for capable local administrators to manage and implement community development initiatives effectively. Among these officials, ward administrators are pivotal, as

their performance directly impacts the quality of services delivered to citizens, especially in marginalized counties like Turkana.

Education level is a critical factor in the effectiveness of ward administrators. Higher educational qualifications provide these administrators with essential skills for decision-making, problem-solving, and engaging with the community, which enhances their ability to meet the demands of their roles (Armstrong, 2009).

In Turkana County—characterized by high poverty and illiteracy levels—educational attainment among ward administrators becomes even more significant. Administrators with higher education levels are better equipped to navigate the county's unique socio-economic challenges, from poor waste management to inadequate healthcare and substandard infrastructure (KNBS, 2013).

This study aims to explore how the education level of ward administrators influences their job performance in Turkana County. By examining this relationship, the study seeks to provide insights into how education may improve administrators' effectiveness in service delivery and overall public sector performance in counties facing similar developmental hurdles (Nzuve & Njambi, 2015; Amha & Brhane, 2020).

Problem Statement

Despite the promise of improved service delivery through devolution, Turkana County continues to struggle with inefficiencies, particularly in areas such as infrastructure, healthcare, and waste management. As key implementers of county policies at the grassroots level, ward administrators play a crucial role in addressing these challenges. However, concerns about their performance suggest that they may not be fully equipped to meet the demands of their roles. This issue may be influenced by factors such as education level, leadership, working conditions, and organizational support. This study specifically aims to investigate how education level impacts the performance of ward administrators in Turkana County, providing insights into how educational qualifications might enhance their effectiveness in service delivery and contribute to addressing the county's persistent developmental issues.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it examines how the education level of ward administrators influences their effectiveness in service delivery within Turkana County.

For the county government, the findings offer insights into whether educational qualifications enhance administrators' ability to address local challenges in infrastructure, healthcare, and waste management, informing decisions on hiring and training.

For policymakers, evidence of education's impact on performance could shape minimum qualifications and promote ongoing professional development. Additionally, the study provides ward administrators with an understanding of how further education can improve their job effectiveness.

Academically, the research adds valuable insights into employee performance within Kenya's devolved governance structure, offering practical implications for other counties with similar challenges.

Objective of the study

The objective of this study was to examine the influence of education level on the performance of ward administrators in Turkana County, Kenya. It specifically aimed to determine how educational attainment affected administrators' effectiveness in delivering public services, managing resources, and addressing community needs at the grassroots level. By focusing on the role of education, the study sought to identify

whether higher educational qualifications provided ward administrators with essential skills, knowledge, and competencies that contributed to improved service delivery and governance in Turkana County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education significantly enhances employee performance worldwide. Sunaryo (2016) emphasizes that appropriate education equips employees with the necessary skills and competencies relevant to their job roles, thereby improving performance. Supporting this, Gordon and Miller (2012) and Beyhan (2008) note that education fosters essential life skills and positive attitudes that lead to better job outcomes. Research by Goad (2002) and Hunter (2007) also indicates that employees with higher academic qualifications tend to perform better, showcasing greater innovation, effective problem-solving, and communication skills (Jaoko, 2014; Benson, 2004; Quick, 1997). The Human Capital Theory by Schultz (1961) provides a framework for this relationship, positing that enhanced education translates into improved workplace performance and productivity (Ng & Feldman, 2009; Kasika, 2015).

In Africa, the connection between education and employee performance is similarly recognized, with studies showing that higher educational levels correlate with improved job preparedness and professionalism (Beyhan, 2008). Organizations that invest in educational development often experience enhanced service delivery and public sector effectiveness.

In Kenya, the importance of education in public sector performance is increasingly acknowledged, particularly following the devolution of governance established by the Constitution of Kenya (2010). Competent public servants are essential for implementing policies at the county level, with studies indicating that higher educational attainment among county administrators leads to better outcomes in addressing local challenges (Nzuve & Njambi, 2015).

Despite the recognized significance of education, research on the educational qualifications of ward administrators in Turkana County remains limited. This region faces unique challenges, including high poverty and low literacy levels, making effective local leadership crucial. Ward administrators play a vital role in implementing county policies and tackling local issues. However, their performance has raised concerns, highlighting the need to explore how education influences their effectiveness in service delivery.

The literature consistently demonstrates a link between education level and employee performance across various contexts. However, specific dynamics concerning ward administrators in Turkana County are underexplored. This study aims to fill this gap, providing insights that can inform policies and practices to enhance the effectiveness of public servants in devolved governance, ultimately improving service delivery for the citizens of Turkana.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey design to assess the influence of education level on the performance of ward administrators in Turkana County.

Target Population

The target population consisted of 30 ward administrators in Turkana County. Given the small population size, a census approach was used, involving all 30 ward administrators.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected through self-administered questionnaires aimed at assessing the education levels of ward administrators and their influence on performance. The questionnaire was designed to capture both

quantitative and qualitative data, focusing on respondents' highest educational qualifications, relevant certifications, and additional training.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection tools, a pilot study was conducted with a small sample of ward administrators. This pilot helped refine the questionnaire by gathering feedback to enhance clarity and relevance, ultimately ensuring it effectively captured comprehensive data on the educational backgrounds of ward administrators and their impact on performance in Turkana County.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (correlation and regression analyses) via SPSS. Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to assess the relationships between variables. Regression analysis was employed to test the hypothesis and determine the significance of the relationship between education level and performance.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

Introduction

This section presents the analysis, interpretation, and presentation of data collected from the field, focusing on the general information of the respondents and findings based on the study's objective.

Response Rate

Table 1: Response Rate

Response Rate	Wards Administrators' Officers	
	F	%
Non-response	8	26.67%
Actual respondents	22	73.33%
Targeted respondents	30	100%

Table 1 highlighted that 30 respondents were targeted. Out of the targeted group, 22 officers responded to the survey, indicating a response rate of 73.33%. There were 8 non-responses, accounting for 26.67% of the targeted group.

Demographic Information

The study sought to establish the various demographic characteristics of the respondents. The main respondents' demographic traits include: gender, level of education, age, and number of years worked as ward administrator at Turkana County government, Kenya.

Gender of the Respondents

Table 2: Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	19	86.36
Female	3	13.63
Total	22	100

The findings presented in table 2 demonstrated that majority of the respondents were male 86.36%, while 13.63% were female.

Age of the Respondents

Table 3: Age of the Respondents

Age Bracket (Years)	Frequency	Percent (%)
18-35 years	2	9.09
36-45 years	7	31.81
46-55 years	9	40.90
Above 55 years	4	18.18
Total	22	100

The findings in table 3 showed that majority of the respondents were aged 46-55 years (40.90%), 31.81% were 36-45 years, 18.18% were above 55 years while 9.09% were aged 18-35 years.. The study findings are as highlighted in table 3.

Educational Level

Table 4: Highest Educational Level of the Respondents

Education Level	Frequency	Percent (%)
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree	0	0.00
Masters Degree	2	9.09
Bachelors Degree	9	40.90
Diploma	11	50.00
Certificate	0	0.00
Total	22	100

Table 4 establishes that majority of the respondents possessed a diploma (50.00%); 40.90% were bachelor's degree holders and only 9.09% had masters degrees, as their highest level of education. None 0.00% of the respondents had either certificate or Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree level of education.

Period Worked in the Organization

Table 5: Period Worked in the Organization

Period	Frequency	Percent
More than 7 years	8	36.36%
3-7 years	9	40.90%
Less than 2 years	5	22.72%
Total	22	100.0%

The findings are presented in Table 5 showed that majority of the respondents (40.90%) had worked at Turkana County government, Kenya for a period of 3-7 years; 36.36% of the respondents reported that they had worked for a period of more than 7 years; while 22.72% of the respondents reported that they had worked for a period of less than 2 years.

The Influence of Education Level On The Performance Of Ward Administrators

This section investigates how the education level of ward administrators affects their performance in Turkana County, Kenya. The analysis was based on responses collected from the ward administrators, who rated various statements about education's impact on their work performance using a 5-point Likert scale:

5 = Very high
 4 = High
 3 = Moderately high
 2 = Low
 1 = very low

Rating of Education Level of Ward Administrators

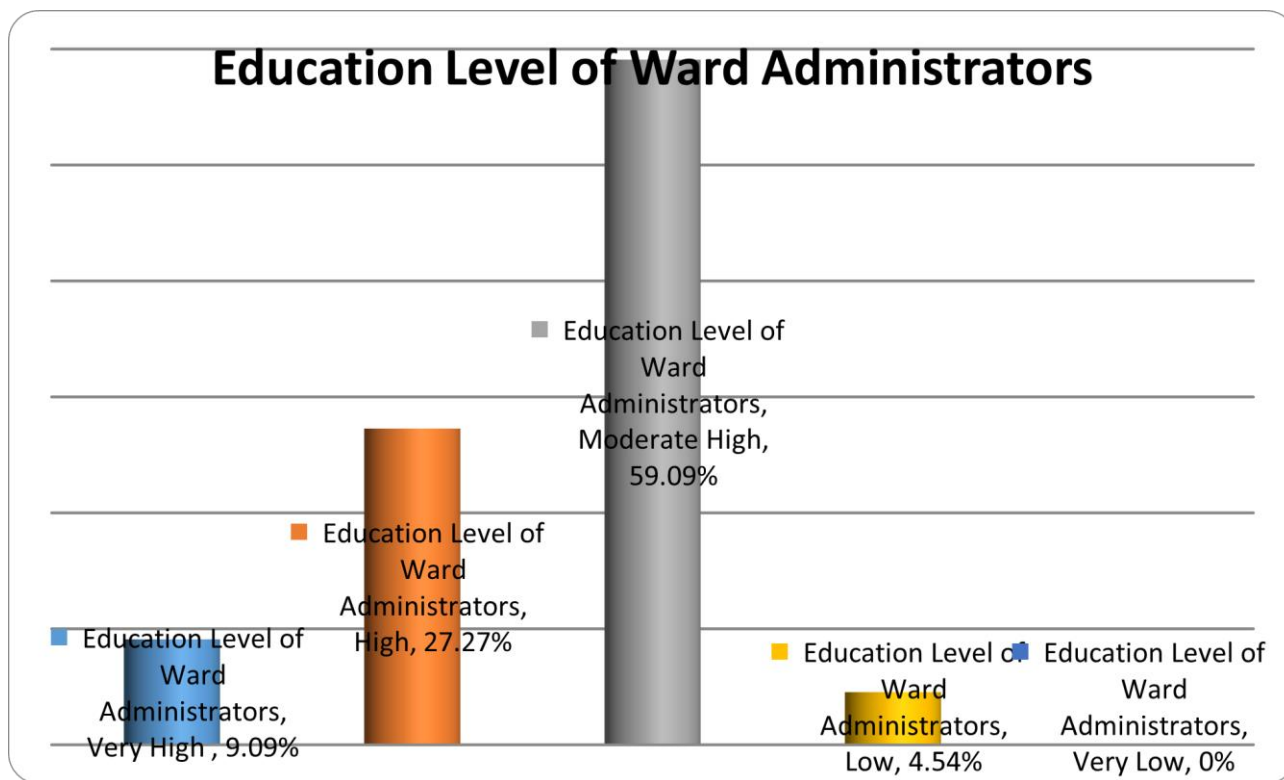


Figure 2: Rating of Education Level of Ward Administrators

Majority of the respondents 59.09% indicated that the education level was moderately high 27.27% indicated high, 9.09% indicated very high but none 0% of the respondents indicated that education level was very low.

Education Level and the Performance of Ward Administrators

Table 6: The Influence of Education Level on the Performance of Ward Administrators

Statements on Education Level	Mean	Std. Deviation
Professional skills of ward administrators influence their work performance	4.5	0.865
Academic credentials of ward administrators influence their work performance	3.8	1.252
Competence of ward administrators influence their work performance	4.5	1.131
Knowledge of ward administrators influence their work performance	4.6	0.735

Key Findings from Table 6 indicate that:

- **Knowledge of Ward Administrators (Mean = 4.6, Std. Deviation = 0.735):**

The highest mean score indicates that respondents believe knowledge is the most significant factor influencing the performance of ward administrators. A standard deviation of 0.735 suggests a relatively low variability in responses, meaning there is strong consensus among respondents regarding the importance of knowledge in enhancing performance.

- **Professional Skills (Mean = 4.5, Std. Deviation = 0.865):**

This score reflects a strong belief that the professional skills of ward administrators significantly impact their work performance. The standard deviation of 0.865 indicates slightly more variability compared to knowledge, suggesting some differences in perceptions regarding the exact nature of skills that may influence performance.

- **Competence (Mean = 4.5, Std. Deviation = 1.131):**

Similar to professional skills, the mean score indicates a high agreement on the importance of competence in influencing job performance. The standard deviation of 1.131 suggests greater variability in responses, which may imply that respondents have different interpretations of what constitutes competence in the context of ward administration.

- **Academic Credentials (Mean = 3.8, Std. Deviation = 1.252):**

This statement received the lowest mean score, indicating that while academic credentials are still considered influential, they are viewed as less critical compared to knowledge, skills, and competence. The higher standard deviation of 1.252 reflects a broader range of opinions on the impact of formal education, suggesting that some respondents may place more emphasis on practical experience than academic qualifications.

Inferential Statistics

Correlation Analysis for Education Level and Performance

The relationship between education level and performance was analyzed using Pearson Correlation. The results are presented in Table 7.

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7: Correlation Coefficients for Education Level and Performance

Variable	Education Level	Performance
Education Level	1	0.622**
Performance	0.622**	1

The results in Table 7 showed a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.622$, $p < 0.01$) between education level and performance, indicating that ward administrators with higher educational 5.0

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study underscored the significant role of education in enhancing the performance of ward administrators in Turkana County, a trend consistent with the broader literature. The correlation coefficient of $r=0.622$ ($p < 0.01$) confirmed a strong positive relationship between educational attainment and job performance among ward administrators. This finding aligned with Schultz's (1961) Human Capital Theory, which posited that investment in education improves productivity and effectiveness in the workplace. The results demonstrated that higher educational qualifications provided ward administrators with essential skills and competencies, which translated into improved job performance.

Response Rate and Demographic Characteristics

The response rate of 73.33%, along with the demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as the predominance of male respondents (86.36%) and a majority age range of 46-55 years, provided context for

interpreting these findings. This demographic profile suggested a relatively experienced workforce, potentially affecting perspectives on education's value. Previous studies indicated that employees with greater experience often placed considerable emphasis on practical skills alongside formal education (Kim & Lee, 2019), which corresponded with the varied views expressed on academic versus practical qualifications in this study.

Influence of Education Level on Performance

The educational attainment of respondents—50% holding diplomas and 40.90% bachelor's degrees reflected an established level of formal education among administrators but showed limited advanced qualifications (e.g., only 9.09% held master's degrees). This lack of higher educational qualifications was potentially a limiting factor in addressing complex administrative challenges. Nzuve and Njambi (2015) found that advanced educational attainment enhanced the performance of county-level administrators, suggesting that a similar trend might have been beneficial for ward administrators in Turkana County.

Key Aspects of Educational Influence

Analysis of education-related factors (Table 6) revealed that knowledge (Mean = 4.6, Std. Deviation = 0.735) was perceived as the most significant factor affecting job performance, followed closely by professional skills (Mean = 4.5, Std. Deviation = 0.865) and competence (Mean = 4.5, Std. Deviation = 1.131). These findings aligned with the conclusions of Goad (2002) and Hunter (2007), who reported that employees with higher educational levels exhibited better problem-solving skills and innovation. The relatively low variability in responses (e.g., a standard deviation of 0.735 for knowledge) indicated a consensus among respondents on the importance of these educational attributes in enhancing job performance.

Academic Credentials versus Practical Skills

The academic credentials factor, while still positively rated, received the lowest mean score (Mean = 3.8, Std. Deviation = 1.252), suggesting that respondents viewed academic achievements as less critical than practical skills and competencies. Sunaryo (2016) similarly found that while formal education supported performance, practical experience often played a more immediate role in job effectiveness. This sentiment was consistent with Kim and Lee's (2019) findings, which highlighted that in certain public sector roles, practical experience could sometimes be more influential than formal academic qualifications in achieving effective service delivery.

Correlation with Existing Literature

The significant positive correlation between education level and performance ($r = 0.622$, $p < 0.01$) reinforced a well-documented link between education and public sector effectiveness. Studies by Amha and Brhane (2020) and Ng and Feldman (2009) emphasized that educational development enhanced service delivery by improving employees' problem-solving abilities, job preparedness, and overall professionalism. This was particularly relevant in Turkana County, where administrators confronted socio-economic challenges such as poverty, inadequate healthcare, and limited infrastructure. The findings indicated that education equipped these administrators to navigate these challenges more effectively.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study confirmed that education is a critical factor in enhancing the performance of ward administrators in Turkana County, as evidenced by a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.622$, $p < 0.01$) between educational attainment and job performance. Educational experiences provided administrators with essential knowledge, skills, and competencies that were directly linked to improved job effectiveness.

Notably, 59.09% of respondents rated the influence of education on their performance as moderately high, with knowledge, professional skills, and competence receiving high mean scores (4.6, 4.5, and 4.5, respectively). However, the relatively lower emphasis on formal academic qualifications (Mean = 3.8) highlighted the importance of practical skills and experiential learning for effective public administration.

Additionally, demographic data indicated a predominance of male ward administrators (86.36%), revealing potential gender disparities in decision-making and governance processes. Addressing these disparities and fostering a more inclusive administrative environment could strengthen governance in Turkana County, particularly at the grassroots level. Overall, the study's findings underscored the importance of tailored educational programs to equip ward administrators with both theoretical and practical skills, ultimately contributing to improved service delivery and governance outcomes for Turkana County residents.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following recommendations were proposed to enhance the performance and inclusivity of ward administrators in Turkana County:

1. Expand Educational and Professional Development Programs

- **Action:** Invest in training programs that blend theoretical knowledge with practical skills specifically relevant to Turkana's unique challenges. These programs should address areas such as community engagement, resource management, and leadership skills.
- **Expected Outcome:** Equipped with targeted skills, ward administrators will be better prepared to handle diverse responsibilities and improve service delivery.

2. Promote Gender Equity in Public Administration

- **Action:** Implement policies to enhance female participation in ward administration. This can be achieved through targeted recruitment, mentorship programs, and professional development opportunities focused on leadership skills for women.
- **Expected Outcome:** Increased gender diversity will contribute to more inclusive decision-making and governance, enhancing community trust and administrative effectiveness.

3. Encourage Continuous Learning and Skill Enhancement

- **Action:** Establish a culture of continuous learning by providing ward administrators with access to regular workshops, seminars, and professional certifications. Focus on current trends and best practices in public administration.
- **Expected Outcome:** Continuous upskilling will allow administrators to adapt to evolving governance challenges and stay current with effective management practices.

4. Develop Comprehensive Performance Evaluation Metrics

- **Action:** Introduce a performance evaluation framework that considers both educational qualifications and on-the-job experience. Regular assessments should identify areas for improvement and support personalized professional growth.
- **Expected Outcome:** Structured evaluation will enable focused training efforts, ensuring that administrators receive the support they need for consistent performance improvement.

5. Strengthen Community Engagement Initiatives

- **Action:** Facilitate active community engagement by encouraging administrators to regularly consult with local residents. This will help administrators understand community needs and tailor their service delivery approaches.

- **Expected Outcome:** Enhanced engagement will result in more responsive and effective governance, fostering community trust and satisfaction with public services.

6. Implement Technology-Enabled Training Solutions

- **Action:** Develop e-learning platforms that offer accessible, flexible training options, accommodating administrators in remote locations within Turkana. Online resources can include modules on leadership, communication, and project management.
- **Expected Outcome:** Technology-driven training solutions will ensure that all administrators have access to educational resources, reducing the impact of geographical barriers on professional development.

By implementing these recommendations, the Turkana County Government can address both the educational and structural needs of ward administrators, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of local governance and improving service delivery for residents. These targeted efforts will help build a skilled, diverse, and community-responsive administration that is better equipped to address the unique challenges faced within Turkana County.

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Conflict of Interest

Authors reports no conflict of interest in this work. Further, no any funding has been provided for the study.

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