

# Principals' Management of Teachers' Workload Pressure and Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the principals' management of teachers' workload pressure and students' academic performance in public day secondary schools in Kitui West sub-County. The study objective sought to establish the influence of Principals' teacher workload management practices on students' academic performance. The study was based on Job Demands–Resources theory whose characteristics can be categorized into two major groups which include job demands and job resources. Descriptive survey research design was used in the study. The study target population included all the 26 principals and 249 teachers. Census and systematic sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 26 principals and 38 teachers respectively. Questionnaires were used as data collection tools. Data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively using descriptive statistics. Frequency distribution and cross tabulation tables were used to present data. Qualitative data was analysed organized in subthemes and analysed qualitatively based on research objectives and presented in a narrative form. The study found that on average majority 83.7% of the principals and 74.8% of the teachers respectively were in agreement with the statement that the management practices of teacher workload pressure influences students' academic performance. The study recommends ensuring adequate staffing in schools by the Teachers' Service Commission to curb overworking teachers and promotion of teamwork for better academic performance. This study may be significant in that the research outcomes could inform policy formulation in the Ministry of Education regarding principals' work environment management. The findings contribute to existing knowledge and serve as a basis for future research. The study advances conceptual understanding and provides empirical evidence in educational leadership and organizational behavior in relation to teacher workload management practices. The study concluded that principals' management practices can significantly impact on students' academic performance.

**Key words:** Teacher workload pressure, academic performance, management practices

## INTRODUCTION

The provision of quality education is dependent on the quality of teachers and the environment in which the teachers work. However, Dan (2022) asserts that Teachers are the backbone of our education system. They work hard every day to help shape the minds of our children and prepare them for their future. However, studies conducted in different parts of the world have shown that teachers work in particularly stressful work environments (Skaalvik, & Skaalvik, 2018). A pleasant working environment makes a job easier or comfortable. Less work or no work hours, less responsibility, or minimal supervision are all ways in which this can be achieved (Hertberg, 2008).

According to Amadi and Osazuwa (2019) it is the responsibility of the school principal who is the chief executive officer of the school, to ensure that teachers work in an environment that promotes their work performance. It is particularly critical to have safe facilities, proper resources, and adequate preparation time for instructors if they are to succeed with their pupils (Oplatka, 2017). On the other hand, Academic performance refers to the

achievement of learners in terms of formative or summative evaluations. It is also the achievement of students, teachers and institutions in terms of academic achievement.

Research conducted in Philippines by Duplon et al. (2022) showed that the performance of teachers was affected by amount of work done from home and support received from school administration. Research by Adika and Sika (2019) has shown that the workload of teachers influences academic performance. In schools where teachers have a heavy workload, the teachers perform poorly than those schools where teachers are not overworked.

This is consistent with Okodeso (2022) who conducted a study to investigate teachers' workload and student academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State. The major findings of the study showed that there is a significant relationship between teacher workload and academic performance of upper basic Social Studies students in Delta State and that there is a significant relationship between teacher's instructional periods and academic performance of upper basic Social Studies student in Delta State.

Moreover, Perlito (2021) in a study done in Philippines revealed that teachers have a high level of workload. Their burnout level is also high. Teachers' work performance, on the other hand, is very satisfactory. Workload has a significant impact on the level of burnout experienced by teachers. Workload has an impact on teachers' performance as well. To avoid stress and burnout, it is recommended that every school administrator adhere to proper workload assignment.

In African countries, the management of teacher workload and its impact on student performance is an emerging area of research. In South Africa, for example, principals who engage in instructional leadership practices and provide adequate support to teachers have been found to positively influence student academic performance (Bush & Glover, 2016). However, challenges such as resource constraints and large class sizes often exacerbate teacher workload pressure, highlighting the need for effective management practices.

Studies have shown that effective management of teacher workload by principals has a direct positive impact on students' academic performance. Schools where principals implement supportive leadership, professional development, delegation, and efficient resource allocation tend to have higher student achievement levels (Orodho, Waweru, Ndichu, & Nthinguri, 2013). In Kenya, principals' management practices play a crucial role in mitigating teacher workload pressure and enhancing students' academic performance. A study by Wanzare (2016) highlighted that effective workload management practices, including delegation and professional development, were associated with improved student performance in national examinations. However, this study was done in Kenya in order to fill a research gap.

## **Statement of the Problem**

There has been a growing concern about workload of teachers, with many educators reporting high levels of stress and burnout who argue that when teachers are overburdened with work, this leads to high levels of stress and exhaustion (Rose & Sika, 2019). When teachers are stressed and overworked, they may struggle to maintain their focus and motivation. This can negatively impact their efficiency and their ability to provide quality education to their students (Hester, et.al. 2020.). Thus, it is noted that this can in turn be reflected on academic performance of the learners. For example, the teachers may not be able to prepare adequately for their classes, leading to poor lesson planning, ineffective teaching strategies, as well as limited personal interaction with students (Mullen, et. al, 2020). The role played by teachers in determining how students perform in national examinations and in shaping the future of learners is very crucial. Kitui west sub county office (2022) reported of a wavering KCSE performance result in the sub county. This was attributable to wanting management of teacher workload pressure in relation to the performance of normal teaching load as well as undertaking other responsibilities, working conditions in terms of handling large class sizes and distance travelled from home to school due to lack of staff houses. The manner in which teacher workload is managed can either enhance or kill the morale of teachers. This in turn can be reflected on students' academic performance which may either improve or drop hence in the long run, it may lead to high or low transition rate to the next level.

This study sought to investigate the principals' management of teachers' workload pressure and its impact on students' academic performance in public day secondary schools in Kitui West Sub- County.

## **Specific objectives**

The study objective sought to establish the influence of principals' practices of managing teacher workloads on students' academic outcomes.

## **Specific study objective**

The study objective sought; to establish the influence of Principals' teacher workload management practices on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in kitui west sub county

## **Research questions**

What influence does the principals' teacher workload management practices have on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in kitui west sub county

## **Theoretical Review**

This study is grounded in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory. The theory aims to elucidate how work environments influence worker performance. As indicated by JD-R theory, job characteristics can be categorized into two major groups which include job demands and job resources. Job demands are elements of work that necessitate sustained effort and are consequently linked to physiological and psychological costs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). On the other hand, job resources encompass areas of work that enables attainment of job-related objectives, easing demands from work and related cost as well as promoting personal development and growth (Demerouti et al., 2001). Bakker and Demerouti (2017) emphasize that high job demands, like heavy workloads, can lead to persistent strain and eventual burnout. Burnout occurs when employees become cynical about the value of their work and doubt their ability to perform effectively. On the contrary, having high job resources may lead to higher motivation, leading to an increase in job engagement. One of the strengths of JD-R theory is that the theory provides a comprehensive system for comprehending the complex relationship between job demands, resources, and employee well-being and job performance. It considers both the negative and positive aspects of the work environment. The theory is also backed by empirical support as it has been widely researched and supported by empirical evidence in a variety of work settings, making it a robust and reliable theory. The JD-R theory has practical implications in that it can be used to design interventions and strategies that enhance employee well-being and job performance by targeting job demands and resources. One of the weaknesses of JD-R theory is lack of specificity, since it is a broad framework and does not provide detailed explanations of the specific job demands and resources that impact employee well-being and performance. The theory also does not fully account for personal differences in how employees recognize job demands and resources, which may affect their responses to these factors. The JD-R theory is correlational and cannot establish causality between job demands, resources, and employee outcomes. Therefore, more research is required to establish causality in the relationships between these variables. Overall, while the JD-R theory has some limitations, its strengths make it a beneficial framework for appreciative the complex relationships between job demands, resources, and employee well-being and job performance.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Management practices of workload pressure and students' academic Performance**

#### **Introduction**

Principals' Workload management practices can influence students' academic performance. Principals need to ensure that teachers have access to adequate resources, including instructional materials, technology, and support staff, to help manage their workload effectively. This can ultimately lead to increased morale, collaboration, and ultimately improved student outcomes or otherwise. "Teacher workload means time spent in teaching, administrative or additional and extracurricular activities, and performing co-curricular responsibilities (Hosain, 2016). This implies that the workload is not just confined to teaching and learning processes alone.

Gonzales (2022) conducted a study to investigate the teachers' workloads and well-being in Philippines and

explored their relationships with the academic performance of the students. High school teachers from three divisions in Northern Mindanao, Philippines participated in a survey on the extent of their workloads and their workplace well-being. Majority of the respondents reported moderate to heavy workloads. They also responded positively in all three domains of well-being considered in this study. Comparing the teachers' responses with the National Achievement Test (NAT) scores of their students revealed no significant relationships. The results suggested that there is no direct link between the teachers' workloads and well-being and their students' academic performance. However, the moderate to heavy workloads reported by the respondents reverberate a pressing issue in the educational workforce. Furthermore, based on the responses, among the three domains of well-being, the environmental domain scores the lowest.

Okodeso (2022) conducted a study to investigate teachers' workload and student academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State, Nigeria. An ex-post facto research design was used for this study. The sample of this study consists of 200 Social Studies teachers drawn from 100 secondary schools across the three Senatorial District in Delta State. Multi-stage sampling procedures were used with a simple sampling technique in composing the sample for the study. Data was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and independent t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The major findings of the study showed that there is a significant relationship between teacher workload and academic performance of upper basic Social Studies students in Delta State.

Mang'uu et al. (2021) carried out a study to determine the effects of teaching work load on teacher performance in public secondary schools in Kitui County. The study employed mixed methods approach and descriptive survey research design to reveal and measure the opinion of teachers and the indicators of school climate. It was anchored on three motivational theories namely: McGregor theory X and Maslow's Hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's two factor theory. The study targeted 400 public secondary schools and 2417 teachers from Kitui County. Purposive and random sampling was used to select 40 principals and 488 teachers. Fractional method was used to sample 40 teachers from the 400-public secondary schools. 20% of 2417 teachers were randomly selected from each sub-county. Sample size for this study was calculated using hypergeometric formulae where 76 principals and 352 teachers were selected giving a total of 428 respondents. Data was collected using Questionnaires for teachers, interview schedules for principals and document analysis. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used to analyse data. The study established that there is statistically significant relationship between teaching workload and teacher performance  $p\text{-value}=0.001$ . This study was conducted in Kitui west sub county in order to fill a research gap on principals' management practices of teacher workload pressure and students' academic Performance

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Kombo and Tromp (2013) a research design is the structure of the research. The research design that was used in this study is descriptive survey research design. It was used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) stated that a descriptive survey research design enables the researcher to collect information and report without controlling the variables. Descriptive survey research design is suitable for this study since it enhanced the collection of data on principals' management of teachers' work environment and academic performance without manipulating the variables.

Kothari (2011) noted that target population is the entire group of individuals to which a researcher is interested in generalizing the conclusions. According to Kitui County Education Office (2023) there are 26 Public day secondary schools consisting of 26 principals and 249 teachers. The target population for this study consisted of 26 principals and 249 teachers from which a sample of 26 principals and 38 teachers were selected from using census and systematic sampling procedure.

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2019) in systematic sampling, every  $k^{\text{th}}$  case in the population frame is selected for inclusion in the sample. To obtain a true random sample, using systematic random sampling technique, all the members in the sampling frame must be randomized. This was achieved first by preparing a list of all teachers from public day secondary schools in Kitui west Sub County in random order. This was followed by determination of sampling interval which was done by dividing the total population by the sample size. That is  $249/38=7$ . The sampling interval was 7. The starting point was blindly selected from the table of



random sampling by blindly pointing at any number. If for example, number 5 is picked, as the first number, one would move down the column and pick every 5<sup>th</sup> number from the table. The process continued until the required sample size of 38 is achieved.

This study used a questionnaire as a data collection tool. According to Orodho (2005) a questionnaire could help collect immense information within a short time. The study had questionnaire for the principals and a questionnaire for the teachers. Hence, the tool was used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data.

To validate the research tool, face and content validity was used. According to Johnson (2013) validity refers to the extent to which a tool appears to measure what it is intended to measure. To ensure face validity, the researcher ensured that the tools were content valid by ensuring that all aspects under investigation were factored in. Face validity was enhanced through expert judgment. According to Abidemi (2016) expert judgment is a method of making decisions that depends on knowledge from authorities within a specific branch of knowledge. Thus, expert judgment in this study was done by university supervisors who gave opinions on adjustments to be input in the study. Validity was enhanced further by a pilot study. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) stated that a pilot test is a technique applied in testing the research instruments prior to carrying out the research. The questionnaires were admitted to 3 principals and 4 teachers who did not participate in the main study.

Instrument reliability was determined by a test re test technique. A measuring instrument is reliable if it provides consistent results (Kothari, 2011). Once data was collected, it was sorted, cleaned, coded and analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively using descriptive statistics with the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (Version 25), a computer software package version 25. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) states that data analysis is the process of bringing meaning to the collected raw data. Quantitative data was analyzed and presented using frequency distribution tables and cross tabulation tables. Analysis of qualitative data was done by organizing it into themes based on the research objectives and presented in a narrative form.

Ethical considerations were observed in this study by ensuring anonymity of the respondents. It was also ensured that the respondents do not suffer physical or psychological harm and anxiety. Ethical issues such as plagiarism and fraud were observed by acknowledging other authors. Additionally, confidentiality was ensured and privacy of respondents was also respected.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study sought to establish the influence of principals' management practice of teacher workload pressure on students' academic performance. The principals and teachers were requested to indicate their opinion on principals' management of teacher workload pressure on students' academic performance. They were requested to indicate their responses using a Likert scale as; SD=Strongly disagree, D=Disagree, N= Neutral A=Agree, and SA=Strongly Agree. The responses are as indicated in tables 1 and 2 respectively.

Table 1: Principals' response on teacher workload management practices and students' academic performance.

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
	F%	F%	F%	F%	F%	F%
Workload pressure can have an effect on students' academic performance	14.3		14.3	1147.8	1043.5	23100
Heavy workload pressure has an effect on timely syllabus completion which in turn affects academic performance	14.3	28.7	0.0	1252.2	834.8	23100
Moderate workload pressure and performance of other assigned duties is an additional workload and can have an effect on students' academic performance	14.3	14.3	4.17.4	1252.2	5.21.7	23100
Teacher normal workload contributes to improved academic performance	0.0	13	14.3	1147.8	834.8	23100

The findings in table 1 indicated that 47.8 and 43.5 % of the principals agreed and strongly agreed respectively with the statement that workload pressure can have an effect on students’ academic performance. It was also found that 4.3 % of the principals strongly disagreed with the statement that Workload pressure can have an effect on students’ academic performance while 4.3% of the principals were neutral. The study also established that 52.2 % and 34.8% of the principals agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that heavy workload pressure has an effect on timely syllabus completion which in turn affects academic performance. However, only 4.3% and 8.7 % of the principals strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively with the statement. The study also found that 52.2 % and 21.7 % of the principals agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that Moderate workload pressure and performance of other assigned duties is an additional workload and can have an effect on students’ academic performance. However, 4.3 % and 4.3% of the principals strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively with the statement that Moderate workload pressure and performance of other assigned duties is an additional workload and can have an effect on students’ academic performance. The study also established that 47.8 % and 34.8 .3% of the principals agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that Teacher normal workload contributes to improved academic performance. However, only 13% of the principals disagreed with the statement while 4.3 % of the principals were neutral.

The teachers also gave their responses concerning principal’s teacher workload management practices and students’ academic. The responses are as indicated in table 2

Table 2: Teachers’ response on principal’s teacher workload management practices and students’ academic

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
	F%	F%	F%	F%	F%	F%
Heavy workload pressure has an effect on timely syllabus completion	12.6	12.6	00	1128.9	2565.8	38100
Moderate workload pressure and performance of other assigned duties is an additional workload	12.6	718.4	37.9	14 36.8	1334.2	38100
Teacher normal workload contributes to improved academic performance	00	25.3	00	1026.3	2668.4	38100

The findings from teachers in table 2 indicated that majority 65.8% of the teachers strongly agreed with the statement that heavy workload pressure has an effect on timely syllabus completion while 28.9% of the teachers agreed with the statement. Only 2.6% of the teachers and 2.6% of the teachers strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively with the statement that heavy workload pressure has an effect on timely syllabus completion. The study also established that 36.8% and 34.2% of the teachers agreed and strongly agreed respectively with the statement that moderate workload pressure and performance of other assigned duties is an additional workload. However, 2.6% and 18.4% of the teachers respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement that moderate workload pressure and performance of other assigned duties is an additional workload. The study also found that majority 68.4% of the Teachers and 26.3% of the teachers strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the statement that normal workload contributes to improved academic performance.

The principals and teachers were requested to give a yes or a No response concerning whether they assigned extra workload to teachers in their schools. The principals’ responses are as indicated in table and table 3 and 4 respectively.

Table 3: Principals’ response on assignment of extra workload to teachers in their schools

Responses	Frequency	%
Yes	21	91.3

No	0	0
No response	2	8.7
Total	23	100

This study in table 3 established that majority of the principals 91.3% gave a yes response while only 8.7 % of the principals gave no response concerning their response on whether they assigned of extra workload to teachers in their schools.

The teachers were also requested give a Yes or a No answer on whether apart from normal teaching workload, they had been assigned any extra workload in their schools. The teachers’ responses are as indicated in table 4.

Table 4: Teachers’ response on assignment of extra workload in their schools

Responses	Frequency	%
Yes	32	84.2
No	0	0
No response	6	15.8
Total	38	100

The findings in table 4 indicate that majority of the teachers 84.2% gave a Yes response on whether or not on whether apart from normal teaching workload, they had been assigned any extra workload in their schools. However, 15.8% of the teachers gave no response.

**Qualitative results on other workload assignments considered to have had an effect on academic performance**

The principals and the teachers were further asked to indicate the type of other workload assignments which applied to their schools. The responses from both types of respondents indicated that teachers were assigned roles as class teachers, form Principal, scouting, career guidance, dorm patrons, Heads of Departments, co-curricular activities roles, clubs patron roles and guidance and counselling roles.

**DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Discussion of research findings in this study have been organized in line with the study objective.

**Management practices of teacher workload pressure and students’ academic performance.**

This sought to establish the influence of management of teacher workload pressure on students’ academic performance. The principals and teachers were requested to indicate their opinion on principals’ management of teacher workload pressure on students’ academic performance. The responses are as indicated in tables 1 which indicated that 47.8 and 43.5 % of the principals agreed and strongly agreed respectively with the statement that workload pressure can have an effect on students’ academic performance. This translates to 91.3% of the principals who were in agreement with the statement that workload pressure can have an effect on students’ academic performance. It was also found that 4.3 % of the principals strongly disagreed with the statement that Workload pressure can have an effect on students’ academic performance while 4.3% of the principals were neutral. The study also established that 52.2 % and 34.8% of the principals agreed and strongly agreed which translated to 87% of those agreeing with the statement that heavy workload pressure has an effect on timely syllabus completion which in turn affects academic performance. However, only 4.3% and 8.7 % of the principals strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively with the statement. The study also found that 52.2 %

and 21.7 % of the principals agreed and strongly agreed which translates to 73.9% of the principals agreeing with the statement that Moderate workload pressure and performance of other assigned duties is an additional workload and can have an effect on students' academic performance. However, 4.3 % and 4.3% of the principals strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively with the statement that Moderate workload pressure and performance of other assigned duties is an additional workload and can have an effect on students' academic performance. The study also established that 47.8 % and 34.8 % of the principals agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that Teacher normal workload contributes to improved academic performance. However, only 13% of the principals disagreed with the statement while 4.3 % of the principals were neutral. On average, majority 83.7% of the principals were in agreement with the statement that the management practices of teacher workload pressure and students' academic performance.

The results of teachers concurred with the results of the principals concerning principal's teacher workload management and students' academic as per their results in Table 2 on Teachers' response on principal's teacher workload management and students' academic which revealed that majority 65.8% of the teachers strongly agreed with the statement that heavy workload pressure has an effect on timely syllabus completion while 28.9% of the teachers agreed with the statement. This translated to 94.7% of those teachers who were in agreement with the statement. Only 2.6% of the teachers and 2.6% of the teachers strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively with the statement that heavy workload pressure has an effect on timely syllabus completion. The study also established that 36.8% and 34.2% of the teachers agreed and strongly agreed respectively with the statement that moderate workload pressure and performance of other assigned duties is an additional workload. This translates to 71% of the teachers who agreed with the statement. However, 2.6% and 18.4% of the teachers respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement that moderate workload pressure and performance of other assigned duties is an additional workload. The study also found that majority 68.4% of the Teachers and 26.3% of the teachers strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the statement that normal workload contributes to improved academic performance. This translates to 94.7% of those teachers who were in agreement with the statement. On average majority 74.8% of the teachers were in agreement with the statement that principals' management practices of teacher workload pressure influences students' academic performance.

Mang'uu et al. (2021) carried out a study to determine the effects of effects of teaching work load on teacher performance in public secondary schools in Kitui County. The study established that there is statistically significant relationship between teaching workload and teacher performance  $p$ -value=0.001. The findings agree with Okodeso (2022) who conducted a study to investigate teachers' workload and student academic performance of Social Studies students in Delta State, Nigeria and found that there is a significant relationship between teacher workload and academic performance of upper basic Social Studies students in Delta State.

The findings of the study in table 3 established that when the principals were asked to give a Yes or a No response concerning giving extra assignments to teachers, majority of the principals 91.3% gave a yes response while only 8.7 % of the principals gave no response concerning whether they assigned extra workload to teachers in their schools.

The teachers were also requested to give a Yes or a No answer on whether apart from normal teaching workload, they had been assigned any extra workload in their schools. The teachers' responses in table 4 indicated that majority of the teachers 84.2% gave a Yes response on whether apart from normal teaching workload, they had been assigned any extra workload in their schools. This means that their results concurred with those of the principals for majority of the principals gave a yes answer when asked if they gave extra workload to their teachers.

### **Discussion of qualitative results on other workload assignments considered to have had an effect on academic performance**

The responses from the principals and the teachers when they were further asked to indicate the other types of workload assignments which applied to their schools. They said that they were assigned roles such as those of class teachers, form Principal, scouting, career guidance, dorm patrons, Heads of Departments (HoDs), co-curricular activities roles, clubs patron roles and guidance and counselling roles. This means that they not only performed teaching roles but they undertook other assignments in their respective schools.



## CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that principals' management practices significantly impact on students' academic performance. Specifically, heavy and moderate workload pressures on teachers influence student outcomes, in that excessive responsibilities detract teachers' ability to focus on instructional quality. Additionally, assigning teachers additional roles or duties exacerbates workload pressures. This further affects their effectiveness and consequently, students' academic achievements. Effective workload management by principals is essential for optimizing both teacher performance and student success.

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