

Principals' Decision-Making Practices and Teacher Job Satisfaction in Senior Schools in Sirisia Sub-County, Bungoma County, Kenya

Chenge Ezekiel Kiptanui, Prof. Robert Kati, Dr. Demtillah Wanjala

Department of Educational Planning and Management, School of Education, Kibabii University

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ABSTRACT

Principals' leadership practices have a significant role in influencing the work environment and job satisfaction among teachers in Senior schools. This study examined the effect of principals' decision-making practices on teacher job satisfaction in public Senior schools in Sirisia Sub-County, Bungoma County, Kenya. The study was guided by the Transformational Leadership Theory and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. The study adopted A descriptive survey research design, targeting a population of 600 teachers drawn from 30 public Senior schools in the sub-county. A stratified random sample of 240 teachers was selected using Yamane's formula. Structured questionnaires administered to teachers were used for data collection. Out of the 240 distributed questionnaires, 192 were completed and returned, representing an 80.0% response rate. Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the reliability of the study questionnaire, and an Alpha of 0.781 was achieved, confirming its reliability. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's Correlation, and simple linear regression were used for data analysis, with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics. The results showed that principals in Sirisia Sub-County have moderate inclusive decision-making practice (mean = 3.737, SD=1.108). The highest-rated decision-making practices were fairness (mean= 4.000, SD=0.965) and transparency (mean= 3.854, SD=1.074), whereas direct teacher involvement in decision-making was rated lowest (mean= 3.438, SD=1.251). A positive and statistically significant relationship was reported between decision-making practices and teacher job satisfaction ($r = .742$, $p = 0.021 < 0.05$). Decision-making practices significantly predicted teacher job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.756$, $p = 0.002 < 0.05$), accounting for 55.0% of the variance in job satisfaction. Based on the results of the study, it was concluded that fair, transparent, and consultative decision-making practices are significant influencers of job satisfaction among teachers. The study recommends that structured measures for decision-making, including the use of anonymous suggestion systems and rotating committee representation, should be developed to improve teachers' participation in the decision-making process and their overall job satisfaction.

Keywords: Decision-Making Practices, Teacher Job Satisfaction, Transformational Leadership Theory, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Senior Schools

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The success of any organization depends on the quality of its leadership (Carvajal et al., 2023; Haile, 2023). School principals, as leaders in educational environments, have the responsibility of providing a favourable environment that can encourage job satisfaction among their staff members through the utilization of necessary leadership practices (Heenan et al., 2023). The leadership practices of principals strongly predict teachers' experience of satisfaction with their work (Baker et al., 2022; Bellibaş et al., 2025). This assertion is supported by a systematic review whose findings suggest that teachers' experience of satisfaction with their work is strongly predicted by their principals' leadership practices (Zhang et al., 2025), a position also confirmed by the World Bank, which identifies leadership practice as one of the most important factors shaping teacher job satisfaction globally (Santiago, 2015).

School leadership is based on different styles ranging from autocratic approaches in which the principal unilaterally makes decisions to democratic approaches that actively embrace the input of and judgment from the teaching staff. A lessening of teacher morale and intentions to leave have been associated with autocratic and exclusionary leadership (Ninković & Knežević, 2024). On the other hand, commitment and satisfaction have

been associated with participatory practices. Teachers who are consulted and participate in school-level leadership reveal significantly more positive attitudes about school compared to those who are not consulted and participate in school leadership (Shi et al., 2024). Among the different aspects of leadership practice, decision-making is a significant and crucial area for teachers' daily working life.

Decision-making practice is defined as how principals engage teachers, communicate decisions, and make decisions fairly and on time that impact the school operations (Shi et al., 2024). It involves how much control teachers have over making decisions, the clarity of the decision-making, the extent of consultation before decisions are made, the level at which decisions are made, and how the decision-making is perceived by teachers (Brauckmann et al., 2023). Inclusive, transparent, and consultative decision-making by principals may foster greater levels of job satisfaction for teachers. In Sub-Saharan Africa, studies have established an existing gap between the principles and practice of participatory decision-making in schools. In a study in public secondary schools in Tanzania, Ngussa (2017) established that in general, expressed their appreciation of teachers' input but found that teachers were not meaningfully involved, and that opportunities to take part were restricted by administrative structures and top-down management cultures (Ngussa, 2017). In a similar study, Migwi (2018) in public secondary schools in Nyeri, Nairobi, and Kajiado Counties, Kenya, found that the level of involvement in decision-making had a significant impact on teacher motivation, confirming that decision-making is an important factor that influences how teachers experience their work (Migwi, 2018).

Principals in the Kenya education system are recognized as administrative and instructional leaders (Shikokoti et al., 2023) and work in a participatory school governance policy framework, while having a high level of autonomy in decision-making on what happens in the school daily. The decisions principals make related to allocation of resources, staffing, and scheduling, among others, have a direct impact on staff morale, commitment, and overall satisfaction. This dual positioning of principals, as administrators answerable to the Teachers Service Commission and Ministry of Education, and as immediate leaders of their teaching staff, creates a context in which decision-making practice is a decisive factor that influences teachers' daily experience (Khan et al., 2025; Nyamugoro et al., 2023). Senior schools in Sirisia Sub-County, Bungoma County, experience issues of teacher absenteeism, low motivation, and dissatisfaction, which have raised questions about the role of principals' decision-making practices in teacher performance in these schools. Although this relationship is important, there are no empirical studies that provide an explanation of how decision-making affects job satisfaction among teachers in public Senior schools in this sub-county. This lack of evidence makes it difficult for the principals, the Sub-County Director of Education, and other education stakeholders to develop interventions that are evidence-based to enhance the decision-making practice and job satisfaction of teachers in the Senior schools of the sub-county.

Statement of The Problem

School principals' decision-making is a key factor in the job satisfaction of teachers because it has a direct impact on learning outcomes, teaching quality, and overall school performance. Past research indicates that involvement and open decision-making processes increase teacher motivation and job satisfaction, while exclusionary and autocratic decision-making are associated with higher teacher turnover, lower motivation, and dissatisfaction (Nyamugoro et al., 2023; Santiago, 2015; Shi et al., 2024).

Many concerns have been raised by education stakeholders and school assessments about teachers' absenteeism, lack of motivation, and dissatisfaction in Sirisia Sub-County that may be associated with the decision-making processes of school principals. There is, however, no empirical evidence to explain how the decision-making processes impact the job satisfaction of teachers in this sub-county. This study, therefore, focused on investigating the impact of the principals' decision-making practices on the job satisfaction of teachers in public Senior schools in Sirisia Sub-County.

Hypothesis

H₀1: Decision-making practices have no statistically significant influence on teacher job satisfaction in public Senior schools in Sirisia Sub-County, Bungoma County, Kenya.

THEORETICAL LITERATURE

Transformational Leadership Theory

This study was guided by the Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Bernard, 1985). The theory explains how different leadership characteristics shape the attitudes and performance of subordinates. The assertion of the theory is that leaders who involve their subordinates in decision-making, provide them with individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation inspire high commitment and positive attitudes among them. When used in school settings, the theory emphasizes that practices of fair, transparent, and consultative decision-making may be important in developing higher levels of trust, ownership, and satisfaction among teachers.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

The study was further based on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg & Snyderman, 1959). The theory ascertains that job satisfaction among teachers is determined by hygiene factors, including working conditions and interpersonal relationships, and motivating factors, such as opportunities for professional growth and development and recognition. Based on this framework, the quality of decision-making processes forms a crucial component of working conditions that function as a hygiene factor (Herzberg et al., 1959). The perceptions of fair and inclusive decision-making are important in preventing dissatisfaction (Ninković & Knežević, 2024).

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Khan (2024) found that higher experiences of Job satisfaction were associated with leadership practices which included involvement in decision-making through consultation, collaboration, and shared responsibility in school operation among public Senior school teachers in Pakistan. The study showed that principals' sensitivity to teachers' perceptions in school governance and policy-making enabled them to cultivate positive attitudes among teachers towards work, and participatory leadership practices improved teachers' attitudes and commitment. In another study among college teachers, Sarwar (2025) concluded that participatory leadership practices positively affected the teachers' effectiveness and satisfaction at work. The study found that providing encouragement to teachers' participation in decisions increased teachers' confidence, cooperation, and commitment, whereas democratic leadership practices increased teachers' motivation and positive relationships (Sarwar, 2025).

In a study of secondary schools in Rwanda, Musengamana et al. (2024) showed that teachers' perceptions of decision-making processes were related to a sense of shared ownership and responsibility in schools, which in turn was closely associated with teachers' satisfaction and commitment. Similarly, Ngussa (2017) found in his study of public secondary schools in Tanzania that there was a gap between what principals expect in terms of teacher participation in decision-making and what they actually experience, with principals generally favouring teacher participation while it was less in reality because of administrative hierarchy and time constraints (Musengamana et al., 2024; Ngussa, 2017).

Migwi (2018), in a study on the effect of teacher participation in decision-making on job motivation in public secondary schools in Nyeri, Nairobi, and Kajiado Counties, concluded that participation in decision-making had a positive and statistically significant effect on job motivation and suggested the use of structured mechanisms like suggestion systems and rotation of committee representation to strengthen genuine participation. Similarly, Mwove (2023), in a study on leadership practices related to students' academic performance in the schools within Mwala Sub-County, Kenya, highlighted the deficiencies, including the lack of attention to teacher job satisfaction. These studies emphasize the importance of decision-making processes to teacher outcomes, but most of the studies were carried out in settings outside of Kenya and in counties other than Bungoma, creating a geographical and contextual gap (Migwi, 2018; Mwove, 2023). No study has examined the impact of principals' decision-making on teachers' job satisfaction in public Senior schools in Sirisia Sub-County, Bungoma County; this study aimed to fill the gap.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study conceptualized principals' decision-making practices as the independent variable. This variable is measured through teacher involvement, transparency, consultation, timeliness, and fairness. Teacher job satisfaction is the dependent variable.

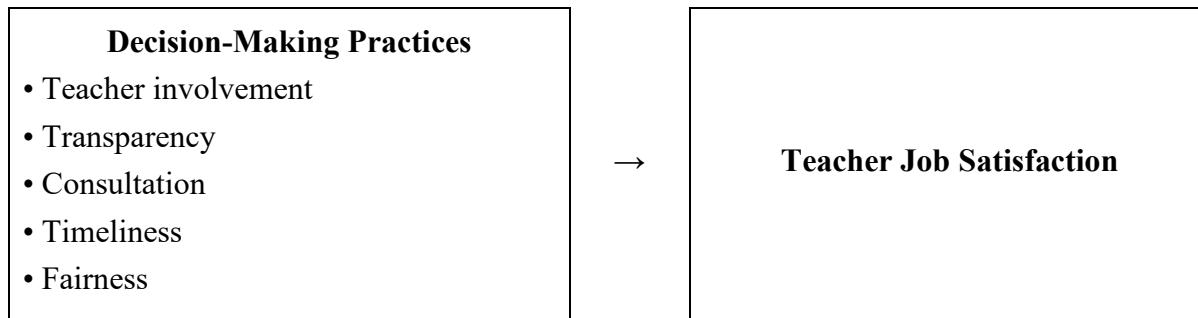


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design allowed the researcher to collect detailed data, describe the current condition of decision-making practices and teacher job satisfaction, and examine the relation between these variables (Kothari, 2019). The study was conducted across 30 public Senior schools in Sirisia Sub-County, Bungoma County, Kenya. The target population included 600 teachers working in those 30 public Senior schools in Sirisia Sub-County. The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula, at a 5% margin of error, and a sample size of 240 was obtained. Stratified random sampling was used to select the teachers. The schools were first stratified by type (boys, girls, mixed; day, boarding) before proportionate simple random selection of respondents from each stratum was conducted. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires distributed to the teachers. During data collection, 240 questionnaires were distributed, and 192 were completed and returned, indicating a response rate of 80.0%. A pilot study was conducted to establish the reliability of the research instrument using Cronbach's Alpha, with the decision-making construct achieving a coefficient of 0.781, indicating that the instrument was reliable (Ahmad et al., 2024). Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics, i.e., means and standard deviations, Pearson's Correlation, and simple linear regression to test the study hypothesis were used for data analysis.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics of Decision-Making Practices

Teacher respondents rated statements regarding their principals' decision-making practices on a five-point Likert scale. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Decision-Making Practices (N = 192)

Statement	Mean	SD
Teachers are involved in decision-making	3.438	1.251
Decisions are transparent	3.854	1.074
Teachers are consulted before major decisions	3.656	1.142
Decisions are fair	4.000	0.965
Average / Total Mean	3.737	1.108

Source: Field Data (2026)

The results in Table 1 show that fairness in decision making had the highest mean score (mean = 4.000, SD = 0.965), suggesting that respondents strongly agreed with fairness in the process of how their principals make decisions in respective schools. This was followed by transparency in decision making (mean = 3.854, SD = 1.074) and consulting the teachers before major decisions are made (mean = 3.656, SD = 1.142). Teachers rated the lowest scores related to their direct involvement in decision-making (3.438, SD = 1.251). The mean score of 3.737 (SD= 1.108) reveals moderate inclusive decision-making practices among principals in Sirisia Sub-County.

Inferential Statistics

Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship between decision-making practices and teacher job satisfaction. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix for Decision-Making Practices and Teacher Job Satisfaction (N = 192)

	Teacher Job Satisfaction	Decision-Making Practices
Teacher Job Satisfaction — Pearson Correlation	1	.742
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.021
N	192	192

Source: Field Data (2026)

The results reveal a statistically significant positive relationship between decision-making practices and teacher job satisfaction ($r = .742$, $p = 0.021 < 0.05$), indicating that among teachers, perceived fairness, transparency, and consultation in decision-making are associated with higher job satisfaction levels.

Table 3: Model Summary for Decision-Making Practices and Teacher Job Satisfaction (N = 192)

Model	R	R Square	Std. Error
1	.742	.550	.338

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 3 shows an R^2 of 0.550, indicating that the decision-making practices explain 55.0% of the variance in teacher job satisfaction in public Senior schools in Sirisia Sub-County. The R value of .742 presents a strong positive predictive relationship between the two variables.

Table 4: ANOVA^a for Decision-Making Practices and Teacher Job Satisfaction (N = 192)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	12.104	1	12.104	106.051	.000
Residual	21.582	190	0.114		
Total	33.686	191			

a. Dependent Variable: Teacher Job Satisfaction; Predictors: (Constant), Decision-Making Practices.
Source: Field Data (2026)

The ANOVA results in Table 4 reveal a statistically significant F-value ($F = 106.051$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$), confirming that decision-making practices significantly predict teacher job satisfaction.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients^a for Decision-Making Practices and Teacher Job Satisfaction (N = 192)

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	Sig.
(Constant)	1.884	0.312		.000
Decision-Making Practices	0.756	0.073	.742	.002

a. Dependent Variable: Teacher Job Satisfaction. Source: Field Data (2026)

As shown in Table 5, decision-making practices had a statistically significant positive effect on teacher job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.756$, $p = 0.002 < 0.05$). This suggests that holding other factors constant, a one-unit increase in the quality of decision-making practices results in a 0.756 increase in teacher job satisfaction. The relationship is expressed by the regression equation:

$$Y = 1.884 + 0.756X_1$$

Where Y = Teacher job satisfaction, and X_1 = Decision-making practices. Based on these results, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) that decision-making practices have no statistically significant influence on teacher job satisfaction was rejected.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the effect of principals' decision-making practices on teacher job satisfaction in public Senior schools in Sirisia Sub-County, Bungoma County, Kenya. The results of this study show that the decision-making of principals significantly contributes to job satisfaction in public senior schools in Sirisia Sub-County. The importance of teachers' decision-making function to the emotional and psychological aspects of their work environment is emphasized. Experiences of fairness, transparency, and consultation in decision-making processes promote teachers' sense of respect, dignity, and belonging and increase job satisfaction (Khan et al., 2024). This is consistent with previous studies showing that transparency and equity in school leadership decision-making are vital in establishing an organizational culture of trust and respect among employees, which is a factor in employee satisfaction at school (Eryilmaz & Strietholt, 2025; Yohannes & Wasonga, 2023). Similarly, Musengamana et al. (2024) highlighted that participation in decision-making processes in schools increases satisfaction through creating a sense of ownership and responsibility, and that the involvement of teachers in the process of making institutional decisions increases their sense of commitment and decreases their intention to leave the school (Paschal & Srivastava, 2020).

The lower mean score obtained for direct teacher involvement in decision-making compared to transparency and fairness indicates that, in Sirisia Sub-County, principals generally make decisions fairly and transparently, but that there is limited staff involvement in the decision-making. The study finding aligns with Ngussa (2017), who noted that many schools have low levels of teachers' involvement in decision-making because of administrative hierarchies and time pressures between the perception of participatory leadership and practice. This is also aligned with the previous studies suggesting that visible attributes of decision-making, fairness and transparency, are more easily and consistently practiced by leaders compared to deep aspects of follower involvement, which require ongoing investments in structures (Maheshwari, 2022; Panagopoulos et al., 2024). The low direct teacher involvement score is compared to higher scores on fairness and transparency, which implies that principals in Sirisia Sub-County may be more focused on ensuring decision outcomes are fair and transparent than on identifying mechanisms for teacher input in the decision-making process itself. The results, therefore, confirm that the participative aspect of decision-making must be strengthened in Sirisia Sub-County through a formal and structured process to enhance teacher job satisfaction in Sirisia Sub-County.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the descriptive survey design is cross-sectional, capturing decision-making practices and teacher job satisfaction at a single point in time; this design does not allow causal relationships to be established between the two variables. Second, data were obtained exclusively through self-reported questionnaires, which may be affected by common method bias and social desirability bias, as teachers may respond in ways they consider favourable rather than strictly accurate. Third, the study was confined to public Senior schools in a single sub-county, Sirisia, which limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other sub-counties, school categories, or education systems. Finally, the study examined only one dimension of school leadership, decision-making practices, and did not control for or examine other organizational and individual factors known to influence job satisfaction, such as workload, school climate, professional development opportunities, and broader leadership style (Nyamugoro et al., 2023). These factors should be taken into account in future research to allow a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of teacher job satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the decision-making processes of principals in public Senior schools in Sirisia Sub-County, Bungoma County, are a key factor affecting teachers' job satisfaction in these schools. The clarity, consultation, and fairness of decision-making are crucial for teachers' job satisfaction and foster an increase in their sense of dignity, organizational belonging, and professional respect. The mean for direct teacher involvement in decision-making, however, is relatively low, indicating that participatory decision-making has not yet completely become a reality in these schools. Therefore, improving the role of the teacher in institutional decision-making is vital in the improvement of teachers' job satisfaction in the sub-county.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Principals should plan and build structured practices for using teacher participation in decision-making outside of formal staff meetings based on the findings. Assessment methods, like anonymous written suggestion systems, rotating teacher representation on decision-making committees, and inclusive development planning workshops, can enhance the perception of inclusivity and fairness in decision-making. Further, the Sub-County Director of Education for Sirisia is recommended to include participatory decision-making competencies in the principal development and support programmes, which will help build the capacity of principals to act based on the professional agency of the teaching staff. Future studies should consider adopting longitudinal or mixed-methods research designs, including qualitative interviews or focus group discussions, to gain a deeper understanding of how decision-making practices affect teacher job satisfaction over time and to enrich the interpretation of quantitative findings such as those reported in this study. Expanding similar studies to other sub-counties, counties, and school categories beyond Sirisia Sub-County would also improve the external validity of the findings and enable comparisons across different educational contexts.

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