

PRINCIPALS' COMMUNICATION AND DECISION- MAKING PRACTICES' INFLUENCE ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN TURKANA COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Exam results have been used to determine a student's aptitude as well as to choose them for further education and career opportunities. Across the course, Turkana County has been experiencing disparities in Kenya Certificate of Secondary School examination results and has remained poor over the recent five years as shown by the following mean scores: 2016 (3.8531); 2017 (3.5488); 2018 (3.2222); 2019 (2.9078); and 2020 (3.0121). This provides proof that the KCSE scores have been fluctuating in a declining trend. For the past five years, Turkana County's academic performance has been appalling, which begs numerous questions, especially in regard to principals' management practices and how they influence students' academic achievement. Principals' management practices always have devastating effects on students' academic performance when they are not properly practiced. This study, therefore, endeavored to establish the influence of selected principals' management practices on students' academic performance in Turkana County. The research objectives were; to establish the influence of principals' communication and decision-making practices on students' academic performance in Turkana Central Sub-County. Fielders' contingency theory served as the foundation for this research. Descriptive survey research design was used in this study. The target population of the research comprised of 16 principals, 200 teachers, and 784 students. A total of 300 respondents were chosen using random for sampling. Principals were chosen using census sampling, teachers through simple random selection, and students through stratified random sampling. Questionnaires with structured and unstructured items were

used to gather data. Ten percent of participant questionnaires were examined in order to verify their validity for its intended purpose. In particular, 22 students, 6 teachers, and 2 principals took part in the pilot study. The researcher also requested the supervisor to validate the instruments' accuracy. The study adopted a method of rational equivalence by Kuder-Richardson Reliability. The data was grouped, entered, coded, cleaned, stored, and analyzed with the aid of SPSS v. 26 software. Descriptive statistics in the form of percentages, frequencies, and means were utilized to assess the quantitative information from the structured questions. Narratives and direct quotes were utilized to examine thematically the qualitative data from unstructured questions. Frequency bar graphs, tables and charts were utilized to display the analyzed data. The study findings include: effective communication by principals, characterized by clear articulation of academic goals, expectations, and feedback, positively correlates with student academic performance; and principals who employ evidence-based solutions and involve stakeholders in decision-making demonstrate a more proactive approach to addressing academic challenges. The study concludes that i) effective communication between principals, teachers, students, and parents is foundational to fostering a supportive and engaged school community, and ii) principals' decision-making practices play a pivotal role in influencing school effectiveness and student outcomes. The study makes the following recommendations: i) principals should prioritize open and effective communication with teachers, students, and

parents by regularly sharing school goals and expectations; and ii) principals should adopt evidence-based decision-making processes, considering input from teachers and students and encourage participatory decision-making which enhances

commitment and ownership of decisions by stakeholders.

Key terms: Academic Performance, Communication practice, Decision making practices, Management Practices, School management.

INTRODUCTION

Management practices play a critical role in determining performance. Effective management can lead to improved efficiency, productivity and overall success. Schools in the United States (US) are under increased pressure to enhance the learning and teaching environment, and as outcome, the duties and responsibilities of school principals have grown which includes leading school reforms aimed at increasing student achievement (Sergiovanni, 2001). Successful secondary school reforms rely heavily on principals' ability to communicate a vision that is shared by teachers, students, and the school community, additionally to incorporate educators into the decision-making procedures when implementing new organizational structures. At the same time, principals are primarily school managers. The literature on principals' management practices takes a variety of positions on the principals' roles and responsibilities (Tobin, 2014). To some extent, how principals respond to problems and issues in their schools may determine their success or failure as school administrators. Principal external motivations, which affect not only non-teachers but also teaching personnel and students, have a major effect on students' academic achievement in classrooms across the US. According to Dhuey & Smith (2014), in the United States, teacher turnover is higher in schools with the least effective principals. School principals can retain teachers only if their management practices are appealing, efficient, and effective.

Bloom, Lemos, Sadun, & Van Reenen. (2015) studied school management practices in Italy conducted by school principals and revealed that Italian school principals lacked adequate management skills when compared to their counterparts in Brazil, Germany, Canada, Sweden, India, UK and US. Armone (2019) observe that school principals have been given the status of managers in order to promote autonomy in the Italian school system and to provide financial recognition for a low-paid function. The awarding of this status, that of "public manager," has increased the responsibility of principals in terms of safety, contracts, and legal cases. However, school-system reforms have not yet provided efficient managerial resources to principals. School governance is based on norms that are still anchored in the past and have only been partially renewed by a series of acts that are not always consistent with the system. Education is one of the keys to human development and poverty eradication all over the world, and as such, management practices in secondary schools are essential to any society's prosperity (Akareem & Hossain, 2016). According to Rout (2014), the foundation of a nation's

development is the basic education level at the international level. Because they have forced school administration to innovate to enhance learning and teaching as assessed by academic achievement in secondary schools in national assessments, management practices are essential in today's competitive and expectations-driven world (Orodho, 2014). When principals develop new methods and approaches to teaching, it has the potential to change the way students learn in schools, thereby improving academic outcomes in secondary schools. This has resulted in a global effort, particularly by policymakers in the education sector, to reform schools in order to hold them publicly more accountable for improving students' performance in national examinations. As a result, school administrators, students, and teachers have been put under pressure to demonstrate that their work is measurable to such improvement (Antoniou, 2013). The improvement of academic achievement in both primary and secondary schools in Kenya is largely dependent on the management practices employed in public secondary schools. The MOE in Kenya has demonstrated its commitment to providing not only quality management practices in education but also a conducive environment for both learners and teachers in enhancing education in secondary schools through the distribution of funds, the hiring of certified educators, and the creation of quality control divisions in educational institutions (Republic of Kenya, 2012). Nzoka (2014) claim that school principals in secondary schools rarely observe the teaching and learning processes. This leads to uneven monitoring and instructional supervision for both teachers and students, which significantly worsens academic achievement in schools in Embu North District, Embu County. According to (Malambo, 2012), school leaders have an impact on students' educational outcomes because poor leadership and management in educational institutions leads to poor academic achievement. Most school principals lack diverse leadership behaviors that enhances the establishment of a better teaching and learning area in order to influence academic achievement (Obama & Eunice, 2016).

Effective communication is essential for successful learning extending beyond academic subjects to shape well-rounded individual. Effective communication skill leads to enhanced collaboration, effective problem-solving, confidence building and positive classroom dynamics (Pringle, 2024). According to Katolo (2016), a number of different propositions made by the practice's proponents support the desire for students to participate in school administration. Internationally, communication serves as a means of transmitting information, such as approaches, rules, changes, and advancements from the head to staff members and students. It is also utilized to provide departments with feedback on the performance of teachers and students. He stated that all activities of a school principal involve communication, and that communication is critical in administration. Regular communication between the principal and the staff and students is thus essential. Poor communication, misunderstood messages, and unclear instructions have all contributed to failure in many secondary schools.

The ability to make decisions has a direct impact on academic success in educational institutions. Teams must collaborate in order to do this. According to Atkinson and Beattie (2018), the principal started and promoted a participatory decision-making process by holding frequent staff meetings, consulting with department heads and implementation committees, and having conversations with students. Furthermore, according to MacNeil and Maclin (2005), effective school principal work with their partners—teachers, students, and parents—to create

a set of standards and values that serve to unite the community. The process of creating a school culture and learning environment that fosters increased student accomplishment is facilitated by a good school leader through group decision-making and the infusion of shared ideas, beliefs, theories, and values. Furthermore, Ocham (2010) noted that increased teacher participation in school decision-making enhances teacher commitment and motivation, which in turn enhances school performance.

Various researches on management techniques in other regions of Kenya have been conducted. For instance, in Homa Bay County public high schools, Eunice and Obama (2016) looked at the connection between students' academic performance and the management approaches of principals. Their main objective was to investigate whether certain fundamental ideas and pupils' academic success were related. On the other side, Mwalimu (2019) discovered that the management function of Head teachers at Kisauni Sub-County's public secondary schools had a positive effect on students' academic achievement. Waweru and Orodho (2014) established that efficient planning of both people and physical resources improved learners' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kiambu County. Existing literature, however, reveal few or no studies ever having been done in Turkana County as a whole as regards principals' management practices and academic performance. This research aims to establish how management strategies used by principals affect learners' academic success in Turkana County's public secondary schools. This survey specifically aims at determining how principals' communication and decision-making practices influence students' academic performance in light of current government policies, the community, and teacher professional development.

Statement of the Problem

Academic achievement is valued highly in Kenya and throughout the world for its seen as a means of fostering the growth of crucial economies. In attempt to improve student learning outcomes, different educational modifications have been implemented throughout the world. The Kenyan Ministry of Education (MOE) has mandated that secondary school principals employ appropriate management techniques in their institutions in order to enhance learner learning outcomes. Due to this, the MOE decided to send majority of secondary school principals to (KEMI) to pursue management training, particularly in the development and execution of strategic plans.

Principals are seen as necessary for schools to run smoothly, where teachers are motivated in an attempt to continuously enhance the caliber of instruction. With the implementation of Subsidized Day Secondary Education (SDSE), there has been enormous increase in teacher shortages of approximately 40,000 for secondary schools. As a result, management practices for the teaching workforce are considered strained and constrained by the sector's expansion, especially the establishment of new schools, which has led to a shortage of teachers and increased enrolment in the already over stretched schools. In secondary schools, these influences can result in poor or declining academic performance. Performance in assessments has been used as a basis for determining a student's aptitude and as a mode of choosing academic advancement and career opportunities.

Throughout time, Turkana County has been experiencing disparities in student achievement at KCSE examinations and has remained poor for some recent years now as shown by the following mean scores: 2016 (3.8531); 2017 (3.5488); 2018 (3.2222); 2019 (2.9078); and 2020 (3.0121). This is an indication that KCSE performance in this County has been fluctuating but mostly in a declining trend. Following this trend, very few students from Turkana County qualify to join universities since the minimum grade for university entry is C plus (C+). There is insufficient empirical research on how the principals' management practices such as communication and decision-making, which are essential for enhancing effective teaching influence students' academic performance. In addition, none of these few researches have examined the connection between principals' communication and decision-making practices, and students' academic performance in an Arid and Semi-Arid region such as Turkana County. Given these circumstances, it was considered vital to carry out research on the how these variables influence students' academic performance in public secondary schools. The current study, in particular aimed at establishing the relationship between principal's communication and decision-making practices, and learners' academic performance in public secondary schools in Turkana Central Sub-County, Kenya.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to determine the influence of principals' management practices on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Turkana County, Kenya.

Specific Objectives

The study was channeled by the following specific objectives:

- i. To establish the influence of principals' communication practices on students' academic performance in performance in public secondary schools in Turkana County.
- ii. To determine how the principals' decision-making practices influence students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Turkana County.

Theoretical Literature Review

Contingency Theory

This research was based on contingency theory (Fiedler, 1964). Fred Edward Fiedler, an Austrian psychologist, proposed the theory back in 1964. The foundation of this theory was on assumption that there isn't a single optimal to approach organizational leadership and decision-making, but that the best course of action is one that is dependent on both external and internal factors. The theory does not provide any specific management principles that can be applied in any situation. Contingency theory emphasizes both the leader's situation and the leader's management techniques.

Three elements make up the situation idea in the theory, which governs how appealing certain situations are inside an organization. The group's general environment and feelings, such as its confidence, loyalty, and faith in its leader, are dealt with by the connections between leaders

and members. Similar to this, effective and successful school management depends on strong relationships between principals and parents, employees, students, and the community. The ability to inspire children with trust, loyalty, and confidence is a skill required of school administrators. Being approachable, intentionally removing perceived obstacles, utilizing acceptable body language, and having good verbal and listening skills are all part of good communication practices. Accessibility is essential for developing connections with school administrators, instructors, and ultimately students and for assembling a cohesive team on which ideas may flow.

Task structure, according to Fiedler (1964), includes both the methods used to carry out the tasks and their clarity. The school principals must clearly explain and structure the teachers' tasks. Tasks are viewed negatively when they are vague and unstructured, and both the team and the leader have little knowledge of how to complete them. A high degree of motivation practices increases teachers' morale, which is likely reflected in students' academic achievement. School principals have inherent power in their position to direct their teachers and students on either punish or reward them. Members may perform better in fear of sanctions or strive to be rewarded if a reward and punishment system is in place. The students' performance demonstrates this.

This theory is appropriate since it focuses on how administrators should handle managerial issues. Leadership decision-making model in contingency theory describes how effective leaders assess and evaluate situations and how much support the group provides in their efforts by adjusting their preferred leadership style. This helps in deciding management practice to use in school setting. In a school context, a number of circumstances are certain to occur. Principals must take a contingency-oriented approach because there is no one optimum way to handle events in schools. The principal must decide which managerial practice will be most effective in dealing with a given situation. In order to respond to a given situation, the principals must rely on their judgment and experience under this management approach. Different leaders, each with their own leadership style, will respond differently to various workplace developments when it comes to problem-solving. The project's scope, the team's size, the resources available, and the deadlines are all elements that affect a leader's effectiveness. The contingency theory reveals that leaders must always devise specific methods to monitor, model, and handle various problems, and they must be willing to admit that partial success. Theirs depends on the specifics of their situation. According to contingency leadership theory, the situation, task, and individuals involved all play a role in effective leadership. Contingency models emphasize the need for flexibility and adaptability in organizational management. By applying a contingency perspective, researchers can better understand how certain management practices may be more effective in specific situations and less so in others. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the relationship between management practices and academic outcomes.

Empirical Literature Review

Overview of Management Practices in Secondary Schools

The sixth edition of the Oxford Dictionary defines management as the act of leading, managing, or deftly handling individuals or circumstances in general. Bloom et al. (2011) noted that administration is a wide phrase that encompasses factors related to the administrator's traits as well as standardized, specific methods for controlling output. The principal is included in school management, but all interested parties are as well (Kyriankides, 2015). According to Huaisherng et al. (2019), school administration strives to advance the institution of the school, mobilize, and demonstrate the human and material prerequisites for educational processes that validate students' learning activities. The application of policy management to create, develop, and produce resources with the intention of achieving educational goals is taken into consideration by management practices in secondary schools (Hopkins, 2015). Academic achievement determines whether or not the students' proceeds to institutions of higher learning either colleges or universities, therefore school managements are under constant pressure to improve their schools' grades in KCSE (Katamei & Omwono, 2015). This pressure calls for the school principals to come up with proper management practices and strategies to enhance students' academic performance.

In today's competitive age, the expectation to achieve good results in secondary schools is high especially from the community, parents as well as the government. This has led to school managers initiate diverse management practices that are geared to improving since improved academic performance serves as a gauge for teaching and learning (Orodho, 2014; Oluchemi, 2012). The principal's independent organizational qualities, school climate, and school growth plan, according to Argyriou and Iordanidis (2014), reflect the school management process that significantly affect academic attainment. According to the United Nations Children Fund (UNCF), ineffective leadership and management lead to students performing very poorly on national exams, which leaves schools ill-prepared and opens the door for students to lack the necessary skills to succeed in the challenging economic and social surrounding and the competence to effectively contribute to the revolution of society (Murray & Newby, 2012).

In Pakistan, a study by Adeel et al. (2020) on the instructional leadership conventions of primary school principals in Pakistan: Perception and meaning. Using semi-structured interviews and a qualitative research approach, a total of 42 primary school principals were questioned. Qualitative data were initially inductively and sequentially coded for analysis before coming to results and conclusions. The study's findings show that high school principals in Pakistan often comprehend and list duties linked to the nation's teaching procedures. In particular, how they checked and assessed the greatness of educating and information in their foundations regarding educator management. However, the study used qualitative data that is collected from a smaller sample size and therefore the findings could not be reflective of the whole sample. The existing research took place in the sub-county of Turkana Central in Kenya, using larger population with the target of 1000 respondents.

A study conducted in Malaysia by Sim (2014) on instructional leadership among Malaysian secondary school principals. To determine the teacher's opinions on the role of directors as

educational pioneers, a survey method was used. The questionnaire used in this study was derived from Philip Hallinger's "Hallinger's " PIMRS questionnaire (1987). In this review, 220 teachers participated. The study found that Malaysian administrators had successfully used all seven components of the influential position. The results uncovered there exist correlational between understudy' levels of academic initiative and achievement. As a result, it implies that effective educational management is essential for achieving higher standards of academic achievement in schools. Even though the research was done in Malaysian schools, Kenya couldn't possibly benefit from the findings. The proposed research was done in Kenya as opposed to the study which was done in Malaysia.

Arop et al. (2020) conducted research on secondary school learners' academic performance in science, instructor viability, and school administration methods in Cross Waterway State, Nigeria. A factorial examination strategy was used for the review. A sample of 2,145 people; 893 educators and 1252 learners were selected using simple and proportionately defined irregular testing techniques from a population of 39,468 senior secondary school learners and 6,356 teachers. Students' Mathematics Achievement Test (SMAT), Teachers' Effectiveness Questionnaire (TEQ), and School Management Practices Questionnaire (SMPQ) were all employed as devices for data gathering. A multivariate statistical approach called multiple regression was used. Academic performance of pupils was found to be substantially correlated with principal leadership styles, teacher discipline, conflict resolution, teacher motivation, school monitoring, record keeping, student discipline, and effective communication. However, the research variables are different from what the current study will focus on which results to gap of the two studies, the current study variables include; principals' communication, decision-making and motivation practices and it will use descriptive research design. The existing study used both structured and unstructured questionnaire to fill in the study gap.

Muma and Odhiambo (2019) evaluated some delegation techniques employed by principals across Rachuonyo South sub-county's public secondary schools. The survey embraced a descriptive research design. A total of 350 department heads, 434 teachers, 75 principals, 75 deputy principals, and 75 principals were involved in survey population. A stratified sampling strategy was established to select 75 deputy principals. We gathered information from 25 principals, 150 department heads, and 150 teachers using a straightforward random selection technique. To examine quantitative primary data, descriptive statistics were utilized like percentages and frequencies. As themes and groupings formed, qualitative primary data were transcribed and categorized. According to research, principals who consider professional knowledge when allocating assignments and communicate with their employees through scheduled staff meetings increase learning results. However, because the research was done in Rachuonyo south sub-county, the findings may not apply to Turkana County. Furthermore, this study used a mixed methods approach to determine how communication practices, decision-making practices, problem solving practices and motivation practices impact on learners' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Turkana County, Kenya bridging the methodological gap.

Relationship between Principals' Communication Practices and Students' Academic Performance

Principals' communication takes different forms in schools. These include; open-door policies, verbal, non-verbal and regular meetings (Patrick & Franke, 2004). Katua (2019) states that suggestion boxes, when placed in good locations and opened on weekly basis are a good communication strategy where students' grievances are heard and listened to by the school administration. The fact that students' views are communicated and steps taken seriously to look into their issues and communicated back, creates room for accountability which translates into organizational outcome. Communications influences person perceptions as well as opinions, communities, institutions and governments (Jonathan, 2017). He outlined the functions of communication as a managerial tool which include; sharing information among the members (teachers, non-teaching staff, students, parents and the community), coordinating activities, reducing unnecessary administrative functions burdens and rules, and improving school performance (Marsen, 2006). By interacting with all these functions influences the students in their national examination. On the other hand, Waswa (2017) states that school principals as leaders are effective and good communicators with the ability and know-how to facilitate effective interpersonal interactions since they understand what communication is all about. They ensure frequent communications with teachers on issues related to instructional and students' needs in particular. He goes on to say that teachers' perceptions of communication with principals who are effective instructional administrators boost better instructional practices in their classrooms and assist instructors comprehend the connection between instruction practices and students' performance. The frequent holding of the staff meetings, enable principals to communicate the school mission, vision and core values to be internalized by both teachers and students (Nyagosia & Njuguna, 2013).

In a study done in the United States, Nwosu (2017) looked into the connection between Latin American public secondary schools' principals' communication tactics and students' academic achievement. All secondary school teachers in Latin America were included in the target population. A total of 191 randomly chosen teachers were surveyed using the "Principal's Communication Strategies and Teachers' Job Performance (CSTJPQ)" self-administered questionnaire. Using inferential statistics and descriptive, the data obtained from the questionnaire was evaluated. The findings indicate that the communication tactics used by the principals were responsible for 24.7% of the variation in student job performance. Secondary school learner academic achievement and principal communication tactics were established to be positively and significantly correlated. However, the respondents were randomly selected which could have led to sample biasness. The current study used principals, teachers and in the secondary schools of Turkana Central County in Kenya, the research utilized stratified sampling method, with the target population of 1000 respondents. Geographical Gap, the study was conducted in United State while the current study was carried in Turkana County.

In Nigeria, Nwankwo *et al.* (2019) studied on principals' communication strategies for teacher effectiveness in secondary schools in Anambra State. A descriptive survey design was employed for the investigation. The six education zones were the subject of the research. A total of 6652 participants from all of the state-owned secondary schools in Anambra state,

including 257 administrators and 6411 instructors, made up the research's sample. The survey's sample size was 915 persons, comprising 810 instructors and 105 principals from the 257 in Anambra state public secondary schools. Essentially to examine the data, the correlation of the Pearson product moment was employed. According to the findings, there was no statistically significant difference between teachers' and principals' mean judgments of the communication techniques employed by principals to increase teacher effectiveness. The study's findings indicate that there isn't much respect in how principals and teachers are evaluated, which leaves a space between the literature which needs to be compliment for the current research to establish the significance of good management techniques, growth and student performance in Turkana County secondary schools.

In Kenya, Waswa (2017) research on the impact of principals' interpersonal abilities on pupils' academic achievement. The study included mixed media techniques and a descriptive survey approach. A sample of 369 classroom teachers, 44 principals, and 369 class monitors were chosen to take part in this survey, for a total of 782 respondents, using easy and purposeful random sampling techniques. An interview schedule and Likert scale questionnaire were utilized to gather the data. To analyze quantitative data, descriptive statistics were used, such as frequencies, percentages, averages, and standard deviations. By describing respondents' emergent content in relation to the research objectives, qualitative data were analyzed. Communication abilities affect teaching and learning, according to research. But because the respondents were chosen through purposeful sampling, there is a methodological flaw. The current survey utilized stratified sampling design to ensure effective representativeness of the sample with sample size of 16 principles, 60 teachers and 224 students. The current study also used more indicators unlike communication only but also decision-making, problem solving and motivation practices to bridge the gap.

Relationship between Principals' Decision-Making Practices and Students' Academic Performance

Decision-making in the educational organizations may take different practices with the main goal of raising its standard of interactions between learning and teaching. These practices include; teacher to teacher interaction, teacher to learners' interactions, teacher-to-material interactions and learner-to-material interactions in the school. The interaction may need making adjustments especially in the educational programs and activities with the main of improving teaching and learning processes to achieve set school goals (Cheng, 2008). On the decision-making strategies by principals' highlights various effective strategies that principals can adopt in decision-making, these include; policy awareness, the committee system, delegated authority and departmental feedback. This indicated that majority of school principals allow sharing of ideas among teachers which they carry to the school management. This enables teachers to actively participate by expressing their opinions, settling disagreements, and coming to a consensus that leads to good judgments and the accomplishment of organizational objectives. When members (non-teaching staff, instructors, and students) play a role in decision- making, they usually tend to be more satisfied with the collective decisions they made and always would support it (Wambua *et al.*, 2017). Principals' who involve their students in making decision, their schools tend to do well. Nyamu (2020)

highlights some of the strategies that can be adopted by school principals to involve the students in decision-making. These are; rewarding active students involved in school activities, supporting the views of students making of decisions and provision of public spaces such as suggestion boxes. This has an impact on students' achievement because they feel that they are also valued.

In Canada, a study by Chitpin (2020) on the role of principal decision-making in closing the achievement gap in Ontario. The parameters of the research were determined using a qualitative case study methodology. This study looks at the choices used by administrators of bridge performance across learners' groups and boost the number of pupils who reach academic standards. Three women and five men from the Ontario School District (pseudonym), one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the world, were among the eight participants. They were all from the southern Ontario school district. Interviews that were open-ended and semi-structured were utilized to collect the information for this research. To confirm the reasoning behind decisions, data on individual school performance, provincial and divisional records, and school improvement plans were compiled and examined. The idea that teacher-centered instruction is superior to student-centered instruction is supported by research. Instead of defining assessment policies to satisfy the requirements of particular students, these participants did so to fulfill the needs of governments and educational institutions. Geographical Gap, the study was conducted in Canada while the current study was carried in Turkana County.

Ayeni (2018) carried survey on the effect of decision-making techniques of principals on secondary school teachers' productivity in Nigeria. This study combined descriptive surveys and ex post facto research. The respondents were 600 instructors and 30 principals from secondary schools. Data were gathered using the "Student Academic Performance Form" (SAPP) and the "Teacher Decision-Making and Task Questionnaire" (PDMTTQ). The percentages and frequency counts were utilized to examine the study topics, and Pearson's correlation coefficient was utilized to test the hypotheses with an alpha level of 0.05. The results demonstrate a notable association between the teacher performance and student decision-making as well as a robust correlation between instructor performance on instructional tasks and student learning outcomes. The fact that the study was undertaken in Nigeria leaves a gap in its breadth, and the fact that it is currently being conducted in the Turkana County's secondary schools could affect the findings. A total of 1,000 respondents will be used in the study as opposed to 630 in the previous one.

The effect of critical decision-making techniques on student achievement in secondary schools in Kirinyaga and Murang'a counties was studied by Irungu et al. in 2019. Participating to the research were 205 headteachers and 367 instructors from each of the 2 districts' 436 high schools. The researchers gathered data from principals and instructors using interview schedules and standardized questionnaires. It was chosen to use to analyze the data, both inferential and descriptive statistics are used. The outcomes suggest that school leaders should promote teamwork inside their institutions. Stakeholders can be involved in networks and linkages that encourage collaboration and potentially boost academic performance in order to

accomplish this. The study, however, was carried only in Kirinyaga and Murang'a counties, which highlights a lack of context. In contrast to the scenario above, which combines both questionnaires and interview schedules, the current study exclusively gathered data by sending questionnaires to all respondents (principals, teachers, and students). The current study concentrated on how important management methods affect learners' performance in academics at secondary public schools.

Relationship between Principals' Problem-Solving Practices and Students' Academic Performance

Problem-solving practices by principals remain to be the key function of school management. Every organization at some point encounters problems, but how the problems are tackled depends on the experience and management skills of the school principal. As school administrators, they are in charge of overseeing and controlling all personnel, pupils, and activities in order to achieve organizational objectives through everyone's ongoing efforts (Khan et al., 2012). School management is an interactive social process between school management, teachers, students and the community. All these stakeholders are in one way or another engaged in problem-solving in school problems (Al & Zaid, 2015). For effective leadership to be influential, it must be based on the following three strategies: monitoring, pattern setting, dialogue and controlling (Southworth, 2004). A successful school principal adopts these strategies essentially as the foundation in problem-solving in school where participation between the school principal and all school stakeholders.

Perveen (2016) studied how problem-solving techniques affected Pakistani high school pupils' mathematical ability. The study's sample consisted of middle schoolers who were taking math classes. Class 10 learners from Pakistan Government Girls High School in Rawalpindi made up the study sample. Based on previous testing, 48 pupils were divided into two groups at random: test or guide. Sherreen (2006) and Polya (1945)'s problem-solving heuristic phases serve as a reference for how to handle the planned problem-solving strategy. A post-test was utilized to gauge the treatment's success after it had been administered. A two-tailed t-test was used to analyze the data, and the findings showed that before the experiment, the mathematical knowledge of the control group and the experimental group was remarkably similar. The experimental group considerably outperformed the control group on the post-test. The target population of the study was limited to students who had studied mathematics, which produced a methodological gap since the existing study would be done in Turkana, Kenya. The study was also conducted in Pakistan.

Aidoo (2020) research in South Africa examined the educational leadership responsibilities of secondary school administrators in the Bohlabela region. Discussions on broad subjects like interpretations of instructional leadership, effective learning, administrative support for teachers to teach as well as the state of school readiness and the performance of the principal's educational role, were conducted through a review of documents and oral interviews with chosen principals. Four (4) principals, one (1) vice principal, two (2) subject heads, and one (1) experienced teacher were sampled as part of the study's qualitative design employing sampling methodology. One of the main conclusions of this research is that, despite principals'

comprehension of the notion of instructional leadership, they do not, for whatever reason, commit themselves to that role, which is detrimental to the teaching and learning process. However, secondary data-based research reveals a methodological gap. Secondary and primary data was used in the current study to gather information.

The research “Correlational of Problem-Solving Approach and Academic Achievement: A survey from Municipality of Kakamega, Kenya” by Matemba et al. (2014). A correlational design was employed for this investigation. Using stratified sampling, six schools one for boys, one for girls, three coeducational public schools, and one coeducational private school were chosen. A total of 200 learners were chosen using proportionate and simple random picking, 113 of whom were boys and 87 of whom were girls. Data were gathered via surveys, focus group discussions and observation checklists. Inferential and Descriptive statistics were utilized to assess the quantitative data accessed on the field, while qualitative data from group conversations were qualitatively studied. The t test was utilized to assess between-group similarity in the research variables, and the correlation technique was used to evaluate the 0.05 null hypotheses significance indexes. Academic performance and methods for addressing problems did not significantly correlate. However, the study was a case of Kakamega municipality and it used Correlation research design, thus presenting a contextual gap. The existing research used descriptive survey design and was conducted in Turkana Coun

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the study's conceptual framework which shows the interrelation between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

Independent Variables

Dependent

Variable

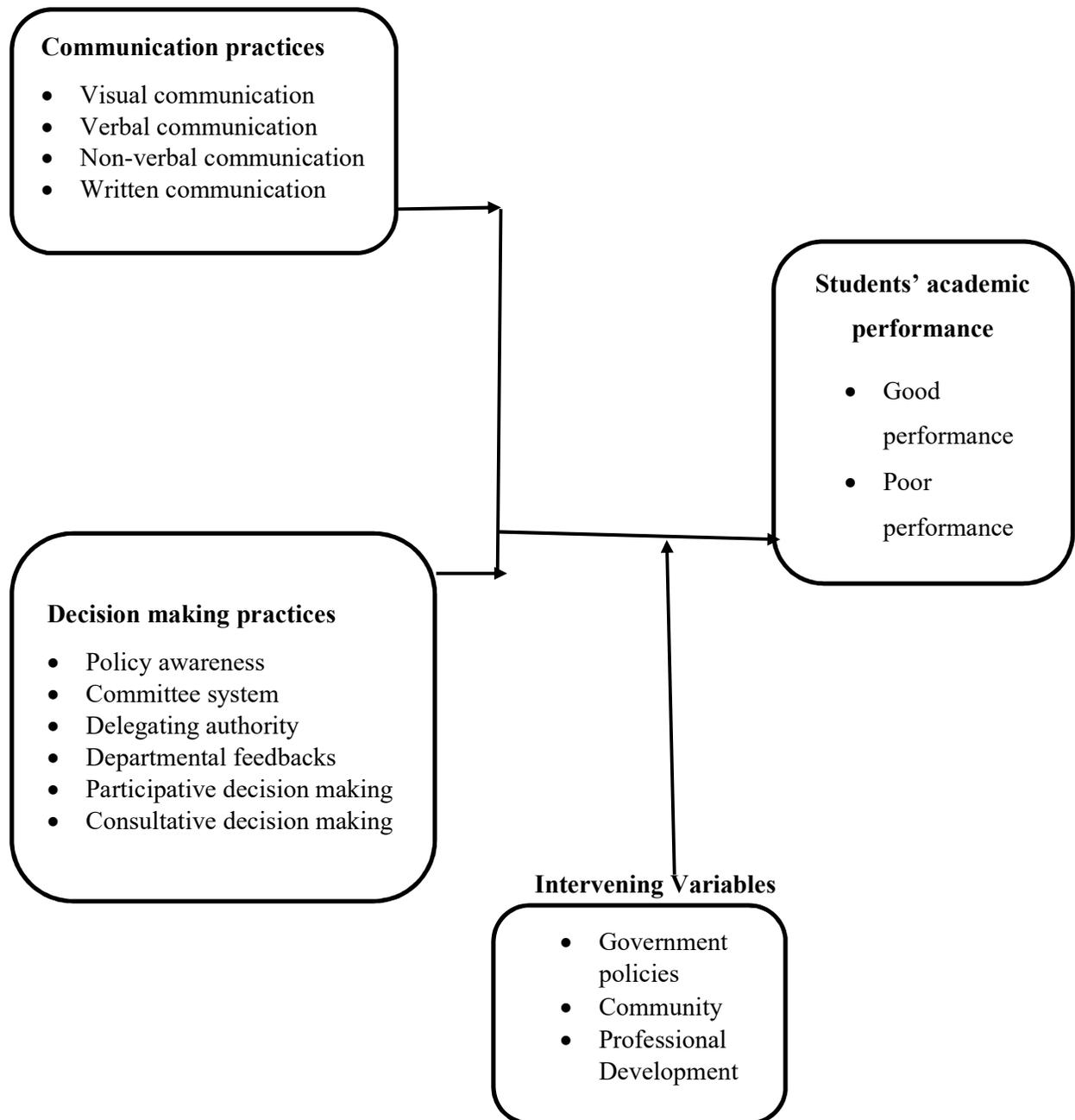


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Researcher, (2024)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was used in this study. The target population of the research comprised of 16 principals, 200 teachers, and 784 students. A total of 300 respondents were chosen using random for sampling. Principals were chosen using census sampling, teachers through simple random selection, and students through stratified random sampling. Questionnaires with structured and unstructured items were used to gather data. Ten percent of participant questionnaires were examined in order to verify their validity for its intended purpose. In particular, 22 students, 6 teachers, and 2 principals took part in the pilot study. The researcher also requested the supervisor to validate the instruments' accuracy. The study adopted a method of rational equivalence by Kuder-Richardson Reliability. The data was grouped, entered, coded, cleaned, stored, and analyzed with the aid of SPSS v. 26 software. Descriptive statistics in the form of percentages, frequencies, and means were utilized to assess the quantitative information from the structured questions. Narratives and direct quotes were utilized to examine thematically the qualitative data from unstructured questions. Frequency bar graphs, tables and charts were utilized to display the analyzed data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Questionnaire Return Rate

The questionnaire return rate is the proportion of the questionnaires returned after they have been issued to the respondents. Table 4.1 presents findings on questionnaire return rate.

Table 4.1 Response return rate

Respondents' Category	Number of Instruments Issued	Number of Instruments returned	Percentage return rate (%)
Principals	16	14	87.5%
Teachers	60	52	86.7%
Students	224	206	92.0%
Total	300	272	90.7%

Source: Field Data (2024)

The findings presented in Table 4.1 show that out of 16 questionnaires issued to the school principals, 14 were returned back. This represents a return rate of 87.5 per cent. Moreover, return rate of 52 (86.7%) of the sampled teachers took part in the study and returned the questionnaires. Further, a total of 272 students out of 300 filled in the questionnaires and returned. This represents a return rate of 92.0 per cent. In overall, 272 respondents out of 300 participated in the data collection process presenting an average response rate of 90.7%. According to Baruch and Holtom (2014), 50 per cent rate of response is satisfactory, 60 per

cent good and above 70 per cent rating better. This response was considered satisfactory for the purpose of the study.

Demographic Information of Respondents

Principals, teachers and students were involved in the study. The principals are the managers of the schools. They are involved in the management team of the school hence were believed to be in better positions to provide data on principals' management practices in their schools. Teachers play a direct role in delivering education to students and implementing the strategies set forth by school administrators. Their input is valuable in examining how principals' management practices translate into day-to-day classroom activities and student interactions. Students are the ultimate beneficiaries of the educational system.

Respondents' Gender

The respondents were asked to indicate their gender. Table 4.2 presented findings on respondents by gender distribution.

Table 4.1 Distribution of Principals, Teachers and Students by their Gender

Respondents	Principals		Teachers		Students	
	F	%	f	%		
Male	8	57.1%	28	53.8%	112	54.4%
Female	6	42.9%	24	46.2%	94	45.6%
Total	14	100	52	100	206	100

Source: Field Data (2024)

The results in Table 4.2 show that majority of the administrative personnel in the schools were male. These are represented by 57.1% of principals and 53.8% of the teachers. These findings succinctly indicate that there is gender bias in terms of responsibility allocation. The fact that there are more male principals would mean that women's ability in administrative roles has really not fully been appreciated. These findings concur with the findings of Kiumi, Kibe and Ng'ang'a (2013) who found that there was no gender parity in headship position in their study area. This violation is further enhanced by the presence of more male teachers than the female teachers which portrays a gender imbalanced scenario in job allocation.

Further, the study revealed that 112(54.4%) of the students who participated were male while 94(45.6%) were female. Based on data from the Kenya Ministry of Education, the enrollment of male and female students in secondary schools has been relatively close. For example, in some regions, the enrollment might be close to a 50/50 split between boys and girls. However, it's important to note that gender disparities may still exist in certain areas or communities due to cultural, economic, or social factors. There is no gender-based restriction on attending secondary education in Kenya, and both boys and girls have equal access to schooling. The Ministry of Education in Kenya promotes gender equality in education, aiming to ensure that

all children, regardless of gender, have the opportunity to attend and complete their secondary education.

Age of Respondents

The study aimed to determine the age of the respondents. The age brackets of principals, teachers and students are analyzed and presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.2 Age of the Respondents

Respondents	Age bracket	Frequency	Percentage
Principals	30-40	4	28.6
	41-49	7	50.0
	50 and Above	3	21.4
	Total	14	100
Teachers	29 and below	6	11.5
	30-40	15	28.8
	41-49	20	38.5
	50 and Above	11	21.2
	Total	52	100
Students	14 -17	98	47.6
	18 - 20	67	32.5
	Above 20	41	19.9
	Total	206	100

Source: Field Data (2024)

The findings displayed in Table 4.3 shows that majority of the principals who took part in the study were aged between 41 and 49 years. The principals who were above 50 years constituted 21.4 percent. This infers that all the principals who participated in the research had enough experience and were mature enough as indicated by their age. According to the Ministry of Education Report (2022), the age distribution of principals in secondary schools often shows a range of ages, reflecting both experienced educators and younger leaders entering administrative roles.

Regarding the teachers' age, majority were aged between 41 and 49 years as presented by 38.5 percent. Further, 28.8 percent of teachers were aged between 30 and 40 years. According to Malik (2021), an employees' age has an effect on their perception of satisfaction and commitment which consequently affects turnover intentions. In this regard, there is almost an equal distribution of age among respondents.

Concerning the students' age, majority were aged between 14 and 17 years as presented by 47.6% and those aged between 18 and 20 years were presented by 32.5%. According to recent reports from the Ministry of Education (2022), the age distribution of students in Kenyan

secondary schools typically ranges between 14 to 19 years old, encompassing a broad spectrum of adolescents and young adults. The majority of students enter secondary school around the age of 14 years after completing primary education, although variations in age at entry can occur based on individual circumstances and academic progression.

Educational Level of Respondents

The study further found it necessary to determine the respondents' level of academic qualification in order to ascertain if they were well equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills for the school responsibilities. The findings are as indicated in Table 4.4.

Table 4.3 Distribution of Principals and Teachers by Academic Qualification

Qualifications	Principals		Teachers	
	f	%	f	%
PhD	2	14.3	2	3.8
M.ED	5	35.7	12	23.1
B. Ed	7	50.0	29	55.8
Diploma	-	-	9	17.3
Total	14	100%	52	100%

Source: Field Data (2024)

The results in Table 4.4 show that half of the principals held a bachelor's degree certificate while 5(35.7%) having a master's degree. This shows that all the respondents were qualified and thus likely to translate and implement issues of management effectively. This is in line with what Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2020) pointed out that principals need to have pre-requisite of conceptual, technical and interrelation skills in order to guide the teachers. Typically, a principal in Kenya is expected to have at least a bachelor's degree in education, which provides a solid foundation in pedagogy, curriculum development, and management. Regarding academic qualification of teachers, majority of the teachers held bachelor's degree as presented by 29(55.8%). This implies that teachers were sufficiently qualified and hence able to understand the influence of management practices on students' academic performance. Educational qualifications are relevant because they allow educational professionals to conduct systematic and analytical research into the theory and practice of leadership and management in education. The knowledge and skills learned from educational courses could be applied to better their own practice as managers in educational institutions.

Distribution of Principals and Teachers by Teaching Experience

The respondents were requested to indicate their level of teaching experience. The results are as presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.4 Distribution of Respondents by Teaching Experience

No. of years	Principals		Teachers	
	f	%	f	%
1-5 year	-	-	6	11.5
6 - 10 years	3	21.6	12	23.1
11 -15 years	6	42.9	20	38.5
Above 15 years	5	35.7	14	26.9
Total	14	100%	52	100%

Source: Field Data (2024)

The results in Table 4.5 reveal that majority of the principals 6 (42.9) have served as teachers for between 11 and 15 years. This is an indication that principals had enough experience on management practices. Some principals have extensive teaching experience exceeding 15 years or more. These experienced educators bring a wealth of knowledge, expertise, and insights gained from years of classroom teaching to their administrative roles. They often provide strong mentorship and guidance to both teachers and newer administrators.

Also, teachers were fairly distributed according to teaching experience as indicated by 6 (11.5%) having taught between 1 and 5 years, 12 (23.1%) having taught between 6 and 10 years, 20(38.5%) having taught between 10 and 15 years while 14 (26.9%) had taught for more than 15 years. Mid-career teachers have acquired substantial experience ranging from 6 to 15 years. They have developed proficiency in their subject areas, established effective teaching practices, and often take on leadership roles within their departments or grade levels.

Principals’ Communication Practices and Students’ Academic Performance

The first objective of the study was to establish the influence of principals’ communication practices on students’ academic performance in public secondary schools. The respondents were requested to indicate their agreement level on statements regarding influence of principals’ communication practices on students’ academic performance using 5-likert scale as follows: SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, U-undecided, D-Disagree and SD-Strongly Disagree. The findings are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.1 Respondents' Views on Principals' Communication Practices

Principals	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std.Dev
Principal communicates with all people freely	5 (35.7%)	8 (57.1%)	1 (7.1%)			3.54	0.634
Principal supports students who need help without biasness	6 (42.9%)	8 (57.1%)				3.65	0.617
The vision and mission of school is clearly communicated	9 (64.3%)	5 (35.7%)				3.61	0.623
Instructional goals are communicated during school meetings.	4 (28.6%)	8 (57.1%)	2 (14.3%)			3.53	0.642
Communication influences persons perceptions and opinion	5 (35.7%)	6 (42.9%)	3 (21.4%)			3.62	0.628
Teachers							
Principal communicates with all people freely	20 (38.5%)	26 (50.0%)	5 (9.6%)	1 (1.9%)		3.51	0.625
Principal supports students who need help without biasness	25 (48.1%)	24 (46.2%)	2 (3.8%)	1 (1.9%)		3.64	0.631
The vision and mission of school is clearly expressed	23 (44.2%)	24 (46.2%)	1 (1.9%)	4 (7.7%)		3.59	0.629
Instructional goals are expressed during school meetings.	19 (36.5%)	24 (46.2%)	6 (11.5%)	3 (5.8%)		3.55	0.635
Communication influences persons perceptions and opinion	18 (34.6%)	27 (51.9%)	5 (9.6%)	2 (3.8%)		3.63	0.638
Students							
Principal communicates with all people freely	82 (39.8%)	98 (47.6%)	14 (6.9%)	8 (3.9%)	4 (1.9%)	3.50	0.619
Principal supports students who need help without biasness	78 (37.9%)	92 (44.7%)	18 (8.7%)	12 (5.8%)	6 (2.9%)	3.61	0.621
The vision and mission of school is clearly expressed	76 (36.9%)	96 (46.6%)	20 (9.7%)	7 (3.4%)	7 (3.4%)	3.57	0.639
Instructional goals are expressed during school meetings.	80 (38.8%)	94 (45.6%)	17 (8.3%)	11 (5.3%)	4 (1.9%)	3.56	0.626
Communication influences persons perceptions and opinion	77 (37.4%)	97 (47.1%)	16 (7.8%)	13 (6.3%)	3 (1.5%)	3.66	0.638

Source: Field Data (2024)

The findings presented in Table 4.6 show that responses based on influence of principals' communication practices on students' academic achievement. Majority of the respondents agreed with the statement that principal communicates with all people freely as indicated by principals (mean =3.54; S.D = 0.634), teachers (mean =3.51; S.D = 0.625), and students (mean =3.50; S.D = 0.619). Principals who engage in open and transparent communication foster a sense of trust and inclusivity among teachers, students, parents, and community members. The findings are supported by the findings of a study by Katua (2019) who observed that principals who institute open channels of communication and foster inclusive dialogue enhance school effectiveness, promote positive relationships, and facilitate collective efforts towards educational improvement and community engagement. The findings contradict the with findings of a study by Walker and Madsen (2016) who established that academic performance is influenced by a myriad of factors, such as socioeconomic status, teacher quality, and parental involvement, which overshadow the role of principals' communication practices.

The study reveals that principals supported students who needed help without biasness as indicated by principals themselves (mean =3.65; S.D = 0.617), teachers (mean =3.64; S.D = 0.631), and students (mean =3.61; S.D = 0.621). This imply that when principals provide unbiased support, students feel valued, respected, and empowered to thrive academically and socially. This supportive environment cultivates a sense of belonging and encourages students to seek help when needed, ultimately enhancing their overall academic performance and well-being. The findings are consistent with those of a study conducted by Chitpin (2020), which found that principals who exhibit a commitment to assisting students without bias lead to a more inclusive and conducive learning environment.

The findings show that the vision and mission of school was clearly communicated as supported by principals themselves (mean =3.61; S.D = 0.623), teachers (mean =3.59; S.D = 0.629), and students (mean =3.57; S.D = 0.639). This infers that well-communicated vision and mission statements serve as guiding principles that inspire and motivate teachers, students, and parents towards a common purpose. The findings are corroborated by Ayeni (2018), who found that when principals effectively communicate the school's vision and mission, stakeholders have a better understanding of common aims and values of the school.

Further, the findings reveal that instructional goals were communicated during school meetings as supported by principals themselves (mean =3.53; S.D = 0.642), teachers (mean =3.55; S.D = 0.635), and students (mean =3.56; S.D = 0.626). This means that principals who prioritized instructional goal communication fostered common knowledge among instructors about curriculum objectives, pedagogical practices, and assessment expectations. The shared vision promotes collaboration and coherence in instructional methods, resulting in higher teaching quality and student engagement. Waswa (2017) supports the findings, stating that principals who actively support and promote these instructional goals help to foster a culture of continual growth and professional development among teachers.

Additionally, the findings show that communication influenced person's perceptions and opinion as supported by principals themselves (mean =3.62; S.D = 0.628), teachers (mean

=3.63; S.D = 0.638, and students (mean =3.66; S.D = 0.638). This implies that clear and courteous communication contributes to a helpful and inclusive educational climate. Students, teachers, and administrators feel heard and respected, which improves their opinions of the school's culture and leadership. The findings are supported by findings of a study by Nyagosia and Njuguna (2013) who established that principals who encourage open and transparent communication foster a feeling of community and collaboration, improving overall perceptions and opinions inside the school. The findings go contrary with Baker, Miller and Santos (2018) who highlighted that structural factors within the school environment, including class size, availability of resources, and curriculum quality, play a more critical role in determining student academic outcomes than the communication practices of principals. Further, the study aimed to determine the frequency of meetings between the principals the teaching staff. The findings are presented in Figure 4.1

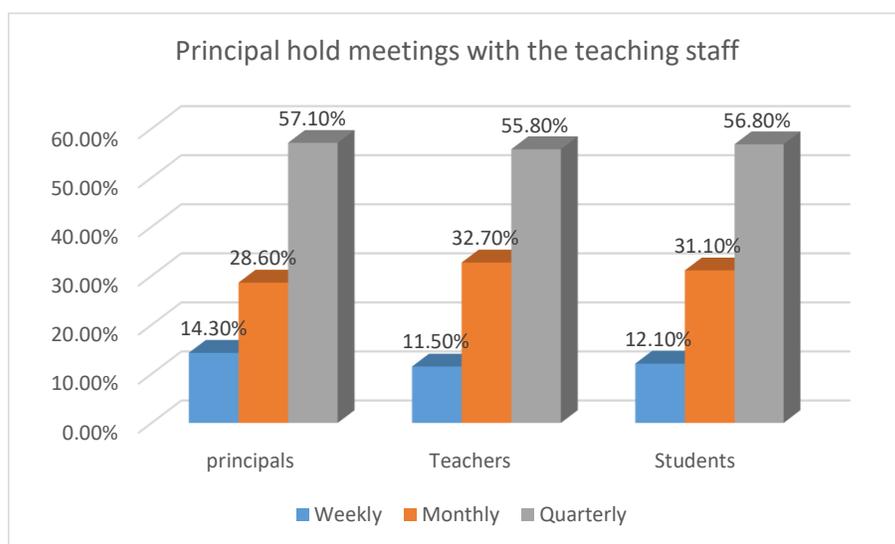


Figure 4.1 Extent of principals holding meetings with teaching staff
 Source: Field Data (2024)

The findings presented in Figure 4.1 show that majority of the respondents noted that principals held meetings with teaching staff quarterly. Principal-led meetings allow for effective communication of school goals, priorities, and expectations. Monthly and quarterly meetings offer a balance between regular communication and flexibility, allowing educators to focus on broader topics, strategic planning, and longer-term initiatives. They also accommodate busy schedules while ensuring that important matters are addressed on a recurring basis.

The research also looked for a relationship between principals' communication practices and students' academic performance. The 95% confidence range for Pearson's correlation coefficient was employed (Table 4.7).

Table 4.2 Correlation Between Principals' Communication Practices and Students' Academic Performance

		Principals' Communication Practices	Students' Academic Performance
Principals' communication practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.692
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.035
	N	272	272
Students' academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.692	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035	
	N	272	272

The results uncovered that there was a positive correlation ($r=0.692$) between principals' communication practices and students' academic performance. The results suggest that students' academic performance is influenced by principals' communication practices since the $p = 0.035 < 0.05$. This strong correlation indicates that effective communication by principals is closely associated with higher academic achievement among students.

Principals' Decision-Making Practices and Students' Academic Performance

The second objective of the study was to determine how the principals' decision-making practices influenced students' academic performance in public secondary schools. The respondents were requested to indicate their agreement level on statements regarding influence of principals' decision-making practices on students' academic performance using 5-likert scale as follows: SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, U-undecided, D-Disagree and SD-Strongly Disagree. The findings are presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.1 Respondents' Views on Principals' Decision-Making Practices

Principals	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std.Dev
Principal is open to helpful criticism.	3 (21.4%)	8 (57.1%)	2 (14.3%)	1 (7.1%)		3.71	0.674
Principal take on the delegated power.	4 (28.6%)	9 (64.3%)	1 (7.1%)			3.79	0.725
Teachers are given departmental response about their performance.	3 (21.4%)	9 (64.3%)	2 (14.3%)			3.75	0.713
There is an open discussion at meetings involving students, teachers and school principal.	4 (28.6%)	8 (57.1%)	2 (14.3%)			3.67	0.676
Principals welcome personal initiatives before making a decision	5 (35.7%)	5 (35.7%)	4 (28.6%)			3.69	0.679
Teachers							

Principal is open to helpful criticism.	14 (26.9%)	26 (50.0%)	10 (19.2%)	2 (3.8%)		3.68	0.667
Principal take on the delegated power.	22 (42.3%)	19 (36.5%)	7 (13.5%)	4 (7.7%)		3.76	0.673
Teachers are given departmental response about their performance.	19 (36.5%)	24 (46.2%)	6 (11.5%)	3 (5.8%)		3.74	0.684
There is an open discussion at meetings involving students, teachers and school principal.	20 (38.5%)	22 (42.3%)	7 (13.5%)	3 (5.8%)		3.71	0.692
Principals welcome personal initiatives before making a decision.	17 (32.7%)	26 (50.0%)	5 (9.6%)	4 (7.7%)		3.74	0.686
Students							
Principal is open to helpful criticism.	83 (40.3%)	91 (44.2%)	14 (6.8%)	11 (5.3%)	7 (3.4%)	3.73	0.671
Principal take on the delegated power.	81 (39.3%)	85 (41.3%)	19 (9.2%)	15 (7.3%)	6 (2.9%)	3.70	0.663
Teachers are given departmental response about their performance.	77 (37.4%)	92 (44.7%)	21 (10.2%)	12 (5.8%)	4 (1.9%)	3.68	0.656
There is an open discussion at meetings involving students, teachers and school principal.	78 (37.8%)	94 (45.6%)	14 (6.8%)	10 (4.9%)	10 (4.9%)	3.65	0.674
Principals welcome personal initiatives before making a decision.	82 (39.8)	93 (45.1%)	13 (6.3%)	14 (6.8%)	4 (1.9%)	3.66	0.675

Source: Field Data (2024)

The results displayed in Table 4.8 show responses based on influence of principals' decision-making practices on students' academic achievement. Large part of respondents agreed with the statement that principals were open to helpful criticism as indicated by principals themselves (mean =3.71; S.D = 0.674), teachers (mean =3.68; S.D = 0.667, and students (mean =3.73; S.D = 0.671). Principals who welcome feedback from teachers, students, and parents demonstrate a commitment to reflective practice and adaptive leadership, leading to enhanced school performance. The results are supported by the findings of a study by Wambua *et al.* (2017) who established that principals who are open to helpful criticism create an environment

conducive to continuous improvement and learning. Further, the findings contradict with findings of a study by Anderson and Miller (2017) who found that principals' decision-making practices, while essential for school management, did not have a direct measurable impact on students' academic performance. Also, research suggested that factors such as teacher quality, student socioeconomic background, and parental involvement had a more immediate and significant effect on academic outcomes than the decisions made by principals.

The findings uncovered that principal took on the delegated power as indicated by principals themselves (mean =3.79; S.D = 0.725), teachers (mean =3.76; S.D = 0.673, and students (mean =3.70; S.D = 0.663). Principals who are empowered with delegated authority demonstrate greater autonomy and effectiveness in leading their schools. The results concur with those of Waswa (2017) who established that principals who have delegated power are better positioned to make timely and informed decisions that align with the school's vision and goals. Delegation of power enables principals to exercise leadership responsibilities, allocate resources efficiently, and implement innovative strategies to improve educational outcomes.

The results show that teachers were given departmental response about their performance as supported by principals themselves (mean =3.75; S.D = 0.713), teachers (mean =3.74; S.D = 0.684, and students (mean =3.68; S.D = 0.656). This deduces that providing teachers with departmental feedback enhances their awareness of strengths and areas for improvement, leading to improved teaching practices and student outcomes. The findings are supported by Irungu *et al.* (2019), who revealed that constructive criticism from department leaders promotes a culture of ongoing growth among teachers. Teachers who receive detailed and actionable feedback on their performance are better positioned to reflect on their teaching practices, modify instructional tactics, and more effectively address student needs.

Also, the results reveal that there was an open discussion at meetings involving students, teachers and school principals as supported by principals themselves (mean =3.67; S.D = 0.676), teachers (mean =3.71; S.D = 0.692, and students (mean =3.65; S.D = 0.674). This implies that open discussions involving students, teachers, and principals contribute to a more democratic and inclusive school environment. The results are supported by the findings of a study by Armone (2019) who established that open discussion help in resolving issues and generate unique ideas for improving school policies and practices. Involving students and teachers in decision-making processes alongside the principal fosters transparency, trust, and mutual respect within the school community.

Further, the findings indicate that principals welcomed personal initiatives as indicated by principals themselves (mean =3.69; S.D = 0.679), teachers (mean =3.74; S.D = 0.686, and students (mean =3.66; S.D = 0.675). This deduces that principals who encourage personal initiatives empower teachers to take ownership of their professional development and contribute innovative ideas to improve teaching practices and student outcomes. The results are consistent with results of a research by Acquah (2017) who established that principals who welcome and support personal initiatives from teachers and staff create an environment conducive to professional growth and enhance school academic performance.

Further, the study sought to explore whether the students were involved decision making in the school. The findings are presented in Figure 4.2.

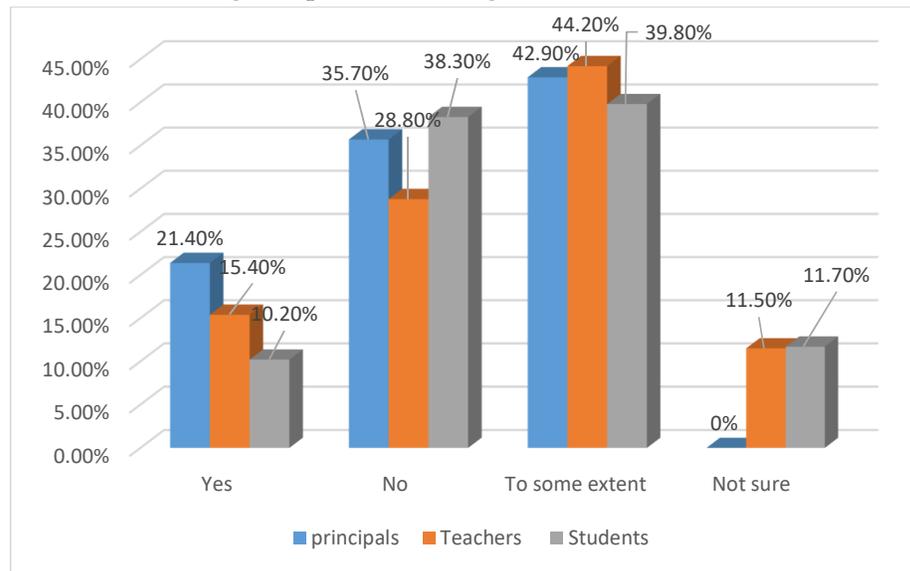


Figure 4.1 Involvement of Students in Decision in School
 Source: Field Data (2024)

According to the findings reported in Figure 4.2, students were to some extent involved in school decision-making. Student leaders may participate in meetings with school leaders, provide input on policies and initiatives, and advocate for student needs. This is supported by findings of a study by Eunice and Obama (2016) who established that inviting students to join committees or task forces focused on specific areas such as curriculum development, school events, or campus improvements gives them a direct role in shaping school policies and programs. Students contribute valuable perspectives and ideas based on their experiences. Further, Johnson, Green and Roberts (2019) established that the impact of principals' decisions varied significantly depending on the school's context, including its size, resources, and community support. In some settings, principals' decisions were crucial, while in others, they were less influential compared to other factors like community engagement and local policies. The research also explores the correlation between the principal's decision making and students' academic performance. Pearson's correlation coefficient was utilized with a 95% confidence interval (Table 4.9).

Table 4.2 Correlation Between Principal’s Decision-Making and Students’ Academic Performance

		Principal’s decision-making	Students’ academic performance
Principal’s decision-making	Pearson Correlation	1	.646
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.043
	N	272	272
Students’ academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.646	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.043	
	N	272	272

According to the findings, there was notable correlation between the principal’s decision-making and students’ academic performance, with a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.646. The results imply that the principal's decision-making influences students’ academic performance. The study found a significant relationship ($p=0.043<0.05$) between prompt principal’s decision-making and students’ academic performance. The results imply that principals who make strategic, informed decisions contribute positively to the academic environment, leading to better academic performance by students.

Regression Analysis

To explore the influence of influence of principals’ management practices on students’ academic performance in public secondary schools in Turkana County, Kenya, the following coefficient were generated and illustrated in Table 4.10

Table 4.30 Regression Coefficients

Multiple Regression Analysis						
Variables		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
		β	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)		3.348	0.028		1.421	.002
Principals’ practices	communication	0.362	0.0137	0.135	1.527	.003
Principals’ practices	decision-making	0.343	0.0141	0.142	1.386	.001

Source: Field Data (2024)

The researcher carried out a multiple regression analysis in order to determine the relationship between principals' management practices and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Turkana County, Kenya. As per the SPSS generated table, the equation ($Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \epsilon$) becomes:

$$Y = 3.348 + 0.362X_1 + 0.343X_2 + \epsilon$$

Y = Students' academic performance

X₁ = Principals' communication practices

X₂ = Principals' decision-making practices

The results displayed in Table 4.10 show that principals' management practices significantly students' academic performance as indicated by P- values which are less than 0.05 at 95% confidence interval. Effective communication, and decision-making practices are all integral to creating a supportive and high-achieving educational environment.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the study findings

The first objective of the study was to establish the influence of principals' communication practices on students' academic performance in public secondary schools. From the findings, it was established that effective communication by principals, characterized by clear articulation of academic goals, expectations, and feedback, positively correlates with student academic performance. Schools where principals prioritize transparent communication channels between teachers, students, and parents tend to exhibit higher levels of engagement and collaboration, ultimately contributing to improved academic outcomes.

The second objective of the study was to determine how the principals' decision-making practices influenced students' academic performance in public secondary schools. The study findings revealed that principals who employ evidence-based strategies and involve stakeholders in decision-making processes demonstrate a more responsive approach to addressing academic challenges. Schools with decentralized decision-making structures that empower teachers and distribute leadership responsibilities tend to adapt more effectively to changing educational needs, positively impacting student academic performance.

Conclusions of the Study

- i. Effective communication between principals, teachers, students, and parents is foundational to fostering a supportive and engaged school community. Principals who prioritize transparent and regular communication about academic goals, expectations, and feedback create an environment conducive to student success. Improved communication channels enhance collaboration and alignment among stakeholders, ultimately contributing to improved academic performance.

- ii. Principals' decision-making practices play a pivotal role in influencing school effectiveness and student outcomes. Principals who employ data-driven decision-making processes allocate resources strategically and implement evidence-based interventions tailored to address academic challenges. Decentralized decision-making structures that empower teachers and involve stakeholders in the decision-making process contribute to a more responsive and adaptive educational system that supports student achievement.

Recommendation of the Study

The following recommendations were made based on study findings:

- i. Principals should prioritize open and effective communication with teachers, students, and parents. Regularly sharing goals, expectations, and feedback fosters a supportive learning community. Principals should promote communication by organizing regular meetings, using digital platforms for updates, and actively listening to stakeholders' concerns in order to improve academic performance.
- ii. Principals should adopt evidence-based decision-making processes, considering input from teachers and students. Encouraging participatory decision-making enhances commitment and ownership among stakeholders. Principals should also cultivate a transparent decision-making culture, ensuring fairness and accountability in resource allocation and educational policies.

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