PRINCIPALS' MOTIVATION AND PROBLEM-SOLVING 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' motivation and problem-solving 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 the 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 findings revealed that principals who demonstrate motivating leadership by recognizing and applauding accomplishments, offering professional development opportunities, and cultivating a positive school culture help to boost teacher morale and dedication. A motivated teaching staff improves instructional quality and student engagement, resulting in improved academic achievement across all subjects. The findings also established that principals who actively identify and address academic issues through collaborative problem-solving initiatives create a more resilient and adaptive school environment. Effective problem-solving strategies foster innovation, resilience, and continuous improvement, which are essential for enhancing academic performance. The recommendations are as follows: i)

principals should inspire, motivate and empower teachers by recognizing achievements and providing professional development opportunities; and ii) principals should foster a collaborative problem-solving culture within the school environment.

Key terms: Principal's management, problem-solving practices, motivation practices, management practices, job satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Management practices play a critical role in determining the 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 on school management practices in Italy conducted by school principals 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. In Nigeria, research by Joseph et al. (2018) on factors that significantly influence secondary school students' academic achievement include effective disciplinary control, motivation, and

classroom management. It is also noted that the role of school administrators, such as principals, is critical in improving the performance of their respective schools (Ekundayo & Kolawole, 2013). According to (Ekundayo, 2013), school administrators are expected to see themselves as change agents because they have the authority to act as coordinators, planners, and problem solvers in education. At the same time, principals in Nigeria play a critical role in secondary education management. Due to their jobs, they are managers, and their managerial skills have an impact on their success or failure (Odumodi, 2011). The primary planning and regulating of all educational programs in schools, as well as controlling and subsequent coordination, were shown to be necessary for excellent outcomes and enhancement of teachers' job effectiveness, according to a study in Ondo State (Ayeni & Akinfolarin, 2014).

Principals' motivational strategies serve as guiding concepts that help staff members maintain focus and achieve success in spite of obstacles they may face at work. They direct employees' actions and conduct in the direction of achieving predetermined goals (Baumeister & Voh, 2014). Institutional motivational strategies, according to Fuhrmann (2016), promote favorable views about the workplace that lead to job satisfaction. By altering the nature of the work, these methods encourage people to grow in their abilities and talents in order to reach their full potential. For instance, giving someone new responsibilities at work and giving them the chance to advance their education can result in better performance.

Finding rational solutions to a variety of problem circumstances requires critical thinking, which involves comprehending the concept of the issue by looking into its root causes and looking for potential solutions (KIE, 2018). According to Mayer and Wittrock (2019), problem solving is crucial in education stems from teachers' desire to help learners become better problem solvers. According to Mayer and Wittrock (2019), instructors are motivated to help learners become better problem solvers, hence problem solving is vital to education. Effective problem solvers consequently tend to perform better academically because they employ more issue-directed coping tactics, have less illogical thinking, and have higher confidence in their abilities to make decisions.

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' motivation and problem-solving practices affect students' academic performance,

specifically whether they perform better or worse 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 techniques, such as motivation and problem-solving practices, which are essential for supporting effective teaching influence students' academic performance. In addition, none of these few researches have examined the connection between principals' motivation and problem-solving 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 motivation and problem-solving 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 how the principals' motivation practices influence students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Turkana County.

ii. To find out the influence of principals' problem-solving practices on 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
Relationship between the Principals' Motivation Practices and Students' Academic Performance
Most of the time secondary school principals employ motivation to energize staff and pupils throughout the teaching and learning process, outcome fosters high standards and positive results (Seead & Rizwani, 2012). Rules, reforms, and laws that set standards for schools are just a few examples of the many various ways that motivational tactics can be implemented. When used effectively, motivational tactics can improve staff and student performance and productivity in schools (Apolline, 2015). Because they don't feel pressured to go above and above but instead act from the heart without further oversight, motivated workers and students produce effective work. School administrators can employ motivational language as a reliable measure of staff and student success (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2010).

In Pakistan, Chaudhry et al. (2020) assessed how well primary school teachers in Lahore learned as a result of their administrators' motivational strategies. The study's participants were all primary school teachers employed by 60 government schools in the Sheikhupura area. Using the cluster random selection technique, 627 elementary school teachers were chosen for the sample. 48 items from the eight most significant motivational approaches were included in a conventional research tool in the form of a questionnaire. Significant variations between variables like appreciation, recognition, performance reviews, benefits and monetary awards,

and promotions were found after statistical analysis of the data. The study's used cluster sampling, however, highlights a methodological flaw. To close the gap, the existing research employed stratified sampling.

In Cameroon, Acheck (2015) research on motivating tactics utilized by principals overseeing education in the Fako Division. The research utilized descriptive research design. Principals and teachers were surveyed in order to collect data. Tables and histograms were utilized to display the data after it had been examined using means and standard deviation. The results showed that: good leadership characteristics/behaviors; transformational leadership style; and sympathetic, supporting, caring, and just on academic and disciplinary concerns are among principals' motivational techniques. The findings demonstrate the significance of motivation in the teaching-studying act and the way it influences both. The study under consideration looked at the motivational tactics employed by school administrators in Cameroon. The existing research will investigate how the principals' motivation practices and others variables (decision-making, problem solving and communication practices) influence learners' academic performance in public secondary schools in Turkana Central Sub-County.

Musyoki et al. (2020) did research in Kenya on the impact of principals' inspirational motivation on learners'??? accomplish at the KCSE. 42 public secondary schools in the Sub-county were the subject of the survey. Using a straightforward random technique where selections are made only by chance, a sample of 38 schools was chosen at random. It was a descriptive study design employed in the study. Information was gathered through focus groups, questionnaires, interviewing protocols, and document analysis, among other methods. Data analysis employed both descriptive and inferential statistics. Percentages, frequencies, averages, variances, and standard deviations are computed and presented in tables in descriptive statistics. To ascertain whether there are connections between inspiring motivation and academic success, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was evaluated at alpha levels of 0.05 or 0.01. The t-test was also employed to ascertain whether the demographic characteristics of principals affect their usage of inspiring motivational leadership. The results show that pupils' performance in KCSE exams is positively and significantly impacted by inspiring motivation. However, the respondents were chosen using a simple random technique, resulting to a methodological gap. The existing research employed stratified sampling to fill in study gap.

Baras (2015) investigated the effectiveness of key motivational methods in raising learners' academic performance in middle schools in Trans-Nzoia West district. A case study design was employed for this research. The Kreijcie and Morgan table was utilized to explore the sample size for each stratum, representing each stratum in the sampling process. Teachers and administrators at day secondary schools in the Trans-Nzoia west district were given structured questionnaires. The quantitative data that was gathered to determine the tables, recurrence, and rates was investigated using quantifiable methodologies. The outcomes of the research reveals that most teachers are not motivated to do their jobs, which is why these schools score poorly. There were little job growth opportunities, training and development opportunities, incentives, and recognition programs in the schools. However, this was a case study of the Transnzoia

West District and a case study design was used thus presenting both contextual and methodological gap. Turkana Central Sub County was the study's current context, and a descriptive research design was employed.

Relationship between the 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 County.

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**

Problem solving practices

- Monitoring
- Pattern setting
- Dialogue
- Controlling
- Considering the salient

Students' academic performance

- Good performance
- Poor performance

Motivation Practices

- Recognize great work
- Encourage teamwork
- Rewarding efforts
- Providing feedback

Intervening Variable

- Government policies
- Community
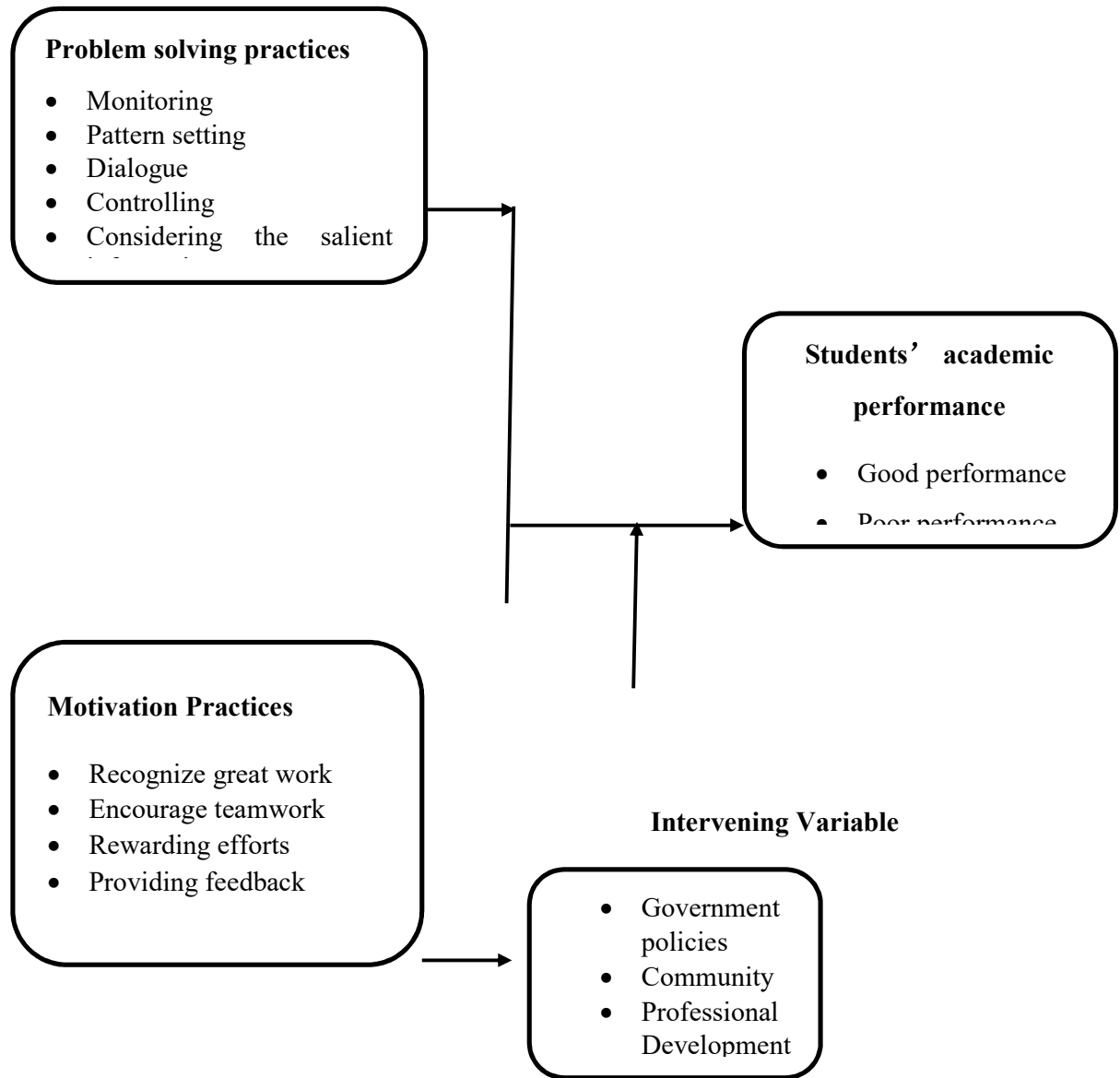- Professional Development

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 4.2 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 4.3 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 4.4 Distribution of Principals and Teachers by Academic Qualification

	Principals		Teachers	
Qualifications	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 4.5 Distribution of Respondents by Teaching Experience

	Principals		Teachers	
No. of years	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' Motivation Practices and Students' Academic Performance

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

Table 4.6 Respondents' Views on Principals' Motivation Practices

Principals	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**	**Mean**	**Std.Dev**
Principal rewards teachers effectively by recommending them for promotion	4 (28.6%)	7 (50.0%)	3 (21.4%)			3.69	0.692
Principal encourages teachers to further their education	5 (35.7%)	8 (57.1%)	1 (7.1%)			3.72	0.719
Principal regular recognition of exemplary performance impacts teachers positively	4 (28.6%)	10 (71.4%)				3.76	0.729

Students are mentored by acquiring professional mentors	3 (21.4%)	9 (64.3%)	2 (14.3%)			3.59	0.695
Teachers concerns are listened to and addressed.	6 (42.8%)	4 (28.6%)	4 (28.6%)			3.67	0.682

Teachers

Principal rewards teachers effectively by recommending them for promotion	15 (28.8%)	24 (46.2%)	9 (17.3%)	4 (7.7%)		3.63	0.675
Principal encourages teachers to further their education	20 (38.5%)	26 (50.0%)	3 (5.8%)	3 (5.8%)		3.68	0.679
Principal regular recognition of exemplary performance impacts teachers positively	18 (34.6%)	29 (55.6%)	4 (7.7%)	1 (1.9%)		3.79	0.671
Students are mentored by acquiring professional mentors	17 (32.7%)	28 (53.8%)	5 (9.6%)	2 (3.8%)		3.75	0.686
Teachers concerns are listened to and addressed.	15 (28.8%)	29 (55.7%)	6 (11.5%)	2 (3.8%)		3.73	0.693

Students

Principal rewards teachers effectively by recommending them for promotion	86 (41.7%)	95 (46.1%)	12 (5.8%)	9 (4.4%)	4 (1.9%)	3.65	0.687
Principal encourages teachers to further their education	80 (38.8%)	89 (43.2%)	16 (7.7%)	13 (6.3%)	8 (3.9%)	3.62	0.684
Principal regular recognition of exemplary performance impacted teachers positively	72 (35.0%)	93 (45.1%)	22 (10.8%)	9 (4.4%)	10 (4.8%)	3.64	0.674
Students are mentored by acquiring professional mentors	75 (36.4%)	97 (47.1%)	15 (7.3%)	13 (6.3%)	6 (2.9%)	3.67	0.672

Teachers concerns are listened to and addressed.	79 (38.3%)	91 (44.2%)	18 (8.7%)	12 (5.8%)	6 (2.9%)	3.73	0.697

Source: Field Data (2024)

The results displayed in Table 4.6 show responses on influence of principals' motivation practices on students' academic achievement. Majority of participants agreed with the statement that principals rewarded teachers effectively by recommending them for promotion as supported by principals themselves (mean =3.69; S.D = 0.692), teachers (mean =3.63; S.D = 0.675, and students (mean = 3.65; S.D = 0.687). This implies that principals who advocate for teachers' promotion based on merit contribute to teacher motivation, retention, and overall school improvement. These findings align with those of Apolline (2015) who established that principals who support fair and open promotion processes develop a motivated and devoted teaching staff, which improves overall school effectiveness and reputation. The findings contradict with the findings of a study by Smith, Wang and Brown (2020) who emphasized that aspects such as curriculum quality, resource allocation, and class size had a more significant impact on academic outcomes than the motivational strategies employed by principals.

The findings also show that principals encouraged teachers to further their education as supported by principals themselves (mean =3.72; S.D = 0.719), teachers (mean =3.68; S.D = 0.679, and students (mean =3.62; S.D = 0.684). This infers that principals who prioritize and facilitate teachers' furthering of their education create opportunities for continuous learning and growth. The results are supported by Seead and Rizwani (2012) who revealed that teachers who feel supported in their educational pursuits are more likely to be engaged, enthusiastic, and effective in the classroom, ultimately benefiting student learning outcomes.

Further, the findings reveal that principal regular recognition of exemplary performance impacted teachers positively as supported by principals themselves (mean =3.76; S.D = 0.729), teachers (mean =3.79; S.D = 0.671, and students (mean =3.64; S.D = 0.674). The findings infer that principals who regularly recognize and appreciate teachers' efforts create a supportive and positive school climate. The findings are in agreement with those of Cunningham (2017) who established that principals who understand and appreciate the unique strengths and efforts of individual teachers contribute to a more engaged and committed teaching staff, leading to improved instructional quality and student outcomes.

Moreover, the results reveal that students were mentored by acquiring professional mentors as indicated by principals themselves (mean =3.59; S.D = 0.695), teachers (mean =3.75; S.D = 0.686, and students (mean =3.67; S.D = 0.672). Professional mentors offer unique insights and guidance, potentially enhancing students' academic performance and personal growth. The findings agree with findings of a study by Acheck (2015) who established that students who participate in mentorship programs with qualified professionals show improvements in academic performance, motivation, and career aspirations.

Additionally, the findings indicate that teachers' concerns were listened to and addressed as indicated by principals (mean =3.67; S.D = 0.682), teachers (mean =3.73; S.D = 0.693, and students (mean =3.73; S.D = 0.697). This implies that when teachers' concerns are actively listened to and effectively addressed by school administrators, it leads to improved job satisfaction and overall school effectiveness. The findings concur with findings of a study by Musyoki et al. (2020) who established that by listening attentively and taking proactive steps to resolve issues, principals contribute to a harmonious work environment and enhance teachers' motivation and performance. Further, the findings are aligned to those of Brown and Garcia (2021) who established that when teachers are empowered to make instructional decisions and provided with opportunities for growth, it positively impacts student learning outcomes.

Further, the study looked for a relationship between principal's motivation practices and students' academic performance. The 95% confidence interval for Pearson's correlation coefficient was utilized (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7 Correlation Between Principal's Motivation Practices and Students' Academic Performance

		Principal's motivation practices	Students' academic performance
Principal's motivation practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.723
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.032
	N	272	272
Students' academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.723	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032	
	N	272	272

From the findings, there was a positive association between principal's motivation practices and students' academic performance (r=0.723). The results imply that principal's motivation practices influenced the students' academic performance. Notably, there was a significant correlational between principal's motivation practices and students' academic performance since p=0.03<0.05. The findings infer that the ways in which principals motivate their staff and students have a considerable impact on academic outcomes.

Principals' Problem-Solving Practices and Students' Academic Performance

The third objective of the study was to find out the influence of principals' problem-solving practices on students' academic performance in public secondary schools. The respondents were requested to indicate their agreement level on statements regarding the influence of principals' problem-solving 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 were presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Respondents' Views on Principals' Problem-Solving Practices

Principals	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std.Dev
Principals who effectively solve problems contribute positively to the overall academic environment, leading to enhanced student achievement.	11 (78.6%)	3 (21.4%)				3.97	0.687
Principal conduct dialogue to solve any discipline issues among students	4 (28.6%)	9 (64.3%)	1 (7.1%)			3.68	0.691
Collaborative problem-solving between principals and teachers enhances student academic achievement.	5 (35.7%)	9 (64.3%)				3.73	0.672
Challenges faced by principals in problem-solving directly impact student academic performance.	6 (42.9%)	8 (57.1%)				3.65	0.686
Principal identifies the challenges facing school and their solutions to enhance smooth learning.	7 (50.0%)	7 (50.0%)				3.61	0.693
Teachers							
Principals who effectively solve problems contribute positively to the overall academic environment, leading to enhanced student achievement.	16 (30.8%)	30 (57.7%)	3 (5.8%)	3 (5.8%)		3.67	0.655
Principal conduct dialogue to solve any discipline issues among students	18 (34.6%)	29 (55.8%)	3 (5.8%)	3 (5.8%)		3.86	0.693
Collaborative problem-solving between principals and teachers enhances student academic achievement.	18 (34.6%)	29 (55.8%)	5 (9.6%)			3.94	0.698
Challenges faced by principals in problem-solving directly impact student academic performance.	23 (44.2%)	22 (42.3%)	3 (5.8%)	4 (7.7%)		3.62	0.684
Principal identifies the challenges facing school	19 (36.5%)	26 (50.0%)	5 (9.6%)	2 (3.8%)		3.78	0.670

and their solutions to enhance smooth learning.							
Students							
Principals who effectively solve problems contribute positively to the overall academic environment, leading to enhanced student achievement.	85 (41.3%)	92 (44.7%)	14 (6.8%)	9 (4.4%)	6 (4.4%)	3.59	0.675
Principal conduct dialogue to solve any discipline issues among students	83 (40.3%)	91 (44.2%)	15 (7.3%)	12 (5.8%)	5 (2.4%)	3.55	0.671
Collaborative problem-solving between principals and teachers enhances student academic achievement.	76 (36.9%)	94 (45.6%)	17 (8.3%)	13 (6.3%)	6 (2.9%)	3.52	0.663
Challenges faced by principals in problem-solving directly impact student academic performance.	79 (38.3%)	95 (46.1%)	16 (7.8%)	12 (5.8%)	4 (1.9%)	3.61	0.648
Principal identifies the challenges facing school and their solutions to enhance smooth learning.	80 (38.8%)	93 (45.1%)	15 (7.3%)	14 (6.8%)	4 (1.9%)	3.67	0.656

Source: Field Data (2024)

The results depicted in Table 4.7 show the responses on how principals' problem-solving practices influence students' academic achievement. Large part of respondents agreed with the statement that principals who effectively solve problems contribute positively to the overall academic environment, leading to enhanced student achievement (mean =3.97; S.D = 0.687), teachers (mean =3.67; S.D = 0.655, and students (mean =3.59; S.D = 0.675). The findings show that principals who actively support and participate in staff development activities contribute to a culture of continuous learning and improvement. The results are supported by the results of a study by Perveen (2016) who established that principals who actively engage in staff development activities create opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and skill enhancement among educators, ultimately leading to improved instructional quality and school performance. The findings contradict with findings of a study by Nelson and Greene (2018) who established that while effective problem-solving by principals contributed to a smoother school operation, it did not have a direct measurable effect on student academic outcomes. Instead, other factors such as classroom instruction quality and student socio-economic status were found to have a more significant direct impact.

The research findings also reveal that principals conducted dialogue to solve any discipline issues among students as indicated by principals themselves (mean =3.68; S.D = 0.691), teachers (mean =3.86; S.D = 0.693, and students (mean =3.55; S.D = 0.671). Dialogic

interactions between principals and students promote mutual understanding, empathy, and accountability. The results are supported by research done by Aidoo (2020) who established that principals who prioritize dialogue and relationship-building with students create opportunities for early intervention and conflict prevention, leading to a more harmonious and respectful school environment.

In addition, the results show that collaborative problem-solving between principals and teachers enhances student academic achievement as supported by principals themselves (mean =3.73; S.D = 0.672), teachers (mean =3.94; S.D = 0.698, and students (mean =3.52; S.D = 0.663). This infers that collaborative problem-solving encourages instructors to take ownership and invest in their students' educational outcomes. The findings are corroborated by Ali and Zaid (2015) who established that teachers feel empowered to submit ideas and participate in decision-making processes alongside their administrators. This active participation creates a more dynamic and responsive learning environment in which students receive individualized support and instruction.

Also, the results reveal that challenges faced by principals in problem-solving directly impact student academic performance as indicated by principal (mean =3.65; S.D = 0.686), teachers (mean =3.62; S.D = 0.684, and students (mean =3.61; S.D = 0.648). This infer that principals are facing challenges each day towards improving student achievement. Principals are the decision-makers of the school, so they have some major responsibilities. The findings concur with those of Ayeni and Akinfolarin (2014) who established that principals must work collaboratively with community stakeholders and leverage community resources to address these challenges effectively.

Furthermore, the findings show that principals identified the challenges facing school and their solutions to enhance smooth learning as supported by principals themselves (mean =3.61; S.D = 0.693), teachers (mean =3.78; S.D = 0.670, and students (mean =3.67; S.D = 0.656). Principals play a crucial role in diagnosing issues such as resource constraints, student behaviour issues, or curriculum gaps that hinder smooth learning. The results concur with the findings of a study by Akareem and Hossain (2016) who established that principals who proactively identify and handle difficulties help to improve school management and academic achievement.

The study also looked for a relationship between principals' problem-solving practices and students' academic performance. The 95% confidence interval for Pearson's correlation coefficient was utilized (Table 4.8).

Table 4.8 Correlation between Principals' Problem-Solving Practices and Students' Academic Performance

		Principals' problem-solving practices	Students' academic performance
Principals' problem-solving practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.629
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.044
	N	272	272
Students' academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.629	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.044	
	N	272	272

The findings show that there is a positive correlational between principals' problem-solving practices and students' academic performance (r=0.629). The results infer that students' academic performance is influenced by principals' problem-solving practices. The statistical significance of this relationship is further supported by a p-value of 0.044, which is below the threshold of 0.05. The strength of this correlation suggests that effective problem-solving by principals plays a crucial role in fostering an environment conducive to academic success.

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 4.8

Table 4.8 Regression Coefficients

Multiple Regression Analysis

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.348	0.028		1.421	.002
Principals' motivation practices	0.347	0.0123	0.137	1.362	.004
Principals' problem-solving practices	0.318	0.0134	0.153	1.317	.003

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 $(Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon)$ becomes:

$Y = 3.348 + 0.318 X_1 + 0.347 X_2 + \epsilon$

Y = Students' academic performance

X_1 = Principals' motivation practices

X_2 = Principals' problem-solving practices

The results displayed in Table 4.8 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 motivation and problem-solving 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 how the principals' motivation practices influenced students' academic performance in public secondary schools. The findings revealed that principals who demonstrate motivating leadership by recognizing and applauding accomplishments, offering professional development opportunities, and cultivating a positive school culture help to boost teacher morale and dedication. A motivated teaching staff leads to greater instructional quality and higher student engagement, which ultimately improves academic performance across all subjects and grades.

The second objective of the study was to find out the influence of principals' problem-solving practices on students' academic performance in public secondary schools. The findings established that principals who actively identify and address academic issues through collaborative problem-solving initiatives create a more resilient and adaptive school environment. Effective problem-solving strategies, such as targeted interventions and continuous improvement efforts, contribute to narrowing achievement gaps and improving overall student performance in public secondary schools.

Conclusions of the Study
i.   Principals' motivation practices are significant in fostering a positive school culture and improving student outcomes. Principals who provide inspirational leadership, recognize and celebrate achievements, and invest in professional development opportunities for teachers cultivate a motivated and dedicated faculty. A motivated teaching staff translates to improved instructional quality, increased student engagement, and ultimately higher academic achievement among students.

ii. Principals who proactively identify and analyze academic issues, engage stakeholders in collaborative problem-solving, and implement targeted interventions contribute to a positive and resilient school climate. Effective problem-solving strategies foster innovation, resilience, and continuous improvement, which are essential for enhancing academic performance.

Recommendation of the Study
The following recommendations were made based on study findings:

i.   Principals should inspire and empower teachers by recognizing achievements and providing professional development opportunities. Creating a positive work environment through motivational leadership improves job satisfaction and commitment, ultimately benefiting student learning outcomes.

ii. Principals should foster a collaborative problem-solving culture within the school environment. Encouraging open communication and teamwork among teachers, staff, students, and parents can lead to innovative solutions to academic challenges. Principals

should facilitate regular meetings and workshops that promote brainstorming and idea-sharing, empowering stakeholders to contribute to problem-solving efforts.

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