

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND THE PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LARI SUB- COUNTY, KIAMBU COUNTY- KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The study aimed to investigate the influence of strategic leadership on the performance of public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county, Kiambu County.

Methodology: Grounded in contingency theory, the study employed a descriptive survey design. The target population consisted of 420 individuals, including principals, deputies, Heads of Departments, and Deans from 42 public schools. A sample size of 81 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using self-administered questionnaires, and the reliability of the instruments was measured using the Cronbach alpha method. Data analysis included both qualitative and quantitative approaches, with SPSS used for statistical analysis.

Results: The findings revealed that strategic leadership significantly influences the performance of public secondary schools, with a positive and statistically significant impact ($\beta = 0.401$, $p = 0.003$). The study highlighted that schools with effective strategic leadership demonstrate better performance outcomes.

Conclusion: The study concludes that strategic leadership is a critical factor in enhancing the performance of public secondary schools. The study recommends prioritizing leadership development, ensuring effective strategic direction, and continuously improving leadership skills to foster better school performance.

Keywords: *Strategic Leadership, School Performance, Public Secondary Schools, Strategic Management, Leadership Development, Stakeholder Theory, Resource-Based Theory, Contingency Theory*

INTRODUCTION

Strategic leadership involves a leader's ability to establish a vision and align the institution's resources and people toward achieving it (Mulyono et al., 2020). In public secondary schools, strategic leadership is integral to performance, ensuring that schools set clear objectives, efficiently allocate resources, and engage stakeholders in the decision-making process. Leaders in these institutions must foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation to cope with external pressures such as increased enrollment, limited resources, and heightened performance expectations. In this context, strategic management practices—planning, technology adoption, financial management, and leadership—are essential for driving performance improvements (Gabow, 2019).

The adoption of strategic leadership practices in education has been significantly correlated with improved performance. Yobhebhe et al. (2024) highlighted that organizations utilizing strategic management achieve better overall outcomes, reinforcing the idea that leadership is essential in guiding institutions toward achieving their goals. This is further supported by Gabow's (2019) findings in a study of commercial banks in Nairobi, where strategic management practices, particularly leadership, had a positive impact on performance. In the context of public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county, strategic leadership is expected to address academic performance issues by providing clear direction, improving resource management, and enhancing stakeholder involvement.

A global perspective on education underscores the importance of leadership in driving performance. For instance, countries like Uruguay and South Korea have successfully integrated strategic initiatives that provide students with digital tools, enhancing learning outcomes. These examples illustrate how strategic leadership can foster innovation and improve performance through the effective use of technology and stakeholder collaboration. Similarly, public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county can benefit from strategic leadership that promotes the adoption of new technologies and better resource allocation to address performance challenges.

Regionally, sub-Saharan Africa faces significant performance challenges in its public education systems due to inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and high student enrollments. Olanipekun et al. (2015) argued that strategic management, especially leadership, allows institutions to respond proactively to these challenges, enhancing performance and sustainability. However, Schlebusch and Mokhatle (2016) found that the

implementation of strategic plans in rural schools in South Africa is often incomplete, leading to suboptimal outcomes. This finding underscores the need for strategic leadership that not only develops plans but also ensures their successful implementation.

In Kenya, despite efforts by the government to improve public secondary schools through initiatives like performance contracts and the National Government Constituency Development Fund (NGCDF), many schools continue to struggle with low performance. Strategic leadership is crucial in turning these schools around by setting clear goals, aligning resources with institutional needs, and fostering a collaborative environment where all stakeholders work toward a common vision (Gure et al., 2018).

The performance of public secondary schools is evaluated based on multiple indicators, including academic achievement, infrastructure development, and stakeholder satisfaction (Ministry of Education, 2020). As Kennedy (2020) notes, effective performance management is a combination of efficiency—using resources optimally—and effectiveness—achieving the right objectives. In this context, strategic leadership is critical to ensuring that schools in Lari Sub-county can improve their performance across these dimensions. Leaders must anticipate future challenges, set realistic goals, and engage their teams in executing strategic plans that are aligned with both school and community needs.

Strategic leadership also involves anticipating and responding to environmental changes, which is crucial for the long-term success of educational institutions. According to Samimi et al., (2022), leaders who adopt strategic leadership are better equipped to guide their institutions through periods of change by setting clear directions and ensuring that all aspects of the organization align with its vision. In the case of public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county, strategic leadership is critical in addressing performance challenges related to resource management, technology integration, and academic outcomes. Schools that embrace this form of leadership are more likely to experience improvements in both academic performance and overall institutional effectiveness.

The history of public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county reflects broader national challenges within Kenya's education sector. Despite financial support from the government through programs like the National Government Constituency Development Fund (NGCDF) and initiatives aimed at improving academic performance, many schools in the sub-county continue to face significant difficulties. The Lari Sub-county strategic plan (2019-2023) underscores the importance of adopting strategic leadership to enhance

performance, particularly by implementing strategic plans that align with the broader goals of the county's education system. School principals play a crucial role in this process, ensuring that schools are well-managed and that resources are effectively allocated to meet performance targets.

In conclusion, strategic leadership is a key driver of performance in public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county. Effective leaders set clear goals, manage resources efficiently, and involve stakeholders in the strategic planning and execution processes. Schools that adopt strategic leadership practices are better equipped to meet the challenges of an ever-changing educational environment and improve their academic outcomes. Strategic management, including leadership, technology integration, and financial planning, is essential for improving the performance of public secondary schools, ensuring that they can meet the demands of both students and the broader community.

Statement of the Problem

The transition rate from primary to secondary school, as reported in Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005, was 47%. The government's objective was to achieve a 70% transition rate from basic to secondary education by 2008. According to the National Education Management Information System (NEMIS) in 2020, the student population increased from 3.263 million in 2019 to 3.569 million in 2020, with 95.3% of these students enrolling at the secondary level Ministry of Education (2020).

However, the Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005 noted that this increase in student numbers has placed significant strain on teaching resources in these institutions, affecting performance in some schools. Increased enrollment necessitates more infrastructure and qualified, skilled manpower. The growth and performance of educational institutions are highly dependent on the measures implemented by their administration. For example, while some schools perform better, others within the same environment continue to underperform. Schools that excel often do so by attracting students based on their academic success. Public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county operate under varying conditions, including differences in administrative capacity, physical environments, resource availability, and funding.

In Lari Sub-county, some schools struggle to create an enabling environment that fosters institutional growth and survival in challenging circumstances. On the other hand, some schools, despite their potential, continue to perform below expectations, struggling to gain

a competitive edge. Factors contributing to poor performance in public institutions include inadequate space, poor leadership, poor financial management, inadequate technology infrastructure, insufficient manpower, and a lack of learning materials (Frederiksen, 2018). These challenges hinder the overall performance of public secondary institutions. Poor performance, in turn, affects enrollment rates, places additional financial burdens on parents, erodes trust between institutions and stakeholders, and increases the risk of institutional collapse, leading to a rise in unskilled personnel.

All these challenges are contributed by lack of proper planning systems of management hence, influencing the institution performance negatively. Better planning systems provides motivations and customer satisfaction therefore its responsibilities of the school heads to manage and plan well the available resources. Despite that resources play a key role in academic performance other factors such as school management, accountability and student determination also has an impact. Previous studies by Kandie (2019) explored strategic management practices but did not fully address their impact on performance in public secondary schools. This study aims to fill that gap by examining the relationship between strategic management practices and performance in Kenyan public secondary schools, offering practical recommendations for improvement.

Objective of the Study

To assess the influence of strategic leadership on the performance of public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county, Kiambu County- Kenya.

Research Questions

What is the effect of strategic leadership on the performance of public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county, Kiambu County- Kenya?

Theoretical Review

The Contingency Theory, developed by Fred Fiedler in 1958, emphasizes that there is no universally optimal leadership style; rather, the effectiveness of a leader depends on how well their leadership approach fits with the specific internal and external circumstances of an organization. This idea is highly relevant to strategic management, where leaders must adapt their strategies to suit different organizational environments. For schools, particularly public secondary institutions, this theory suggests that leadership effectiveness hinges on how well principals and administrators align their style and actions with the unique challenges their institutions face, such as resource constraints, staff dynamics, and

external pressures. As Fiedler (1964) and later researchers (Gupta, 2009) highlighted, effective strategic leaders assess the situation and tailor their decisions to maximize performance.

In strategic management, the theory's predictive nature allows school leaders to evaluate the circumstances they operate in and apply the most suitable leadership style. This adaptability is crucial for public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county, where external factors like limited resources and changing educational policies demand flexible and responsive leadership. For instance, in environments where resources are constrained, contingency theory suggests a more centralized approach to decision-making to ensure efficient resource allocation and goal alignment. According to Daft (2015), this theory underscores the importance of aligning technological infrastructure and strategic goals, particularly when schools face diverse operational challenges.

Moreover, the application of contingency theory in strategic management encourages schools to be agile, fostering a culture of innovation and flexibility. Effective school leaders must continuously adjust their strategies to respond to emerging challenges, enhancing communication, team productivity, and resource management. Robbins & Judge (2018) emphasize that such strategic leadership not only improves organizational performance but also strengthens the institution's ability to innovate and manage conflict. In schools, this means that headteachers should be adept at shifting their leadership style as per the needs of their staff and students, ensuring that they can navigate changing educational environments successfully.

Finally, the study of contingency theory in the context of strategic management will provide valuable insights for public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county. By offering a framework for assessing leadership effectiveness based on situational factors, this theory will assist principals in refining their management policies and practices. As noted by Tsolka (2020), applying this theory will guide school leaders in selecting the best strategies for improving school performance, particularly in environments characterized by uncertainty and rapid change. Consequently, contingency theory supports the core objective of strategic management by ensuring that leadership decisions are not one-size-fits-all but tailored to achieve the highest performance levels based on situational demands.

Empirical Review

Empirical research has consistently shown that strategic management practices significantly influence organizational performance in various contexts. For instance, Musee (2018) examined the relationship between strategic management practices and performance in public universities, focusing on Multimedia University of Kenya. His findings revealed a positive and significant correlation between these practices and institutional performance. Specifically, the study highlighted the central role that management plays in offering the right strategic direction to achieve organizational goals. This underscores the importance of leadership in navigating challenges and aligning strategies with institutional objectives, a theme that will be central in analyzing the performance of public secondary schools in this study.

Similarly, Varelas, Marjanovic, and Orville (2023) explored the role of strategic leadership in strategy implementation within insurance firms in Des Moines, USA. Their study, although focused on the corporate sector, stressed that organizations investing in cultivating strategic leadership are more likely to execute strategies effectively and achieve their goals. The capacity to implement strategy, according to the authors, hinges on leadership skills, which must be developed and reinforced throughout the organization. While this study was based on companies, the present research will adapt its insights by focusing on the leadership skills needed to enhance the performance of public secondary schools, such as strategic decision-making, resource management, and fostering collaboration.

Expanding on the link between leadership and performance, Novitasari et al. (2021) compared the impact of strategic leadership and organizational culture on business performance in Indonesia. Their research indicated that strategic leaders have the ability to motivate employees, leading to improved organizational performance. This study will draw from these findings to explore how heads of institutions in public secondary schools can assume roles that go beyond traditional leadership, incorporating creativity, problem-solving, and effective communication to drive performance. Leadership traits, as emphasized by Samimi et al., (2022), should align with organizational culture and situational demands. Effective leadership, particularly in education, ensures that goals are communicated clearly, resources are utilized efficiently, and strategic plans are implemented successfully, all of which are critical for institutional success.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework demonstrates the relations between independent variables and dependent variables of strategic leadership which influence the performance. The variables are presented diagrammatically.

Independent Variables

Dependent

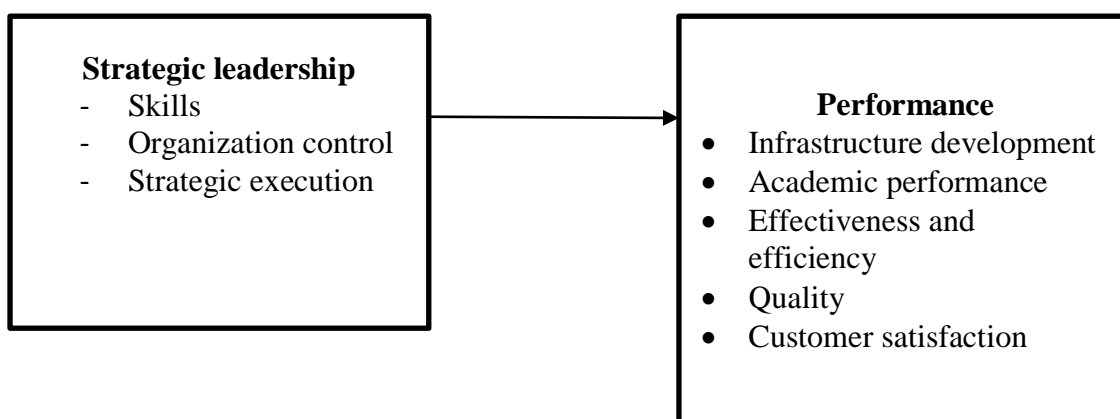


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive survey design to investigate the first objective, which examines the influence of strategic leadership on the performance of public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county, Kiambu County. The target population consisted of 420 participants, including principals, deputy principals, heads of departments, and deans, who are directly involved in the day-to-day management and strategic decision-making in schools. A sample of 81 participants was selected using stratified random sampling, ensuring representation from both top and middle management. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires, which were designed to assess the respondents' views on the role of strategic leadership in enhancing school performance. The validity of the instrument was confirmed through content and construct validity tests, and reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between strategic leadership and school performance.

Ethical considerations such as confidentiality and honesty were prioritized throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the results of the study. It contains descriptive and inferential analyses.

Descriptive Statistics

The participants were asked to provide their responses on the various aspects of strategic leadership in various institutions. The responses are presented in Table 1

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Strategic Leadership

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev
Leaders develop a clear vision for improving student achievement	0.00%	0.00%	6.50%	72.70%	20.80%	4.14	0.51
Leaders provides a clear guideline in managing human capital	0.00%	0.00%	5.20%	36.40%	58.40%	4.53	0.60
The leaders play an important role on organization control and especially on budgetary matters	0.00%	0.00%	5.20%	57.10%	37.70%	4.32	0.57
Leaders skills are matched with their responsibilities	0.00%	0.00%	6.50%	62.30%	31.20%	4.25	0.57
Average						4.31	0.56

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Table 1 results show a strong consensus among respondents on the positive impact of strategic leadership on public secondary school performance. A high percentage (93.50%) agreed that leaders develop a clear vision for student achievement, reflected by a mean score of 4.14 and a standard deviation of 0.51. Similarly, 94.80% agreed that clear guidelines for managing human capital are essential, with a mean score of 4.53 and a standard deviation of 0.60. Additionally, 94.80% supported the role of leadership in

budgetary control, with a mean of 4.32 and a standard deviation of 0.57, highlighting leadership's critical role in financial management.

In addition, a mean score of 4.25 and a standard deviation of 0.57 were obtained by 93.50% of respondents who either agreed or strongly agreed that the skills of leaders are well-matched with their responsibilities. This suggests a robust correlation between the responsibilities and the abilities of leaders.

The overall composite mean score for all measures was 4.31, with a standard deviation of 0.56, indicating strong agreement among respondents regarding the positive effects of strategic leadership on school performance. This high level of agreement, coupled with the relatively low variance, underscores the critical role that strategic leadership plays in fostering a performance-driven culture within public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county, Kiambu County, Kenya.

When respondents were asked about their involvement in the strategic planning process, the majority reported active participation. A common theme in the responses was the collaborative nature of strategic planning in these institutions. One respondent affirmed, *"Yes, it is a collaborative approach,"* emphasizing the importance of teamwork in decision-making. Another respondent reinforced this by stating, *"We work as a team, and every individual has a role to play in the strategic planning and decision-making process."* These responses highlight a shared sense of responsibility among staff members, indicating a collective effort in shaping the strategic direction of their schools.

Additionally, several respondents noted that while they might not be directly involved in formal strategic planning, their opinions and recommendations are valued. One participant commented, *"Yes, we front opinions and recommendations for consideration,"* suggesting that even those not formally engaged in planning still contribute meaningfully to the process. This reflects an inclusive approach to strategic leadership, where diverse perspectives are encouraged and integrated into the overall management strategy.

However, there were also indications of only partial involvement in strategic planning. For example, one respondent remarked, *"Partially, yes,"* indicating that while some level of participation exists, it may not be fully comprehensive or integrated across all aspects of the process. This suggests a potential area for improvement, where the strategic planning process could become more inclusive to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are fully engaged.

While strategic leadership practices in these schools are generally collaborative and inclusive, there are opportunities to enhance participation further, ensuring a broader and more comprehensive involvement in the strategic planning process.

Inferential Analysis

The study conducted correlation and regression analysis. The results are presented as below.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was employed to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between strategic leadership and school performance. This analysis provided insight into how effectively strategic leadership contributes to improved academic outcomes, resource management, and overall institutional efficiency. The test-retest reliability ensured the consistency of measures related to strategic leadership, allowing for accurate assessment of its impact on school performance. The Pearson correlation matrix presented in Table 14 highlighted the degree of association between strategic leadership and other performance indicators, showing whether an increase in strategic leadership efforts leads to a corresponding improvement in school performance. This analysis was crucial in identifying the specific leadership traits and practices that significantly influence positive outcomes in the schools studied.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

		Performance	Strategic Leadership
Performance	Pearson Correlation	1.000	
Strategic Leadership	Pearson Correlation	.648**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	

Source: Survey Data (2024)

The Pearson correlation matrix in Table 2 reveals a strong positive correlation of .648 between strategic leadership and the performance of public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county, Kiambu County, with a significance level of 0.000. This indicates that strategic leadership practices are closely linked to improved school performance. The findings emphasize the importance of leadership in shaping institutional outcomes, suggesting that effective leadership can motivate staff, set clear goals, and drive the overall success of schools. These results are consistent with the conclusions of Musee (2018), who found a

positive relationship between strategic management practices, particularly leadership, and the performance of public universities.

Further supporting these findings, Varelás, Marjanovic, and Orville (2023) highlighted the crucial role of strategic leadership in the successful implementation of strategies in organizations. This aligns with the current study's conclusion that leadership skills are fundamental to ensuring that schools in Lari Sub-county meet their objectives. Effective strategic leadership involves not only guiding the school toward its goals but also ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and that the school environment fosters collaboration and innovation. This reinforces the idea that strong leadership is essential for driving performance improvements in educational institutions.

The qualitative analysis also complements the quantitative findings, as respondents frequently mentioned the significance of strategic leadership in motivating teachers and students. Many participants noted that leadership behaviors directly impact morale and performance, underscoring the need for school leaders to inspire and engage their teams. The qualitative feedback highlighted that effective leaders play a pivotal role in addressing challenges such as resource constraints and staff motivation, further validating the correlation between strategic leadership and school performance. In essence, strategic leadership emerges as a key factor that influences not only the direction and vision of the schools but also their overall ability to achieve better performance outcomes.

The strong positive relationship between strategic leadership and performance in public secondary schools highlights the central role that leadership plays in enhancing educational outcomes. Effective leadership involves not only setting strategic directions but also fostering a culture of motivation, collaboration, and innovation within the school. This study reinforces the critical need for strong, strategic leadership in public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county to ensure that performance goals are met and sustained over time.

Regression Analysis

The study conducted a linear regression analysis. The model summary is shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.848 ^a	0.719	0.702	0.43586

a Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Leadership

Source: Survey Data (2024)

The regression analysis in Table 3 specifically emphasizes the significant impact of strategic leadership on the performance of public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county, Kiambu County. With a strong R value of 0.848, it is evident that strategic leadership, alongside other strategic management practices, is highly correlated with improved school performance. The R Square value of 0.719 suggests that strategic leadership, along with technology adoption, strategic planning, and financial management, collectively explains 71% of the variation in performance outcomes.

Strategic leadership plays a crucial role in this model, as it directly influences how well schools can align their goals, motivate staff, and implement necessary changes to enhance performance. The adjusted R Square value of 0.702 further reinforces the precision of the model, indicating that the contribution of leadership is substantial even when accounting for other factors. Leadership drives the strategic direction of schools, ensuring that goals are clearly defined, resources are effectively utilized, and teams are motivated to achieve higher academic standards.

The strong relationship between strategic leadership and performance, as indicated by the regression analysis, shows that schools led by effective strategic leaders are better positioned to improve outcomes. Leaders who engage in forward-thinking decision-making, foster collaboration, and address challenges proactively are instrumental in shaping the success of public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county. This analysis reaffirms that strategic leadership is a vital driver of school performance and must be prioritized to achieve sustained improvements.

Table 4: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	33.058	4	8.264	43.504	.000 ^b
	Residual	12.918	68	0.19		
	Total	45.976	72			

a Dependent Variable: Performance

b Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Leadership

Source: Survey Data (2024)

The ANOVA analysis presented in Table 4 highlights the statistical significance of the regression model, particularly focusing on the influence of strategic leadership, along with strategic financing, technology adoption, and strategic planning, on the performance of public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county, Kiambu County. The F-statistic of 43.504, with a significance level of 0.000, indicates that the model is statistically significant and that the independent variables, including strategic leadership, play a crucial role in explaining the variation in school performance.

Regarding strategic leadership, the ANOVA results underscore the importance of leadership in shaping school outcomes. The low significance value (Sig. = 0.000) further highlights that strategic leadership is a key driver of school success. Effective strategic leadership ensures that schools are guided with clear direction, fostering collaboration and innovation, which in turn enhances performance. The ANOVA results support the idea that leadership, in combination with other strategic management practices, significantly impacts school performance in the region.

The high F-value indicates that the model, which includes strategic leadership, fits well with the data and confirms that leadership is not merely a peripheral factor but a central one in driving the success of public secondary schools. By providing a structured and focused approach, strategic leadership empowers schools to better utilize resources, manage teams effectively, and achieve their educational objectives. This statistical analysis confirms that strategic leadership is integral to improving performance in the public secondary education sector in Lari Sub-county.

Table 5: Coefficient of Regression

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
1				
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	0.526	0.266		1.981 0.052
Strategic Leadership	0.401	0.163	0.371	2.460 0.003

Source: Survey Data (2024)

The coefficient of regression analysis in Table 5 highlights the crucial role of strategic leadership in enhancing the performance of public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county, Kiambu County, Kenya. The unstandardized coefficient for strategic leadership is 0.401, indicating a positive and significant relationship between leadership and school performance, with a t-value of 2.460 and a significance level of 0.003. This suggests that for every unit increase in strategic leadership efforts, school performance improves by 0.401 units, affirming that leadership is a key driver of success in educational institutions. The standardized beta coefficient of 0.371 further confirms that strategic leadership contributes substantially to the overall model, positioning it as a central factor in determining school outcomes. These findings echo the conclusions of Musee (2018), who demonstrated the positive impact of strategic management practices, including leadership, on the performance of public universities.

Strategic leadership's significant influence on school performance, as demonstrated by the regression analysis, underscores the importance of leadership qualities such as decision-making, team motivation, and strategic direction in educational success. Effective leaders inspire both staff and students, aligning them toward common goals and fostering a collaborative environment that enhances learning and resource management. The positive relationship between leadership and performance aligns with the broader understanding that strong leadership is fundamental in guiding institutions toward better results. In this context, strategic leadership not only shapes the vision and mission of the schools but also ensures that resources are effectively allocated and challenges are proactively addressed.

The regression model also shows the critical impact of other strategic management practices, such as technology adoption, strategic planning, and financial management, but strategic leadership remains a pivotal element in the mix. Its significance within the model reflects its overarching role in setting the strategic direction of the institution, coordinating

various initiatives, and ensuring that school operations are aligned with long-term objectives. The statistical evidence points to strategic leadership as a cornerstone in fostering a high-performing academic environment, making it a focal area for schools looking to enhance their performance in Lari Sub-county.

In conclusion, the regression analysis solidifies the understanding that strategic leadership is not only a facilitator of other management practices but a primary determinant of school performance. Leaders in public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county must continue to emphasize strategic thinking, effective communication, and goal-oriented leadership to drive school success. The significant and positive relationship between strategic leadership and performance highlights the need for continuous leadership development to ensure that schools can navigate challenges, inspire stakeholders, and achieve academic excellence.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis of strategic leadership in public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county, Kiambu County, highlights how leadership practices influence key performance indicators such as academic outcomes, resource management, and organizational efficiency. Respondents emphasized that strategic leadership involves not only goal setting but also fostering alignment and collaboration among staff and students, which greatly enhances school performance. Proactive leadership, characterized by clear goals and mission alignment, was identified as a key factor in boosting morale and improving academic results, aligning with Musee's (2018) findings on the importance of leadership in institutional success.

Resource management also emerged as a crucial aspect, with respondents praising leaders who efficiently manage school finances to improve infrastructure without overspending. This strategic approach ensures better facilities, directly impacting performance outcomes, consistent with the findings of Varelas, Marjanovic, and Orville (2023) on the role of leadership in resource management and organizational efficiency.

However, some respondents noted a need for greater innovation and adaptability in leadership. While current practices were seen as effective, the lack of focus on innovative approaches was seen as a hindrance to progress. This feedback suggests that continuous improvement and adaptability are necessary for sustaining long-term success in response to evolving educational needs.

Strategic leadership is a vital driver of school performance in Lari Sub-county, but ongoing development, particularly in fostering innovation and flexibility, is essential to meet the evolving demands of the education sector.

SUMMARY

Determining the influence of strategic leadership and performance in public secondary schools was the first research question. According to the descriptive data, most respondents felt that school administrators should create a clear goal for raising student accomplishment and offer precise instructions for managing human resources. The correlation results showed that strategic leadership and performance have a strong positive link. This conclusion was corroborated by the regression analysis, which showed a usually positive correlation between institutional performance and strategic leadership.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that strategic leadership plays a pivotal role in enhancing the performance of public secondary schools in Lari Sub-county, Kiambu County, Kenya. Leaders who articulate a clear vision for improving student achievement and establish well-defined guidelines for managing human capital foster higher levels of motivation and commitment among staff members. The findings demonstrate that through strategic leadership techniques, school managers can instill a sense of purpose and enthusiasm within their teams, resulting in a more motivated workforce that is willing to exceed expectations to achieve learning goals. Schools that prioritize and embed strategic leadership in their administrative processes are likely to experience significant improvements in student performance, as employees feel more connected to the school's mission and more driven to contribute to its success.

RECOMMENDATION

The study recommends that management in public secondary schools prioritize leadership development programs focused on enhancing strategic leadership skills through workshops, mentorship, and continuous professional development to improve the ability of leaders to guide their teams effectively. Additionally, strategic plans should be regularly monitored and adjusted to meet the evolving needs of the schools, while sufficient resources must be allocated toward acquiring and maintaining up-to-date technology, coupled with staff training to maximize its impact on teaching and learning. Robust

financial management practices, including effective budgeting and financial planning, should also be adopted to ensure resource efficiency and financial transparency. Policymakers are encouraged to enforce policies supporting continuous leadership development, provide frameworks for strategic planning, and promote the integration of technology in schools by funding infrastructure and ensuring equal access. Future research should investigate the challenges in strategic plan implementation, the long-term impact of technology on academic achievement, and the effectiveness of financial management strategies in enhancing school performance.

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