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## **INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS' HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMPETENCY ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KWALE COUNTY, KENYA**

<sup>1\*</sup>Mumia Mvurya Mbovu, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Ruth Thinguri & <sup>3</sup>Dr Mary Mugwe Chui

<sup>1</sup>PhD Student, Mount Kenya University, Kenya.

<sup>2&3</sup> Lecturer, Mount Kenya University, Kenya

\*Email of Corresponding Author: [mvuryamumia2@gmail.com](mailto:mvuryamumia2@gmail.com)

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this study is to assess the influence of principals' human resource management competency on the academic performance in public secondary schools in Kwale County, Kenya.

**Statement of the Problem:** Principals' competency in human resource management significantly contributes to the performance of secondary schools. However, in Kwale County, despite principals having undergone professional competency training, academic performance still falls below expectations.

**Methodology:** This study employed a mixed methodology and utilized both descriptive survey and phenomenological research designs. The target population consisted of 4,327 respondents, including 92 principals, 1,564 members of the School Board of Management (BoM), 832 teachers, 10 Sub-county Directors of Education (SCDEs), and 1,834 student leaders. A sample of 365 respondents was determined using Yamane's Formula. Stratified sampling was employed, creating five distinct strata based on the number of sub-counties in Kwale County. Within each sub-county, three principals and four members of the school BoM were purposively selected, while all 10 SCDEs were included. Furthermore, 40 teachers and 16 student leaders were randomly chosen from each sub-county, resulting in a final sample of 15 principals, 200 teachers, 60 BoM members, 10 SCDEs, and 80 student leaders. Qualitative data were thematically analyzed in accordance with the study objectives and presented narratively. Quantitative data were subjected to inferential analysis using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 23), with the results presented in tabular form.

**Findings:** The study found that academic performance in public secondary schools in Kwale County has been low and is attributed to principals' inadequate human resource management competencies.

**Recommendations:** The study recommends that the Ministry of Education (MoE) continues to provide training and re-training opportunities for teachers.

**Keywords:** *Principals' human resource management competency, academic performance, public secondary schools.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Human resource plays a critical role in the realization of educational objectives and optimization of staff deployment, thus achieving a systematic balance. Key to realizing it is a thorough knowledge of the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the human resource pool, of short- and medium-term staffing requirements and of the supply and demand for needed skills on the open job market. Ivancevich (2007) states that teacher performance has posed a challenge globally, especially in developing countries. To address these challenges, successful secondary schools are recognizing that various practices contribute to teacher performance, with human resources being the most crucial factor (Mello, 2006). In other words, human resource is the most important asset for any secondary school and it is the resource of achieving competitive advantage and boosting the performance of teachers.

Chan and Kuok (2011) define human resource management practices as the widely recognized guidelines or procedures designed to help schools achieve their goals, as outlined in their mission and vision statements. They observed that in the current era, where the value in secondary schools is encapsulated within the knowledge of the workforce, practices such as recruitment, selection, orientation, rewards, compensation, performance appraisal, training and development, and labor relations are crucial. Chan and Kuok (2011) further emphasized that these practices involve a continuous flow of information through interconnected stages of analysis, aimed at achieving the set objectives. This information flow in human resource management encompasses historical, present, and predictive data concerning operations.

Allen, Ericksen and Collins (2013) suggested that a good human resource management practice generates a competitive advantage that differentiates a secondary school from its competitors by giving it a sustainable edge that is valuable, rare and not easy to imitate. To corroborate the assertions of Allen *et al* (2013), Boxall, Ang and Bartram (2014) carried out a study in India that revealed that effective human resource management practices improve the performance of teachers in any school and lead to higher profits. Boxall *et al* (2014) argue that the strategic link between different human resource management practices to performance does not involve individual practices but interrelated and internal practices called bundles, this means that there are various configurations of human resource management practices that go hand in hand and enhancing a school's competitive advantage depends on a bundle or set of human resource management practices configured together. In a study conducted amongst 12 tertiary institutions

in Kuala Lumpur, Boselie, Dietz and Boon (2015) agree that the most common human resource management practices comprise training and development, pay and reward, and performance management. Boselie *et al* (2015) studied the impact of human resource management policies and practices on institutional performance and found that these practices have a significant impact on teacher outcome (turnover and productivity) and overall performance. To corroborate these assertions, Mahmood (2010), in a study conducted in Pakistan, noted that those responsible for the management of human resources have a responsibility to establish and maintain a workplace environment that is conducive to achieving the academic performance in public secondary schools. Marzano, Marzano and Pickering (2011) posit that, while they are civil servants, school teachers are not governed by the same rules that apply to their non-teaching colleagues.

In many Sub-Saharan African countries, the situation is similar, with an urgent requirement to fill an estimated 3.8 million additional teaching positions by 2015, as part of the effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Ekwoaba, Ikeije & Ufoma, 2015). Affective commitment and job satisfaction are desirable teacher behaviour outcomes that are an outcome of teachers' perception of school experiences derived from appropriate human resource management practices (Ekwoaba *et al*, 2015). The teacher behaviour outcomes have strongly and consistently been associated with desired work outcomes such as efficiency, profitability, productivity and low meeting deadlines among others (Ekwoaba *et al*, 2015). Human resource management scholars suggest that secondary schools can use performance and commitment-oriented human resource practices to drive the desired secondary school effectiveness (Ahmad & Schroeder, 2013).

Further, Gardener and Moynihan (2011) argue that human resource management practices have a direct impact on teachers' knowledge, skills, motivation and behaviour which in turn influences the proximal indices of secondary school performance such as operational efficiency, productivity, profitability, learning and growth. The study found that any selected human resource management practices by a teacher school work almost immediately and have desired consequences on teachers' behaviours and attitudes when teachers perceive them in the desired manner. In a study carried out in Ghana, for example, Fishman, Marx, Besta and Talb (2012) revealed that to date, the school teacher-teacher trainee ratio is still high and school teacher demand and supply remain a major issue. Good quality education depends in part on reasonable

class sizes and Trainee/Teacher Ratios (TTR). Yet the GMR (2008) reveals that there are large regional and national disparities in TTRs (Fishman *et al*, 2012). The typical maximum teacher-to-student ratio often cited is 40:1, although significant variations exist across different regions and countries. Studies indicate that numerous factors influence the demand and supply of school teachers. A critical element among these is teacher motivation, which is influenced by various underlying factors, including salary. According to GMR (2006), many countries face a crisis of school teacher morale that is mostly related to poor salaries, working conditions and limited opportunities for professional development. Other problems include the doubtful use of contract school teachers and the lack of evidence for introducing performance-related pay structures.

In Kenya, the scenario is the same and Ajuoga, Indoshi and Agak (2010) posit that there is a need thus to address the equal distribution of school teachers in sub-counties, carry out registration of all school teachers, have all untrained school teachers trained through in-service courses, put in place adequate staffing norms at all levels to make maximum use of school teachers, define the concept of a school teacher as a professional within acceptable professional principles. Muchiri and Cooksey (2012) assert that teacher empowerment is also believed to be a motivator since teacher involvement in decision-making makes them feel valued. This also cultivates a sense of commitment to the secondary school. In a study conducted in Eldoret East Sub-county, Lagat (2013) reported that performance management is a strategic and integrated process that delivers sustained success to schools and secondary schools by improving the performance of the teachers and support staff who work in such institutions and by developing the capabilities of individual contributors and teams. Lagat (2013) asserts that human management includes the practices through which the manager defines the teacher's goals and work, develops the teacher's capabilities and evaluates and rewards their effort all within the framework of how the teacher's performance should be contributing to achieving the secondary school goals.

In Kwale County, many secondary schools have shown poor performance despite the extensive professional development training that secondary school principals have undergone in the past. For example, a report by the Ministry of Education (2023) shows that public secondary schools in Kwale County have registered low grades in national examinations (KCSE) compared to the national statistics as shown in Table 1:

**Table 1: KCSE Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya and Kwale County from 2018 to 2022**

Year	Meanpoints for KCSE Results	
	National Results	Kwale County
2018	7.412	2.882
2019	7.209	3.267
2020	7.034	3.384
2021	7.913	3.118
2022	8.128	3.175

**Source: Ministry of Education (2023)**

Table 1 shows that there is a decreasing trend in the performance of students in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). The report also notes that cases of 59.5% of the principals show inability to meet deadlines with approximately 34.9% of public secondary schools experiencing instances of students' indiscipline. Despite this state of affairs, few empirical studies have interrogated the extent to which principals' human resource management competency influences academic performance in public secondary schools, hence the study.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Principals' human resource management competency of principals contributes immensely towards academic performance of public secondary schools. However, in Kwale County, the academic performance in public secondary schools is still below expectations. As indicated earlier, cases of low academic performance in national examinations (KCSE) have increased. Table 1 shows that Kwale County registered a mean point grade of 2.882 in 2018 in KCSE, 3.267 in 2019, 3.384 in 2020, 3.118 in 2021 and 3.175 in 2022 which paints a picture of declining academic performance in public secondary schools (MoE, 2023). Efforts to mitigate these challenges have not yielded much remarkable progress. Despite these observations, little has been done to interrogate how principals' human resource management competency influences the academic performance in public secondary schools.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- i. To assess the status of academic performance in public secondary schools in Kwale County.

- ii. To evaluate the influence of principals' human resource management competency on academic performance in public secondary schools in Kwale County;

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study was informed by the Professional Development Theory, proposed by Krumboltz in 1979, which is based on social learning theory and classical behaviorism. This theory also integrates contemporary concepts from self-efficacy theory and cognitive-behavioral theory. It considers numerous factors, each affecting an individual's professional decision-making differently. Specifically, the theory highlights the importance of adapting to change in the fast-evolving job market. In the context of this study, the theory acknowledges that principals are key assets in school management, and their professional competence is crucial for enhancing the performance of secondary schools. Through training, the principal brings into the continuing education arena a rich array of experiences that affect the learning styles and assimilation of knowledge.

This study was also guided by the theory of educational productivity which was postulated by Walberg (1981). One of the premises of this theory is that performance of students in any learning institution is impacted by changes in school and human resources. This theory associates diverse inputs affecting a student's performance such as schools, structures, facilities, textbooks, teachers and learning environments with measured outputs including subsequent labour market success, transit from one level of education to the next, class attendance, graduation rates, and, most commonly, standardized examination results. The resources in public secondary schools which include teaching and non-teaching staff, physical facilities and curriculum support materials are all inputs that are expected to make positive returns as outputs. The rationale of using this theory is that human capital is an input in education that is expected to bring change in behaviour, knowledge and skills as an output. These theories recognize the fact that secondary schools, like any other firm or company, use resources to achieve set curriculum goals and objectives.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a descriptive survey and phenomenological research designs. Target population was 4327 respondents which comprised 92 principals, 1564 members of the School Board of Management (BoM), 832 teachers, 10 Sub-county Directors of Education (SCDEs) and 1834 student leaders from which a sample of 365 respondents was determined using Yamane's

Formula. Stratified sampling was used to create five (5) different strata based on the number of sub-counties in Kwale County.

From each sub-county, three principals and four (4) members of school BoM were selected using purposive sampling. All the 10 SCDEs were purposely sampled. However, from each sub-county, 40 teachers and 16 student leaders were selected using simple random sampling. This procedure realized a sample of 15 principals, 200 teachers, 60 members of school BoM, 10 SCDEs and 80 student leaders. A questionnaire was used to collect data from teachers, interview guides from principals, members of school BoM and SCDEs and a focus group discussion guide for student leaders. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically based on objectives and presented in narrative form. Quantitative data were analyzed inferentially using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 23) and presented using tables.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this study, 200 questionnaires were distributed to teachers, resulting in 197 completed and returned questionnaires. The researcher also conducted interviews with 13 principals, 49 school Board of Management (BoM) members, and 10 Sub-county Directors of Education, in addition to focus group discussions with 67 student leaders. The response rates obtained from these activities are detailed in Table 2.;

**Table 2: Response Rate**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Sampled Respondents</b>	<b>Those Who Participated</b>	<b>Achieved Return Rate (%)</b>
Principals	15	13	86.7
Teachers	200	197	98.5
Members of school BoM	60	49	81.7
Student Leaders	80	67	83.8
Sub-county Directors of Education (MoE & TSC)	10	10	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>92.1</b>

**Source: Field Data (2023)**

Table 2 shows that principals registered a response rate of 86.7%, teachers registered 98.5%, members of school BoM registered 81.7% whereas student leaders registered a response rate of 83.8%. However, all the ten (100.0%) Sub-county Directors of Education (MoE & TSC) took part in the study. This yielded an average response rate of 92.1%, which is consistent with the

assertions of Creswell (2014) that a response rate above 75.0% is adequate. This information was important since it allowed the researcher to generalize the study outcomes to the target population.

### Status of Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools

The study sought to assess the trends of academic performance in public secondary schools in Kwale County. This was done by taking records of students' performance in KCSE for the last five years (2018-2022). Descriptive data were collected and results are shown in Table 3;

**Table 3: KCSE Performance in Public Secondary Schools In Kwale County Between 2018 And 2022**

KCSE Results in Mean Score (Points)	Years of Examination				
	2017 %	2018 %	2019 %	2020 %	2021 %
1-2.9 points (Poor)	40.2	43.5	44.2	47.3	48.9
3-4.9 points (Below Average)	36.9	35.1	34.9	33.5	32.5
5-6.9 points (Fair)	15.4	15.1	14.8	13.7	13.4
7-8.9 points (Good)	5.3	4.4	4.3	3.8	3.6
9-11.9 points (Excellent)	2.2	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.6

The study findings shown in Table 3 reveals that in 2017, 40.2% of secondary schools had average scores ranging from 1 to 2.9 on the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE), 36.9% scored between 3 and 4.9 points, 15.4% scored between 5 and 6.9 points, 5.3% scored between 7 and 9 points, and only 2.2% of the schools achieved scores between 9 and 11.9 points. In the following years, there was a downward trend in performance. For instance, in 2018, 43.5% of secondary schools scored between 1 and 2.9 points, 35.1% scored between 3 and 5 points, 15.1% scored between 5 and 7 points, 4.4% scored between 7 and 8.9 points, and 1.9% scored between 9 and 11.9 points on the KCSE. In 2019, the distribution was 44.2% of schools scoring between 1 and 3 points, 34.9% between 3 and 5 points, 14.8% between 5 and 7 points, 4.3% between 7 and 8.9 points, and 1.8% between 9 and 11.9 points.

Table 3 further shows that, in 2020, 47.3% of secondary schools scored between 1-2.9 mean points in KCSE, 33.5% scored between 3-4.9 mean points, 13.7% scored between 5-6.9 mean points, 3.8% scored between 7-8.9 mean points while 1.7% scored between 9-11.9 mean points in KCSE. In a similar trend, 48.9% of the secondary schools scored between 1-3 mean points,



32.5% scored between 3-4.9 mean points, 13.4% scored between 5-6.9 mean points, 3.6% registered between 7-8.9 mean points whereas 1.6% registered between 9-11.9 mean points in KCSE in 2021. These results are consistent with a report issued by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 2023, which revealed a similar downward trend in student performance in Kwale County. According to the Ministry of Education (2023), public secondary schools in Kwale County registered a meanpoint grade of 2.882 in 2018 in KCSE, 3.267 in 2019, 3.384 in 2020, 3.118 in 2021 and 3.175 in 2022. This further points to a decline in academic performance in public secondary schools. This implies that academic performance constitutes a key component of quality education offered in secondary schools and outcome indicators can be defined based on the extent to which outcome measures are connected to learning content. In other words, academic performance is the outcome of quality education and the extent to which a student or secondary school has achieved their educational goals.

### **Principals' Human Resource Management Competency and Academic Performance In Public Secondary Schools**

The study sought to examine how principals' human resource management competency influences academic performance in public secondary schools. Descriptive data were collected from teachers and results are presented in Table 4;

**Table 4: Teachers' Views**

Statement	Ratings				
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
Principals have not improved teachers' work conditions as a way of improving the performance of public secondary schools	51.8	11.5	5.8	5.8	25.1
In public secondary schools, principals lack skills to undertake staff promotion and motivation to improve performance	54.0	14.4	5.8	11.5	14.4
Principals are rarely skilled in handling matters of indiscipline which has made public secondary schools register impressive performance	57.6	9.4	7.2	9.4	16.4
To improve the performance of public secondary schools, principals have mastered skills and competencies on how to handle teachers' human resource challenges	48.2	8.6	5.8	20.9	16.4
Training on human resource management has enabled principals to oversee the realization of the impressive performance of secondary schools	66.5	11.3	3.3	5.4	13.5

**Source: Field Data (2023)**

Table 4 shows that 102(51.8%) of teachers strongly agreed with the view that principals have not improved teachers' work conditions as a way of improving the performance of public secondary schools as did 23(11.5%) who agreed, 11(5.8%) were undecided, 11(5.8%) disagreed whereas 50(25.1%) strongly disagreed. Most, 106(54.0%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public secondary schools, principals lack skills to undertake staff promotion and motivation to improve performance while 28(14.4%) agreed, 11(5.8%) were undecided, 23(11.5%) disagreed whereas 29(14.4%) strongly disagreed. These findings corroborate the assertions of GMR (2006) that many countries face a crisis of school teacher morale that is mostly related to poor salaries, working conditions and limited opportunities for professional development. These findings further support the findings of a study conducted in Nigeria in which Wright et al (2011) revealed that human resource management practices have a direct impact on teachers' knowledge, skills, motivation and behaviour which in turn influences the proximal indices of secondary school performance such as learning and growth. This indicates that the low academic performance witnessed in national examinations is attributed to the

inability of many principals to support teachers in terms motivation, provision of basic incentives and strive towards creating an environment where teachers can get opportunities for further professional development.

The study found that 113(57.6%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that principals are rarely skilled in handling matters of indiscipline which has made public secondary schools register impressive performance while 19(9.4%) agreed, 14(7.2%) were undecided, 19(9.4%) disagreed whereas 32(16.4%) strongly disagreed. These findings are consistent with the findings of Wright et al (2011) that any selected human resource management practices by a school head to discipline teachers and other staff members work almost immediately and have desired consequences on teachers' behaviours and attitudes when teachers perceive them in the desired manner. This indicates that approaches adopted by principals to discipline teachers cannot be ignored as a key step towards improving academic performance in public secondary schools.

The study found that 95(48.2%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, to improve the performance of public secondary schools, principals have mastered skills and competencies on how to handle teachers' human resource challenges whereas 17(8.6%) agreed, 11(5.8%) were undecided, 41(20.9%) disagreed whereas 33(16.4%) strongly disagreed. Majority, 130(66.2%), of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that training on human resource management has enabled principals to oversee the realization of the impressive performance of public secondary schools whereas 23(11.5%) agreed, 7(3.6%) were undecided, 11(5.8%) disagreed whereas 26(12.9%) strongly disagreed. These findings lend credence to the findings of a study carried out in Kuala Lumpur in which Boselie et al (2015) found that the most common human resource management practices comprise training and development, pay and reward, and performance management. This implies that successful secondary schools are increasingly realizing that many practices contribute to the performance of teachers with the human resource being the most critical. In other words, human resource is the most important asset for any secondary school and it is the resource of achieving competitive advantage and boosting the performance of teachers.

### **Inferential Analysis**

To verify the influence of principals' human resource management competency on academic performance in public secondary schools, data were collected from principals of the 13 sampled public secondary schools on how often (Very Often = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2

and Never = 1) they manifest human resource management competencies and performance in KCSE (2018-2022). Results are shown in Table 5:

**Table 5: How Often Principals Manifest Effective Human Resource Management Competencies and Performance in KCSE (2018-2022)**

How Often Principals Manifest Human Resource Management Competencies	KCSE Performance				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
3	4.723	4.724	4.643	4.175	4.524
2	2.505	2.681	2.805	2.241	2.349
3	2.003	2.245	2.179	2.274	2.307
2	3.109	3.15	3.118	2.772	2.293
2	3.140	4.320	3.710	4.010	4.020
4	4.660	4.750	6.090	5.286	6.030
5	8.320	7.700	7.670	8.409	7.913
3	4.706	5.700	5.316	5.534	5.500
4	5.162	5.928	6.757	5.150	5.566
5	3.720	3.485	3.420	3.615	3.424
4	3.877	4.642	4.464	4.104	5.200
5	3.954	4.066	4.0984	3.092	3.097
5	7.789	8.031	8.7588	8.261	8.363

**Source: Field Data (2023)**

Table 5 shows that, in public secondary schools where principals frequently manifest competencies on how to handle and manage human resource issues such as improving work conditions for staff, promoting and motivating staff as well as undertaking staff discipline, academic performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) is high. The results in Table 5 were subjected to Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Analysis and the results are shown in Table 6:

**Table 6: Relationship Between Principals' Human Resource Management Competency and Academic Performance In Public Secondary Schools**

		<b>X1</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>X1</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.642*	.553*	.592*	.560*	.569*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.018	.045	.033	.046	.042
	N	13	13	13	13	13	13
<b>B</b>	Pearson Correlation	.642*	1	.962**	.945**	.966**	.929**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.018		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	13	13	13	13	13	13
<b>C</b>	Pearson Correlation	.553*	.962**	1	.966**	.973**	.961**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.050	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	13	13	13	13	13	13
<b>D</b>	Pearson Correlation	.592*	.945**	.966**	1	.950**	.961**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	13	13	13	13	13	13
<b>E</b>	Pearson Correlation	.560*	.966**	.973**	.950**	1	.976**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.046	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	13	13	13	13	13	13
<b>F</b>	Pearson Correlation	.569*	.929**	.961**	.961**	.976**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.042	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	13	13	13	13	13	13

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Key: **X1**- How Often Principals Manifest Human Resource Management Competencies; **B, C, D, E** and **F**-Students' Academic Performance from 2018 to 2022.

Table 6 displays the outcomes of a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test Analysis, which showed a statistically significant correlation between principals' human resource management competencies and students' academic performance in public secondary schools. The analysis generated correlation coefficients,  $r_1 = 0.642$ ,  $r_2 = 0.553$ ,  $r_3 = 0.592$ ,  $r_4 = 0.560$  and  $r_5 = 0.569$ , with corresponding p-values, 0.018, 0.045, 0.033, 0.046 and 0.042, which were less than the predetermined level of significance of 0.05. This further implies that human resource management competencies which principals manifest often tend to lead to improved academic performance in public secondary schools.

### Thematic Analysis

During the interviews, the principals, however, refuted claims that they have not improved teachers' work conditions, recommendations for promotion and motivation as a way of improving the performance of public secondary schools. Principal, P1, stated;

*In my secondary school, I always ensure that teachers are safe, provided with meals, accommodation and their welfare taken care of. I have often recommended to the Teachers' Service Commission to promote hardworking and deserving teachers. I have also ensured that teachers are motivated through incentives and opportunities for professional development. This has enabled them to dedicate their time for classroom activities.*

These perspectives were echoed by students, school Board of Management (BoM) members, and Sub-County Directors of Education from the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and Ministry of Education (MoE), who also mentioned that schools have taken steps to address teachers' welfare in terms of safety, providing meals during work hours, and sometimes offering accommodation on school premises. Regarding the management of staff discipline, principals disagreed with the majority of teachers who felt that they lacked the necessary skills to address staff indiscipline. They however, stated that understand behavioral challenges which bedevil teachers, especially young ones and offer disciplinary approaches. Principal, P2, stated;

*In my secondary school, I always counsel new and young teachers on how to avoid behaviour patterns which may precipitate disciplinary cases and ruin their future career. This has often seen them work hard in their teaching activities and ensure that most of their students register good grades.*

This was supported by the other interviewees who also noted that principals are tasked to discipline teachers and ensure that they undertake their duties effectively. On further probing, sub-county director of Education (TSC), SCDETSC1, noted;

*Principals are required to be skilled and are mandated by the TSC codes of ethics to discipline teachers in terms of dress code, class attendance and adherence to professional standards.*

As noted earlier, these qualitative findings affirm the fact that strategies which school heads adopt or apply to discipline teachers play a crucial role in improving academic performance in public secondary schools. To achieve this, many principals stated that they have undergone training on human resource management which has enabled them to oversee the realization of the impressive performance of public secondary schools. Principal, P3, noted;

*I have been equipped with skills on how to manage teachers and their challenges. I have acquired skills on how to promote, motivate and discipline teachers with an aim of improving their work productivity.*

This was supported by the student leaders, members of school BoM and sub-county directors of education who stated that, upon being posted as a school head, one is required to undertake refresher courses on management. In summary, these findings point to the fact that, despite the fact that many schools are yet to realize effective human resource management, these practices constitute a major step towards improving academic performance in public secondary schools.

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The study found that academic performance in public secondary schools in Kwale County has been on a declining trajectory over the last five years (2018-2022). Furthermore, it revealed that the working conditions of teachers are unfavorable due to the absence of promotions and inadequate motivation from principals to encourage them to strive for improved academic outcomes in public secondary schools. Despite opposing views from some principals and interviewees, the study emphasized the interconnectedness of teachers' success in achieving curriculum objectives with their working conditions, promotional opportunities, and motivation. Additionally, the research identified a potential gap in the skills of many principals in effectively addressing staff disciplinary issues. Nonetheless, their ability to address and manage these issues plays a crucial role in enhancing academic performance in schools. Furthermore, the study highlighted that principals recognize the behavioral challenges faced by teachers, especially younger ones, and adopt appropriate disciplinary approaches.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study recommends that the Ministry of Education should prioritize the continuous training and re-training of principals, focusing on aspects of human resource management. This investment in professional development will significantly enhance their abilities to effectively manage teachers and other staff members, ultimately leading to an improvement in the quality of instruction in schools.

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