The Extent to which Teacher Motivation Influences Academic Performance of Students in Public Primary Schools in Mombasa County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study investigated the extent to which teacher motivation influences academic performance in public primary schools in Mombasa County, Kenya. The specific objectives included assessing the relationship between teacher motivation and student academic performance, examining how motivation impacts teachers' professional development, and evaluating classroom practices influenced by motivation. The study was guided by Vroom's Expectancy Theory and adopted an embedded mixed-methods research design. A conceptual framework was utilized, positioning teacher motivation as the independent variable influencing educational outcomes. The study targeted 10 head teachers and 109 teachers, selected using Gay and Diehl's (1992) and Cronbach's formulas. Data were collected through semi-structured questionnaires and interviews, and instrument reliability was confirmed via the split-half method with a reliability coefficient of 0.75 or above. A pilot study was conducted in Kilifi County. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 24 and presented in tables and graphs. Results revealed that motivation factors such as fair remuneration, professional development opportunities, and incentive structures significantly impact teacher performance and student outcomes. Motivation initiatives including goal-setting, recognition, and regular salary reviews were found to enhance teacher commitment and academic achievement. The study recommends robust motivation policies to promote student success and provides empirical evidence for education stakeholders and policymakers.

Keywords: *Teacher Motivation; Academic performance, Public primary schools; incentives*

1. Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged as a cornerstone for socio-economic development. In Kenya, education is a key strategy for national transformation. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of the education system heavily relies on teacher motivation, which directly affects student academic outcomes. Globally, issues surrounding teacher motivation such as remuneration, job satisfaction, and working conditions remain central to discussions on educational quality. Research from developed countries highlights the positive correlation between teacher motivation and student performance. For instance, studies from the UK, India, and Brazil have shown that motivated teachers are more productive and foster better learning outcomes.

Similarly, in Africa, particularly South Africa and Cameroon, research underscores the negative impact of poor teacher motivation on educational attainment.

In Kenya, despite various reforms in the education sector, challenges persist in motivating teachers, especially in public primary schools. Studies in counties like Meru, Limuru, and Mombasa have identified low pay, limited professional development, and inadequate working conditions as factors demotivating teachers. These conditions adversely affect teaching practices and student performance. Given this context, the study focuses on Mombasa County, where student performance inconsistencies raise concerns about the role of teacher motivation. Although various studies have explored teacher turnover and general staff motivation, there is a research gap in understanding the specific influence of motivation components such as salary and professional growth on academic performance in public primary schools. Addressing this gap, this study investigates how teacher motivation shapes student academic outcomes in Mombasa County.

1.1 Problem Statement

Despite efforts to improve education quality, academic performance in Mombasa County's public primary schools remains inconsistent. Data from the County Education Office indicate that only one out of ten schools show consistent academic improvement. Teacher motivation has been identified as a critical determinant of instructional quality, professional commitment, and student learning. Yet, many public-school teachers suffer from inadequate remuneration, delayed salaries, and a lack of performance-based rewards, leading to decreased morale and ineffective teaching. While teachers may possess the required qualifications, motivation is key to translating competence into impactful teaching.

Although there is abundant literature on student performance factors, few studies have examined how specific motivational elements like compensation and incentives directly influence academic outcomes in Mombasa County. Thus, there is a pressing need to explore how teacher motivation translates into improved student achievement. This study addresses this gap by examining the impact of teacher motivation, specifically in terms of salary structures, professional development, and recognition on student performance in public primary schools. The findings aim to inform educational policy and practices that promote teacher engagement and academic excellence.

2. Literature Review

Teacher motivation encompasses both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence the effectiveness of educators in fulfilling their professional roles. Intrinsic motivators include personal satisfaction, passion for teaching, and commitment to learners, while extrinsic motivators involve salary, promotion, and recognition (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Globally, motivated teachers are recognized as essential for achieving quality education, with UNESCO (2020) emphasizing their importance in realizing Sustainable Development Goal 4. Studies from OECD countries show that low pay, poor working conditions, and limited career advancement reduce motivation, ultimately impacting student performance (UNESCO, 2020). Keller et al. (2020) conducted a meta-analysis confirming that teacher motivation positively influences student outcomes, including higher test scores and classroom engagement.

Research in developing regions also reflects the importance of teacher motivation. In Indonesia, Khan and Mansoor (2013) established that incentives such as salary increments, recognition, and access to resources significantly improved teaching performance, which

subsequently affected student achievement. However, global studies often focus on secondary or tertiary education, with fewer examining primary schools in low-resource settings.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, despite challenges like limited infrastructure, school-level support has shown promise in enhancing motivation (Akomolafe & Ogunmakin, 2021). In Rwanda, Mugenzi (2011) highlighted financial incentives and job security as central motivators, although the study stopped short of linking these to specific academic outcomes. Darling-Hammond et al. (2021) argue that motivated teachers are more likely to demonstrate professional commitment, including lesson preparedness and consistent attendance, which benefits learners. Similarly, Mwakalobo (2022) in Tanzania found that motivated teachers exhibited greater punctuality and innovation in the classroom.

In Kenya, most studies on teacher motivation have focused on secondary education. Muriuki (2020) reported that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence teacher satisfaction, though the study lacked direct links to academic performance. Wambua and Mwangi (2024), however, found that schools with supportive leadership and incentive programs reported better pupil outcomes. Njagi et al. (2023) observed that teacher morale directly impacted KCPE performance, yet challenges such as unequal recognition and infrastructure disparities persist. Onderi, Kiplangat, and Awino (2017) demonstrated that higher income levels improved teacher engagement in both academic and co-curricular activities. Similarly, Lubang (2019) found that teacher demotivation in South Sudan mirroring Kenyan contexts led to poor instructional delivery and low student performance. While these findings underscore motivation's relevance, empirical studies directly linking teacher motivation to academic performance in Kenyan primary schools remain limited.

2.1 Research Gaps

Although existing literature confirms that teacher motivation influences job satisfaction and teaching quality, few studies have empirically linked this to academic performance, particularly in public primary schools. Most existing studies are general in scope, lacking focus on specific education levels or geographic contexts.

There is also a noticeable lack of data specific to Mombasa County, which is unique due to its cultural diversity, urban dynamics, and socio-economic challenges. Furthermore, many studies fail to use performance data (e.g., KCPE results) as measurable indicators of student academic outcomes. This study addresses these gaps by investigating the extent to which teacher motivation impacts academic performance in public primary schools in Mombasa County, Kenya.

The literature reveals a strong theoretical and empirical foundation supporting the notion that teacher motivation influences educational outcomes. However, there is limited empirical data specifically examining how motivation affects student academic performance at the primary level, especially within the context of public schools in Mombasa County. The current study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by employing a mixed-methods approach to assess this relationship in a localized setting.

3. Methodology

This study adopted an embedded mixed-methods design to explore how teacher motivation influences academic performance. The design allowed for the integration of quantitative data (from teachers through questionnaires) and qualitative insights (from head teachers via interviews). The mixed methods approach was suitable for understanding the statistical relationships between motivation and performance, while also capturing deeper insights into

contextual and leadership dynamics influencing motivation. This design aligns with the study's aim by combining empirical data with stakeholder perspectives for a holistic understanding of the phenomenon (Orodho, 2009).

The research was conducted in Mombasa County, a diverse urban setting in Kenya. It was purposively chosen due to its unique socio-economic and cultural diversity across its public primary schools. While the county enjoys relatively high school enrollment, KCPE performance disparities exist despite the perception of well-motivated teachers. Investigating this paradox offered a suitable ground for studying how motivation translates to academic outcomes. Schools from low-income slums to high-income suburbs (like Nyali) were included, ensuring representativeness across different school environments.

Teacher motivation was the central independent variable. It included aspects such as remuneration, recognition, workload balance, and opportunities for professional development. The study examined how these factors influenced teacher retention, commitment, and instructional quality key components hypothesized to influence academic performance. These components align with key findings from scholars such as Khan and Mansoor (2013), Muriuki (2020), and Lubang (2019), who identified these factors as critical influencers of teacher commitment and classroom effectiveness. The dependent variable was academic performance which was measured primarily by KCPE scores, supplemented with indicators such as problem-solving skills, subject proficiency, and classroom innovation. These measures directly addressed how motivated teaching influences learning outcomes.

The target population comprised 2040 teachers and 102 head teachers from all 102 public primary schools in Mombasa County. Head teachers were included to provide administrative insights on how motivation strategies are implemented and their perceived effects on student outcomes. The schools were categorized by sub-county as shown below:

Table 1: Sub-County

Sub-County	Public Schools	Teachers
Kisauni	23	460
Changamwe	11	220
Jomvu	10	200
Nyali	13	260
Mvita	25	500
Likoni	20	400
Total	**102**	**2040**

The final sample included 109 teachers and 10 head teachers from 10 public primary schools, ensuring diverse perspectives across Mombasa's sub-counties.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select 10% (10 schools), guided by Gay and Diehl's (1992) recommendation. Head teachers from these schools were automatically included for interviews. Using Cronbach's formula, a sample size of 109 teachers was determined, randomly drawn from the 2040 total. Simple random sampling ensured equitable representation

from each sub-county: This approach ensured a diverse and inclusive representation of different school environments, reflecting recommendations by Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) and affirming insights from UNESCO (2020) about the influence of local contexts on educational outcomes. Stratification allowed the study to assess whether motivational dynamics and their impact on performance vary across different types of schools and communities within the county.

Table 2: Sub -County

Sub County	Sampled Schools	Head Teachers	Teachers
Nyali	1	1	14
Kisauni	2	2	24
Mvita	3	3	27
Changamwe	1	1	12
Likoni	2	2	21
Jomvu	1	1	11
Total	**10**	**10**	**109**

The study employed three data collection instruments: a semi-structured Teachers' Questionnaire, a Head Teachers' Interview Guide, and a Student Performance Datasheet. The Teachers' Questionnaire combined Likert-scale and open-ended items to elicit both quantitative and qualitative data on teachers' perceptions of motivation and its impact on student academic performance, aligning with the study's objectives. The Head Teachers' Interview Guide enabled an in-depth examination of institutional policies, leadership strategies, and motivational mechanisms, providing contextual insights into school-level influences on teacher motivation. Lastly, the Student Performance Datasheet recorded KCPE results from the past three academic years, supplying a standardized metric to assess student academic outcomes across the sampled schools.

A pilot study was conducted in two public primary schools in Kilifi County to test the research instruments, allowing for the identification of potential weaknesses related to structure, comprehension, and consistency. Validity of the instruments was ensured through the use of standardized items derived from existing literature and expert review by the research supervisor and other professionals in the field. To determine reliability, the instruments were subjected to Cronbach's Alpha analysis, aiming for a minimum threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ as recommended by Nunnaly (1978). Based on the pilot results, the instruments were refined to enhance clarity and improve reliability before the main study.

Quantitative data from questionnaires were coded and analyzed using SPSS v24**.** Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means) and inferential statistics (correlation analysis) were used to test the relationships between teacher motivation and academic performance. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically to supplement the quantitative findings.

The study adhered to all ethical protocols, including obtaining official approval from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and Kenyatta

University. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were fully briefed on the purpose and procedures of the research. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study. Data collected was handled with integrity, and findings were reported ethically, ensuring that no individual participant could be identified.

4. Results and Discussion

The research study sought to establish the preferred methods of teacher motivation. When teachers are motivated, they are more likely to engage deeply with their students, adopt innovative teaching strategies, and foster a positive learning environment. Views were collected from the teachers via questions, while the head teachers of the respective schools were interviewed.

Table 3: Ways Teachers Are Motivated in Schools

Motivation Method	Frequency	Percentage
Salary increment	11	10.1%
Promotion opportunities	10	9.2%
Classroom observation/holistic participation	5	4.6%
Feedback and recognition	5	4.6%
Token for KCPE performance	52	47.7%
In-service training	11	10.1%
Setting of targets	9	8.3%
Annual retreat and certificates	5	4.6%
Others	1	0.9%
Total	**109**	**100%**

The study explored how teachers are motivated in schools, with findings summarized in Table 3. The most common method reported was the issuance of tokens of appreciation for good academic performance in KCPE, cited by 52 teachers (47.7%). This aligns with principals' interviews, which emphasized oral praise, certificates, and one-on-one recognition. Salary increments and in-service training were each mentioned by 11 teachers (10.1%), followed by promotion opportunities (9.2%) and setting personal targets (8.3%). Other methods included classroom observation and holistic participation (4.6%), annual retreats with certificates (4.6%), and feedback and recognition (4.6%). Only 8 teachers (7.3%) reported that their schools lacked a motivation structure, while 91.7% affirmed its existence. These findings support studies by Muriuki (2020), Khan and Mansoor (2013), and Lubang (2019), all emphasizing the value of structured motivational frameworks, tangible rewards, and career development in enhancing teacher performance and retention.

School structure for the motivation of teachers

The finding is an indication that the schools have different structures that are used in remunerating teachers in order to enhance performance. The study found out that most schools have a structure for motivation of teachers as reported by 100 (91.7%) while 8(7.3%) teachers said no, only 1(0.9%) failed to respond.

Teacher Motivation Influence on Academic Performance

Table 4: Level of Teacher Motivation Influence on Academic Performance

Motivation Influence	Frequency	Percentage
Zeal to perform better	44	40.4%
Neutral	1	0.9%
Create a stimulating learning environment	61	56.0%
Clear career progression paths	2	1.8%
Others	1	0.9%
Total	**109**	**100%**

The study examined how teacher motivation influences academic performance, as summarized in Table 5. Most teachers (56.0%) reported that motivation helps create a stimulating learning environment, while 40.4% stated it fuels their zeal to perform better in their subjects. Only a few cited career progression (1.8%), neutrality (0.9%), or other reasons (0.9%). Teachers and principals agreed that a motivated teacher is more engaged, committed, and willing to support students, which enhances academic outcomes.

These findings align with Lubang (2019) in South Sudan, who noted that motivated teachers improve student achievement and reduce absenteeism. Similarly, Khan and Mansoor (2013) found that structured motivation positively influences job performance and retention. Principal 2 emphasized that motivated teachers go the extra mile, while Teacher X linked motivation to improved cooperation between teachers and learners. Muriuki (2020) also observed that motivated teachers in Kenya are more effective and committed, resulting in better student performance. The findings affirm that teacher motivation is a key driver of quality instruction and academic success, justifying the need for structured motivation systems in schools.

The extent to which motivation influences the decision by teachers to remain in a school

The study sought to determine the extent to which motivation influences teachers' decisions to remain in a school using a three-point Likert scale: high, moderate, and low. The findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Extent Motivation Influences Decision to Leave a School

Extent	Frequency	Percentage
Moderate	45	41.3%
High	59	54.1%
Low	5	4.6%
Total	**109**	**100.0%**

Most teachers (54.1%) indicated that motivation highly influences their decision to stay, while 41.3% reported moderate influence, and 4.6% said motivation had little effect. This supports findings by Asuquo and Akpan (2020) and Kinyili et al. (2015), who noted that motivated teachers are more likely to remain in their positions, reducing turnover.

The study also examined teachers' perceptions of fairness and equity in school motivation systems. Results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Perceived Fairness and Equity in Teacher Motivation

Response	Frequency	Percentage
No	17	15.6%
Yes	82	75.2%
I don't Know	10	9.2%
Total	**109**	**100.0%**

A majority (75.2%) felt motivation practices were fair and equitable. This aligns with Karanja and Waweru (2021), who linked perceived fairness with job satisfaction and teacher retention. However, 15.6% felt otherwise, and 9.2% were unsure, reflecting concerns over equity in motivational practices. These results emphasize the importance of structured, fair motivation systems in enhancing teacher commitment, satisfaction, and academic performance.

How Motivation and Commitment Influence Student Academic Performance

The study aimed to establish how teacher motivation and commitment influence student academic performance. Findings are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7: Motivation and Commitment to Teaching Roles Influence on Student Academic Performance

Motivation and Commitment Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Motivated teachers influence learning	13	11.9%
Personalized support and positive learning environment	7	6.4%
Consistent feedback	3	2.8%
Raises the performance of learners	68	62.4%
Achieving quality education	10	9.2%
Active participation in teaching	3	2.8%
Lack of motivation affects performance	2	1.8%
Others	3	2.8%
Total	**109**	**100.0%**

Most teachers (62.4%) affirmed that motivation enhances learner performance. Nyaga and Mutungi (2023) similarly found that motivated teachers positively influence academic outcomes through a conducive learning environment, consistent feedback, and personalized support. School heads echoed the need for fair motivation practices and inclusion in decision-making to maintain high performance and morale. Head teacher 1 emphasized treating all teachers equally to avoid demotivation.

Influence of Motivation Structures on Student Academic Performance

Teacher motivation is pivotal in shaping student outcomes. The study explored how various structures of teacher motivation both monetary and non-monetary affect academic performance in primary schools. The results are detailed in Table 8.

Table 8: Extent Structures of Teacher Motivation Influence Student Academic Performance

Structures of Teacher Motivation	High Frequency (%)	Moderate Frequency (%)	Low Frequency (%)
Basic Salary	80 (73.4%)	28 (25.7%)	1 (0.9%)
Bonuses	71 (65.1%)	33 (30.3%)	5 (4.6%)
Benefits	70 (64.2%)	38 (34.9%)	1 (0.9%)
Incentives	59(54.1%)	45(41.3%)	5(4.6%)

Basic salary had the highest impact, with 73.4% of teachers affirming its strong influence on student performance. Bonuses (65.1%) and benefits (64.2%) also ranked highly. These results align with global studies such as Smith and Richards (2021) and Ahmed et al. (2020), which found that financial rewards improve teacher engagement, resulting in better academic outcomes. Incentives were rated as having moderate influence by 41.3%, highlighting their lesser but still relevant role in motivation.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that motivation is pivotal in improving teacher performance and student academic outcomes. Among various motivation structures, base salary emerges as the most critical, followed by professional development opportunities, and benefits like housing and health insurance. Schools that invest in structured motivational strategies such as bonuses, recognition, and capacity-building workshops report improved teacher morale, retention, and ultimately, better student results. Motivated teachers create dynamic learning environments that foster academic excellence.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Policy Recommendations

1. The Ministry of Education should prioritize the increase of teachers' base salaries, as over 51.4% of respondents identified it as the most effective motivation strategy.
2. Schools should develop clear reward systems, including merit-based bonuses, certificates, and recognition events, to appreciate exemplary teachers.
3. The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) should promote professional development, offer leadership roles, and ensure job security to foster intrinsic motivation.
4. School administrators should ensure a conducive, resource-rich environment, enabling teachers to perform effectively. The institutions introduce regular training, scholarship opportunities, and career advancement paths to nurture long-term motivation and retention.

6.2 Recommendations for Further Research

- Investigate how motivation structures vary between rural and urban primary schools and their specific impact on performance.

- A longitudinal study should be conducted to assess how sustained motivation affects student outcomes and teacher retention over several years.

- A study to explore how different leadership styles influence teacher motivation and performance across school categories.

- A study on how motivation strategies affect male and female teachers differently, particularly regarding career progression and satisfaction.

6.3 Contribution to the Body of Knowledge

This study adds to the literature by demonstrating quantitative evidence linking teacher motivation structures especially financial incentives to student academic performance in Kenyan public primary schools. It also provides a context-specific analysis of motivation strategies in Mombasa County, offering insights for similar developing country contexts.

It highlights the importance of non-financial strategies, such as recognition, involvement in decision-making and conducive environments, which are often under emphasized, and informs education policy and management practices on the multifaceted nature of teacher motivation and its crucial role in improving school performance.

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