

Influence of Resource Allocation on the Performance of Public Secondary Schools in Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract

Performance of public secondary schools in Kenya remains uneven despite increased investment in education and the widespread adoption of strategic planning frameworks to improve academic outcomes and institutional effectiveness. Resource allocation has increasingly become a critical determinant of school performance because it influences instructional effectiveness, staffing adequacy, infrastructural support, and the availability of teaching and learning resources. This study examined the influence of resource allocation on the performance of public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya. The study was anchored on the Resource-Based View Theory and Higgins' 8-S Strategy Implementation Framework and adopted a mixed-methods approach using descriptive and correlational research designs. The target population comprised 395 public secondary school principals and 9 Sub-County Directors of Education, and a sample of 199 principals was selected using proportionate random sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and interview schedules, which underwent validity and reliability testing prior to the main study. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and bivariate linear regression analysis. The findings revealed that resource allocation had a positive and statistically significant influence on the performance of public secondary schools ($\beta = 0.139$, $t = 8.47$, $p = 0.000$). The regression model yielded an R^2 of 0.287, indicating that resource allocation explained 28.7% of the variation in school performance. The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 71.67$, $p < 0.05$), confirming the predictive effect of resource allocation on institutional performance. The study concluded that the effective allocation of instructional materials, staffing, financial resources, and infrastructure significantly enhances academic and non-academic performance in public secondary schools. The study recommends strengthening institutional resource planning, equitable distribution of educational resources, and monitoring systems to improve school performance outcomes in public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya.

Keywords: *Resource allocation, school performance, instructional resources, public secondary schools, strategic implementation, Meru County*

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1. Introduction

Public secondary schools in Kenya continue to experience significant performance disparities despite sustained government investment in educational reforms and strategic implementation initiatives aimed at improving institutional outcomes and learner achievement. Although the government has introduced policies such as free secondary education, capitation funding, curriculum reforms, and infrastructural expansion, many schools continue to record inconsistent Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) performance, weak co-curricular outcomes, infrastructural inadequacies, and operational inefficiencies. These persistent disparities have raised concerns about the effectiveness of strategy implementation processes within educational institutions, particularly regarding the allocation and utilization of institutional resources. According to UNESCO (2023), institutional resource capacity significantly influences educational effectiveness by shaping schools' ability to support curriculum delivery, learner support services, and operational stability. Similarly, OECD (2022) observed that schools with adequate institutional support systems and efficient resource management practices are more likely to achieve stable academic and operational performance than resource-constrained institutions.

Resource allocation remains a critical determinant of school performance because it influences the availability and utilization of instructional materials, staffing, infrastructural facilities, technological resources, and financial support necessary for effective teaching and learning. Effective allocation of educational resources enhances curriculum implementation, instructional coordination, learner support, and institutional operations, thereby improving academic and non-academic performance outcomes. Conversely, inadequate resource allocation contributes to shortages of teaching materials and staffing, overcrowded classrooms, and infrastructural limitations that undermine institutional effectiveness and learner achievement. Hanushek (2021) established that the efficient use of educational resources significantly improves instructional quality and learner performance, while Baker et al. (2022) observed that the equitable distribution and use of school resources strengthen academic outcomes and institutional stability. Similarly, Leithwood et al. (2021) noted that schools with effective resource planning systems demonstrate stronger instructional capacity and improved educational performance compared to poorly resourced institutions.

In Kenya, despite increased educational financing and policy interventions aimed at strengthening secondary education, many public secondary schools continue to experience financial constraints, delayed capitation disbursement, inadequate instructional resources, and infrastructural challenges that limit effective implementation of educational programmes. The Ministry of Education (2023) reported persistent disparities in KCSE performance across counties, largely associated with differences in resource adequacy and institutional capacity. In Meru County, variations in staffing levels, instructional materials, infrastructural facilities, and financial support have increasingly been linked to inconsistent academic performance and operational effectiveness across public secondary schools. Lafortune et al. (2022) similarly established that sustained investment in educational resources significantly enhances institutional performance, learner achievement, and long-term educational outcomes. These challenges, therefore, necessitate an empirical examination of how resource allocation influences the performance of public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya.

1.1 Problem Statement

Public secondary schools in Kenya play a critical role in human capital development and socio-economic transformation, yet they continue to experience persistent performance disparities reflected in inconsistent academic outcomes and weak institutional effectiveness. Despite sustained government investment through free secondary education, capitation funding, infrastructural expansion, and curriculum reforms, many public secondary schools continue to record poor and fluctuating KCSE performance. The Ministry of Education (2023) reported that more than 62% of candidates scored grade C and below in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations, limiting progression to tertiary education and skilled employment opportunities. UNESCO (2023) similarly observed that schools operating in resource-constrained environments exhibit lower instructional effectiveness and weaker learner achievement outcomes than adequately resourced institutions.

Empirical evidence indicates that schools with inadequate instructional materials, staffing shortages, weak infrastructural support, and limited financial resources are less likely to achieve stable academic and operational performance outcomes (Hanushek, 2021). Baker et al. (2022) established that inequitable allocation and inefficient utilization of educational resources significantly contribute to weak instructional delivery and reduced learner achievement. In Kenya, many public secondary schools continue to experience shortages of teaching materials, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate staffing, and infrastructural limitations that constrain effective curriculum delivery and institutional performance (Republic of Kenya, 2022). In Meru County, several public secondary schools have consistently recorded KCSE mean scores below 5.0, reflecting persistent institutional performance challenges (MoE, 2023).

Although existing studies have examined strategic planning and leadership practices in educational institutions, limited empirical attention has been paid to how resource allocation directly influences the performance of public secondary schools in Meru County. Addressing this gap is essential for strengthening institutional resource planning and improving educational effectiveness in public secondary schools.

1.2 Research Objective

To determine the influence of resource allocation on the performance of public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: Resource allocation does not significantly influence the performance of public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Within the Resource-Based View (RBV) framework, resource allocation is conceptualized as a strategic institutional capability that influences the performance of public secondary schools through effective distribution and utilization of financial, human, physical, and instructional resources. The theory posits that organizations achieve superior performance by acquiring and deploying valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources that competitors cannot easily replicate (Barney, 1991). In educational institutions, resources such as qualified teachers, instructional materials, physical infrastructure, technological facilities, and financial support constitute critical institutional assets that significantly influence effectiveness and learner

outcomes. The theory further emphasizes that institutional success is not solely determined by the availability of resources, but by the capacity of organizations to strategically coordinate and utilize those resources to achieve desired objectives. Within public secondary schools, the effective allocation of educational resources supports teaching and learning, strengthens curriculum implementation, enhances institutional coordination, and improves operational efficiency.

The Resource-Based View further explains that institutions with strong resource management systems are more likely to achieve sustainable competitive advantage and improved performance outcomes compared to poorly resourced institutions. Effective allocation of human resources enhances instructional quality and curriculum delivery, while adequate financial and physical resources support infrastructural development, learner support services, and co-curricular activities. Hanushek (2021) established that efficient utilization of educational resources significantly improves learner achievement and institutional effectiveness, while Baker et al. (2022) observed that equitable allocation of school resources strengthens instructional quality and academic outcomes. Similarly, OECD (2022) noted that schools with adequate educational resources consistently demonstrate stronger academic performance and institutional stability. Therefore, the RBV theory provides an appropriate foundation for explaining how effective resource allocation influences the performance of public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Resource Allocation and Performance

Resource allocation significantly influences institutional performance by determining how financial, human, instructional, and physical resources are distributed and utilized within organizational systems. Effective allocation of resources enhances operational efficiency, institutional coordination, curriculum implementation, and achievement of organizational objectives by directing available inputs toward high-impact activities. Barney (2021) established that strategic resource allocation enables institutions to create value and improve performance outcomes through the effective deployment of organizational capabilities. Similarly, Rothaermel (2021) observed that performance improvements are realized when institutional resources are efficiently coordinated and aligned with strategic priorities. Collis (2021) further argued that the availability of resources alone does not guarantee improved performance unless allocation decisions are guided by effective coordination mechanisms and institutional goals. Kraaijenbrink (2021) also noted that the effectiveness of resource allocation depends on complementary institutional processes such as monitoring, accountability, and strategic coordination. These findings suggest that educational institutions require not only adequate resources but also efficient management systems to achieve improved performance outcomes.

Empirical evidence within educational contexts further demonstrates that effective resource allocation enhances instructional quality, learner achievement, and institutional effectiveness. Hanushek (2021) established that the efficient use of educational resources significantly improves academic performance and operational stability in schools. Similarly, Baker et al. (2022) observed that the equitable allocation of educational resources strengthens instructional delivery and learner achievement by supporting curriculum implementation. Leithwood et al. (2021) further reported that schools with adequate instructional materials, qualified teaching staff, and stable financial support demonstrate stronger academic outcomes and improved

institutional performance than resource-constrained schools. OECD (2022) also emphasized that schools operating within supportive resource environments are more likely to achieve sustainable educational outcomes and institutional stability. These studies therefore reinforce the argument that effective allocation and utilization of school resources significantly contribute toward improved educational performance.

In the African context, institutions operating under constrained financial and infrastructural environments require efficient allocation and utilization of available resources to achieve desired outcomes. Nkundabanyanga et al. (2021) observed that financial limitations significantly affect institutional effectiveness, particularly in public-sector institutions operating under budgetary constraints. Similarly, Mutiso and Kamau (2022) established that effective resource management improves institutional performance in resource-limited environments by enhancing operational efficiency and service delivery. Within Kenya, Oduor and Waweru (2021) found that disparities in resource distribution contributed to variations in academic performance across public secondary schools, while Mwangi and Muturi (2022) observed that delayed funding and inefficient allocation practices negatively affected institutional performance outcomes. Despite these empirical findings, limited scholarly attention has been given to how resource allocation influences the performance of public secondary schools in Meru County, creating a contextual and empirical gap that this study sought to address.

2.3 Conceptual framework

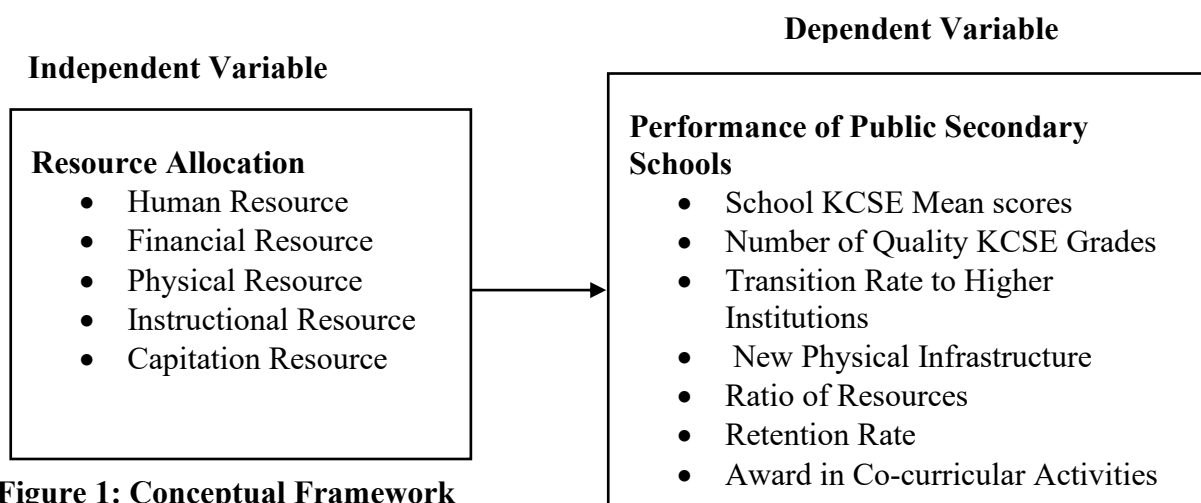


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

The study adopted a positivist research philosophy, which emphasizes objective measurement and the generation of empirical evidence through quantitative approaches (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). A descriptive and correlational research design was employed, in which the descriptive component examined prevailing resource allocation practices, while the correlational component assessed the relationship between resource allocation and the performance of public secondary schools (Saunders et al., 2021). The target population comprised 395 principals of public secondary schools and 9 Sub-County Directors of Education in Meru County. Using proportionate stratified random sampling, a sample size of 199 principals was selected to ensure representativeness across school categories, while all the 9 Sub-County Directors of Education participated in the study through a census approach.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires and interview schedules containing Likert-scale and open-ended items. A pilot study was conducted to refine the research instruments and improve validity and reliability (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2019). Content and construct validity were assessed through expert evaluation, while reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha coefficient with a threshold of 0.7 considered acceptable (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Version 27 with descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression. Diagnostic tests for normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity were conducted to ensure robustness of the regression model (Field, 2020). Ethical considerations were upheld through NACOSTI authorization, informed consent, confidentiality, and respondents' voluntary participation.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Response Rate

This section presents the response rate achieved during data collection and evaluates its adequacy for statistical analysis in the study context. Data were obtained from a sample comprising 199 principals of public secondary schools and 9 Sub-County Directors of Education in Meru County. Of the targeted respondents, 180 principals returned completed questionnaires, while all 9 Sub-County Directors of Education participated in the interviews. This resulted in response rates of 90.45% among principals and 100% among Sub-County Directors of Education. All returned instruments were examined and confirmed to be complete and suitable for analysis, thereby providing a reliable dataset for subsequent statistical procedures.

The response rates achieved were considered adequate for meaningful statistical analysis and interpretation of findings. In survey-based research, response rates above 70% are generally regarded as strong indicators of data reliability and reduced non-response bias. The high participation among principals, who constituted the primary unit of analysis, ensured sufficient representation of the study population. This level of response supported the application of inferential statistical techniques, including correlation and regression analysis. Consequently, the dataset was considered robust and appropriate for examining the relationship between resource allocation and performance of public secondary schools.

Table 1: Response Rate

Respondents	Sample Size	Response Rate	Percentage
Principals	199	180	90.45
Sub-County Directors of Education	9	9	100

4.2 Descriptive Analysis on Resource Allocation Variable

The study examined respondents' perceptions of resource allocation as a strategy-implementation dimension influencing the performance of public secondary schools in Meru County. The findings indicated general agreement that effective resource allocation enhances institutional performance. Allocation of resources to strategy implementation recorded a high mean score ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.958$), suggesting that principals perceived resource alignment as a critical enabler of school effectiveness. Similarly, financial resource allocation influencing

strategy implementation recorded a mean of 4.07 (SD = 0.989), reinforcing the importance of financial support in operationalizing institutional strategies. Human resources were also perceived as central to implementation processes, with respondents agreeing that human resources are the main actors in strategy implementation (M = 4.04, SD = 1.045).

The findings further revealed moderate agreement regarding the adequacy of institutional resources. Recruitment of competent staff had a mean of 3.80 (SD = 1.188), whereas adequacy of human resources had a lower mean of 3.24 (SD = 1.199), suggesting staffing disparities across schools. Availability of instructional resources was also recorded as relatively low (M = 2.96, SD = 1.150), indicating shortages of teaching and learning materials in some institutions. Similarly, the sufficient allocation of resources for curriculum implementation recorded a mean of 2.89 (SD = 1.212), reflecting financial constraints that affect strategy implementation and curriculum delivery.

Physical and financial resources were also identified as important determinants of institutional performance. Adequate physical resources enhancing performance recorded a mean of 3.87 (SD = 1.005), while delayed capitation affecting programme implementation recorded a mean of 3.79 (SD = 1.201). Respondents strongly agreed that the government should improve the timeliness of fund disbursement (M = 4.42, SD = 0.909), highlighting concerns regarding funding delays and institutional operations. The aggregate mean score of 3.68 (SD = 1.102) confirmed overall agreement that resource allocation significantly influences strategy implementation and school performance. These findings support the Resource-Based View Theory, which emphasizes that effective deployment and utilization of institutional resources enhances organizational performance and competitiveness (Barney, 2021).

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis on Resource Allocation (N = 180)

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Allocation of resources to strategy implementation improves performance	180	4.06	0.958
Human resources are the main actors in strategy implementation	180	4.04	1.045
The school recruits competent staff to implement the curriculum	180	3.80	1.188
The school has adequate human resources	180	3.24	1.199
Human resource allocation improves performance	180	3.96	1.040
Financial resource allocation influences strategy implementation	180	4.07	0.989
Financial allocation follows budgetary processes	180	3.57	1.269
Sufficient resources are allocated for curriculum implementation	180	2.89	1.212
Finances are allocated for physical facilities development	180	3.27	1.214
Adequate physical resources enhance performance	180	3.87	1.005
Availability of instructional resources	180	2.96	1.150
Instructional resource allocation improves performance	180	3.69	1.047
Delayed capitation affects programme implementation	180	3.79	1.201
The government should improve the timeliness of fund disbursement	180	4.42	0.909
Aggregate Mean / SD		3.68	1.102

4.3 Descriptive Analysis on Performance of Public Secondary Schools

Performance of public secondary schools in this study was defined as the extent to which institutions achieved desired academic outcomes, operational efficiency, and institutional growth indicators, such as KCSE results, transition rates, retention levels, and infrastructural development. The descriptive findings indicated that respondents moderately agreed that performance was reflected through achievement of specific KCSE mean scores ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.290$), suggesting that academic performance remained a central benchmark for evaluating school success. Respondents further strongly agreed that performance was influenced by clearly defined goals, stakeholder effort, and institutional commitment ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.238$), highlighting the importance of coordinated effort in achieving performance outcomes. Schools setting ambitious KCSE targets also recorded moderate agreement ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.096$), while progressive improvement in KCSE mean scores was rated at 3.50 ($SD = 1.070$).

The findings further revealed moderate ratings regarding improvement in quality grades ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.178$) and transition rates to colleges and universities ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.165$), suggesting that academic gains were incremental rather than transformative. Student retention rates above 50% recorded a mean of 3.69 ($SD = 1.202$), indicating relatively stable enrolment and progression. However, infrastructure development based on strategic plans recorded a moderate mean of 3.19 ($SD = 1.298$), while adequacy of physical facilities recorded a mean of 3.13 ($SD = 1.322$), suggesting infrastructural constraints affecting institutional performance. Similarly, resource-student ratio satisfaction recorded a moderate mean ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.268$), indicating pressure on available educational resources.

The results further demonstrated that curriculum implementation, leadership, communication, and monitoring significantly influenced school performance. Curriculum implementation determining school success recorded a mean of 3.91 ($SD = 1.120$), while leadership influencing resource allocation and performance recorded a mean of 3.79 ($SD = 1.337$). Communication enhancing performance recorded a mean of 3.74 ($SD = 1.124$), while monitoring critical to institutional success recorded a relatively high mean of 3.98 ($SD = 1.302$). The average mean score of 3.53 ($SD = 1.287$) confirmed that the performance of public secondary schools was moderately effective. These findings support the Resource-Based View Theory, which emphasizes that institutional performance is influenced by effective deployment and management of organizational resources and strategic processes.

Table 3: Statistics on Performance by Principals

Performance Indicators	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Performance indicated by KCSE mean scores	180	3.33	1.290
Performance influenced by goals and stakeholder effort	180	4.14	1.238
School sets ambitious KCSE targets	180	3.65	1.096
KCSE mean scores have progressively improved	180	3.50	1.070
Students attaining quality grades have improved	180	3.38	1.178
Transition rate to colleges/universities is increasing	180	3.48	1.165
Student retention above 50%	180	3.69	1.202
Infrastructure developed as per the strategic plan	180	3.19	1.298
Adequate physical facilities available	180	3.13	1.322
Awards in co-curricular competitions	180	3.16	1.229
Resource-student ratio satisfactory	180	3.08	1.268
Financial performance improved	180	3.38	1.150
Curriculum implementation determines success	180	3.91	1.120
Leadership influences resource allocation	180	3.79	1.337
Communication enhances performance	180	3.74	1.124
Monitoring critical to success	180	3.98	1.302
Average		3.53	1.287

4.4 Bivariate Correlation Analysis

The results presented in Table 4 indicate a statistically significant positive relationship between resource allocation and performance of public secondary schools ($r = 0.536$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that effective allocation and utilization of financial, human, instructional, and physical resources are associated with improved academic outcomes, operational efficiency, and institutional effectiveness. The findings imply that schools with better resource planning and allocation practices are more likely to achieve stronger performance outcomes compared to institutions experiencing resource inadequacies. These findings support empirical literature indicating that adequate educational resources significantly improve institutional effectiveness and learner achievement (OECD, 2022; Robinson et al., 2021).

The positive and statistically significant relationship further confirms the Resource-Based View Theory, which emphasizes that organizational performance depends on effective acquisition, deployment, and utilization of valuable institutional resources. The findings therefore demonstrate that strengthening resource allocation systems is essential to improving the performance of public secondary schools in Meru County.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Tests Analysis

Category	X1	Y
Resource Allocation (X1)		
Pearson Correlation	1	
Sig. (2-tailed)		
N	180	
Performance of Public Secondary Schools (Y)		
Pearson Correlation	.536*	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	180	180

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

4.5 Bivariate Linear Regression Analysis

The hypothesis examined whether resource allocation significantly influences the performance of public secondary schools in Meru County. The null hypothesis (H₀) stated that resource allocation has no significant influence on school performance. The model summary results presented in Table 5 indicate a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.536, suggesting a moderate positive relationship between resource allocation and school performance. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.287$) implies that approximately 28.7% of the variation in the performance of public secondary schools is explained by resource allocation. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.274 further confirmed the model's robustness after accounting for sample size and complexity. These findings suggest that improvements in the allocation of financial, human, instructional, and physical resources are associated with enhanced institutional performance.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.536	.287	.274	.928

- a. Dependent Variable: Performance of Public Secondary Schools
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Resource Allocation

The ANOVA results presented in Table 6 further confirmed the validity of the regression model. The findings revealed an F-statistic of 71.67 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating that the model was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. This implies that the relationship between resource allocation and school performance was not due to random variation but reflected a genuine predictive relationship.

Table 6: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	102.956	1	102.956	71.67	.000
Residual	142.022	178	.798		
Total	244.978	179			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of Public Secondary Schools

b. Predictors: (Constant), Resource Allocation

The regression coefficients presented in Table 7 indicate that resource allocation had a positive and significant effect on school performance ($\beta = 0.139$, $t = 8.47$, $p = 0.000$). This implies that a one-unit increase in resource allocation leads to a corresponding 0.139-unit increase in the performance of public secondary schools, holding other factors constant. The significance level ($p < 0.05$) demonstrates that the relationship was statistically reliable. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_0), which stated that resource allocation has no significant influence on the performance of public secondary schools in Meru County, was rejected. The findings imply that effective allocation of financial, human, instructional, and physical resources significantly improves academic outcomes, operational efficiency, and institutional effectiveness within public secondary schools.

Table 7: Regression Coefficients

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficients (β)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	t	Sig.
Constant	3.064	.214	–	14.341	.000
Resource Allocation	.139	.016	.536	8.47	.000

Dependent Variable: Performance of Public Secondary Schools

5. Conclusion

The study found that resource allocation has a statistically significant positive effect on the performance of public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya. Effective allocation of financial, human, instructional, and physical resources enhances academic performance, curriculum implementation, operational efficiency, and institutional effectiveness. Adequate staffing, timely financial disbursement, availability of instructional materials, and improved infrastructural support were found to contribute significantly toward improved school outcomes. The regression findings confirmed that resource allocation significantly predicts the performance of public secondary schools, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. The study, therefore, concludes that effective resource allocation is a critical determinant of successful strategy implementation and sustainable institutional performance in public secondary schools.

6. Recommendations

Public secondary schools should prioritize strengthening resource allocation systems by enhancing financial planning, staffing adequacy, infrastructural development, and equitable distribution of instructional resources. School administrators and Boards of Management should ensure that available resources align with institutional priorities and the needs of curriculum implementation to improve academic and operational performance outcomes. The Ministry of Education and county education authorities should further improve the timeliness of capitation disbursements and strengthen monitoring mechanisms to ensure the efficient use of educational resources. In addition, schools should establish effective budgeting, accountability, and resource management systems that support continuous improvement in teaching, learning, and institutional effectiveness.

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