

Influence of School Working Conditions on the Academic Performance of Learners in Public Primary Schools in Nyandarua West Sub-County, Kenya

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Accepted: 14 August 2026 || Published: 09 September 2026

Abstract

The study examined the influence of school working conditions on the academic performance of learners in public primary schools in Nyandarua West Sub-County, Kenya, with a specific focus on adequate teaching resources, supportive leadership, and manageable teacher workloads. The study was anchored on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. A convergent-parallel mixed-methods approach using cross-sectional and interview designs was adopted. The study targeted 530 teachers and 23 head teachers from 23 public primary schools in Nyandarua West Sub-County. Cochran's formula (1977) determined a sample of 223 teachers selected through simple random sampling, while 12 head teachers were purposively selected. Instruments were piloted with 20 teachers in public primary schools in Nyandarua Central Sub-County. A Cronbach's Alpha of 0.7 or above was considered acceptable. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS through correlation and linear regression, while qualitative data were thematically analyzed and triangulated. The study adhered to ethical research standards. School working conditions, such as adequate teaching resources, supportive leadership, and manageable workloads, enhance teaching effectiveness and improve learner outcomes (mean = 3.89; SD = 0.432). Additionally, correlation results confirmed that school working conditions have a very strong positive and statistically significant relationship with academic performance ($r = 0.702$, $p < 0.01$). Regression results further showed that school working conditions had the strongest positive and statistically significant influence on academic performance ($B = 0.297$, $\beta = 0.361$, $p < 0.001$). The study finds that the availability of teaching resources, supportive leadership, and a manageable workload significantly enhance teacher effectiveness and learners' academic outcomes in public primary schools. The study recommends that school management and education authorities improve working conditions by ensuring adequate teaching resources, supportive leadership, manageable workloads, and improved funding and infrastructure in public primary schools.

Keywords: *School Working Conditions, Academic Performance, Public Primary Schools, Nyandarua West Sub-County, Nyandarua County*

How to Cite: Njeri, T. J., Thuba, E., & Kanini, J. (2026). Influence of School Working Conditions on the Academic Performance of Learners in Public Primary Schools in Nyandarua West Sub-County, Kenya. *Journal of Education*, 6(6), 36-45.

1. Introduction

Education plays a fundamental role in transmitting knowledge, skills, and values across generations, enabling learners to develop their potential and participate effectively in economic and social life. According to Dorfman-Furman (2024), education enhances productivity, self-confidence, excellence, and awareness of global demands. One of the key indicators of educational effectiveness is academic performance, assessed through both continuous and summative evaluation, which provides insights into learners' knowledge mastery and the quality of instruction (Goss, 2022). However, academic performance is influenced by multiple school-related factors, among them the working conditions under which teachers operate. School working conditions are defined as the availability of instructional resources, school infrastructure, workload, administrative support, and the overall school climate. They shape teachers' effectiveness, classroom practices, and ultimately learners' academic outcomes. Supportive school environments contribute to improved teacher engagement, retention, and student achievement (Gokalp, 2022). In developed education systems, emphasis is placed on improving school working conditions as a strategy for enhancing instructional quality. For instance, in the United States, efforts to strengthen school leadership structures and improve resource allocation have been central to improving teaching effectiveness (Smith & Gillespie, 2023). In parts of Europe, such as Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, structured policies govern school environments, ensuring that teachers operate within supportive, well-organized institutional systems (Neumann et al., 2022).

In Africa, school working conditions continue to pose significant challenges to effective teaching and learning. Studies in Nigeria indicate that poor working conditions, including inadequate infrastructure and limited instructional resources, contribute to teacher absenteeism and reduced instructional quality (Onyekwelu, 2024). In Ethiopia, although efforts have been made to improve teacher retention through better employment conditions, inadequate school environments still negatively affect learner outcomes (Abebe & Assemie, 2023). Similarly, in Uganda and Tanzania, teachers often work under heavy workloads, with limited teaching materials and weak administrative support systems, all of which constrain effective classroom instruction (Ayiro et al., 2023).

In Kenya, the government has implemented Competency-Based Education (CBE), positioning teachers as central agents in curriculum delivery and learner development (Ogada, 2025). However, the effectiveness of this system is highly dependent on the quality of school working conditions. The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) oversees teacher deployment and remuneration, but disparities in school infrastructure, resource availability, and administrative support persist across counties (Jonjo, 2025). Studies show that inadequate school facilities and limited instructional materials negatively affect teacher performance and learner achievement (Matiang'i et al., 2024).

At the county level, variations in school working conditions have been associated with differences in educational outcomes. For instance, schools with better infrastructure and adequate instructional resources tend to achieve higher learner performance than those with poor facilities (Kioni et al., 2023). Additionally, supportive leadership and positive school climate have been shown to enhance teacher effectiveness and learner engagement (Mutuku, 2022). Conversely, poor working conditions contribute to teacher stress, reduced instructional commitment, and inconsistent lesson delivery (Muia, 2023).

1.1 Problem Statement

Ideally, well-maintained infrastructure, adequate instructional resources, supportive leadership, and a positive school environment enhance teaching effectiveness, thereby improving learner engagement and academic performance. However, the situation in public primary schools in Nyandarua West Sub-County suggests challenges in learners' academic performance. When schools have adequate learning facilities and instructional materials, teachers prepare well for lessons, employ diverse teaching strategies, and provide the necessary academic support that enables learners to achieve their full potential.

Despite government investment in curriculum reforms, provision of instructional materials, infrastructure development, ICT integration, and strengthened school supervision, public primary schools in Nyandarua West Sub-County have poor and inconsistent academic performance, with the trends from 2019 to 2023 reflecting low mean scores: 240, 231, 222, 235, and 226, respectively. These scores remain below the national average of 250. This indicates persistent underperformance over the five-year period. Similarly, KPSEA results show limited improvement. The scores for 2022, 2023, and 2024 were 2.4, 2.2, and 2.4, respectively. On this scale, 4 represents "Exceeding Expectations", 3 represents "Meeting Expectations", 2 represents "Approaching Expectations", and 1 represents "Below Expectations" (Nyandarua County Education, 2025). These results indicate persistent performance gaps and limited mastery of expected competencies.

Nonetheless, limited empirical studies have specifically examined the influence of school working conditions on academic performance in this sub-county. This creates a clear contextual research gap. Therefore, this study examined the influence of school working conditions on the academic performance of learners in public primary schools in Nyandarua West Sub-County, Kenya. The study provides evidence to inform educational policy, school management practices, and strategies for improving learning outcomes.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The study examined the influence of school working conditions on the academic performance of learners in public primary schools in Nyandarua West Sub-County, Kenya.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H₀: School working conditions have no statistically significant influence on the academic performance of learners in public primary schools in Nyandarua West Sub-County.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

The study was based on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, developed by Frederick Herzberg in 1959, which explains employee job satisfaction by dividing workplace factors into hygiene factors, such as working conditions, and motivator factors, such as achievement, recognition, and responsibility. The theory proposes that hygiene factors do not create long-term motivation but prevent dissatisfaction, while motivators enhance intrinsic motivation and improve outcomes.

The theory clearly distinguishes between factors that prevent dissatisfaction and those that actively promote motivation, making it useful for analyzing workplace performance. However, it assumes all individuals respond similarly to workplace factors and does not fully account for contextual or cultural differences in motivation.

The theory was highly applicable to this study because it directly explains school working conditions as hygiene factors, where adequate teaching resources, supportive leadership, manageable workloads, and good infrastructure reduce teacher dissatisfaction and create a stable environment for effective teaching. When these conditions are poor, teacher morale and performance decline, negatively affecting learners' academic outcomes. Thus, Herzberg's theory underpins school working conditions by showing that improving the work environment enhances teacher effectiveness and, indirectly, academic performance.

2.2 Empirical Review

School working conditions are conceptualized as the physical, instructional, and administrative environment in which teachers operate, including availability of teaching resources, workload, leadership support, infrastructure, and institutional policies. These conditions significantly influence teacher motivation, effectiveness, and instructional quality, which in turn affect learners' academic performance. According to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, poor working conditions act as hygiene factors that create dissatisfaction and reduce performance, while favorable working conditions reduce dissatisfaction and support effective teaching. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory further argues that when teachers work in a conducive environment, they can fully utilize their skills and knowledge, thereby improving learner achievement (Herzberg, 1959; Becker, 1964).

Globally, evidence shows that school working conditions significantly influence academic performance by affecting teacher effectiveness. Studies indicate that adequate teaching resources, supportive leadership, and manageable workloads enhance teacher motivation, reduce burnout, and improve learner outcomes (Sanlao et al., 2024; Santos et al., 2020; Heffernan et al., 2022). Investment in ICT infrastructure and learning materials has been associated with improved literacy and numeracy outcomes, while excessive workload and poor working environments negatively affect instructional quality and student achievement (Dela Cruz et al., 2020; Fredeluces, 2025). These findings consistently demonstrate that school environments are critical determinants of educational performance.

In Africa, studies show that school working conditions strongly shape teacher effectiveness and learner performance. The availability of instructional materials, such as textbooks, ICT tools, and libraries, improves teaching quality and student engagement (Avedzi, 2025). Similarly, supportive leadership enhances teacher motivation and instructional delivery, leading to improved academic outcomes (Ayanda & Nana, 2025). However, challenges such as heavy workloads, inadequate infrastructure, and limited resources continue to negatively affect teaching effectiveness and student performance across many African education systems (Jaiyeoba et al., 2024). Overall, improving school working conditions enhances both teacher performance and learner achievement (Shava, 2024).

In Kenya, school working conditions significantly influence learners' academic performance (Omusula, 2025). Studies indicate that availability of teaching resources, supportive leadership, and manageable workloads enhance curriculum delivery and improve student outcomes, while inadequate resources and excessive workloads contribute to poor performance (Mburu & Sabwami, 2024; Nyakundi et al., 2025). Despite ongoing education reforms and government investment, disparities in school working conditions persist across regions, leading to inconsistent academic performance in public primary schools, including Nyandarua West Sub-County, where the influence of these conditions remains insufficiently established (Ahmed & Ochieng, 2024).

3. Methodology

The study adopted a convergent mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the influence of teacher motivation on learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Nyandarua West Sub-County. The quantitative strand employed a descriptive cross-sectional design to examine the relationships among teacher remuneration, job security, professional development, school working conditions, and learners' academic performance, while the qualitative strand used interviews with head teachers to provide contextual explanations of the quantitative findings (Meydan & Akkaş, 2024).

The target population comprised 530 teachers and 23 head teachers from 23 public primary schools in Nyandarua West Sub-County, for a total of 553 respondents. Using Cochran's (1977) formula at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, a sample of 223 teachers was obtained for the quantitative component, while 12 head teachers were purposively selected for the qualitative component, resulting in a total sample of 235 respondents.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to teachers and semi-structured interview guides administered to head teachers. The instruments were pretested among 20 teachers from public primary schools in Nyandarua Central Sub-County to assess clarity and consistency. Content validity was established using Lawshe's (1975) Content Validity Ratio (CVR), while construct validity was confirmed through expert review. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with a threshold of 0.70 considered acceptable (Izah et al., 2023).

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 30 through descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis to determine the influence of teacher motivation variables on learners' academic performance. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically by coding, categorizing, and identifying recurring themes. The quantitative and qualitative findings were then integrated through convergent triangulation during interpretation to compare, corroborate, and explain the study's findings comprehensively.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Response Rate

Response rate analysis was conducted to determine the proportion of questionnaires that were successfully completed by respondents. Results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Questionnaire Response Rate

Instrument	Targeted	Returned/completed	Not Returned/ Not complete
Questionnaires	223	202 (91%)	21 (9%)
KII Guides	12	12	-

A total of 202 out of 223 questionnaires were successfully completed, yielding a 91% response rate, which was considered adequate for statistical analysis. Additionally, all 12 head teachers participated in the interviews. The high response rate was attributed to self-administered questionnaires, data collection within school premises, follow-up procedures, and assurance of confidentiality.

4.2 Reliability Tests Results

Internal consistency reliability of the study constructs was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to determine the degree to which the items measuring each construct were consistent and reliable. Results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Reliability Tests Results

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
School Working Conditions	9	0.880	Reliable
Academic Performance	9	0.719	Reliable

The reliability of the study instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The study constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming acceptable internal consistency reliability, indicating that the measurement instrument was reliable and suitable for subsequent statistical analyses.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics for School Working Conditions

The study sought to examine the influence of school working conditions such as availability of teaching resources, support from school leadership, and workload, on the academic performance of learners in comprehensive primary schools.

Table 3: Respondents' Opinion on School Working Conditions

Statement	SD	D	M	A	SA	M	SD
Adequate textbooks, teaching aids, and ICT tools are available to support my lessons.	2 (1.0%)	3 (1.5%)	56 (27.7%)	91 (45.0%)	50 (24.8%)	3.91	.818
Insufficient teaching resources negatively affect my lesson delivery.	3 (1.5%)	1 (0.5%)	41 (20.3%)	127 (62.9%)	30 (14.9%)	3.89	.704
The presence of library and laboratory facilities enhances the quality of my teaching.	0 (0.0%)	3 (1.5%)	35 (17.3%)	132 (65.3%)	32 (15.8%)	3.96	.625
The head teacher and school administrators' guidance and supervision support teaching.	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.5%)	18 (8.9%)	121 (59.9%)	62 (30.7%)	4.21	.612
I feel unsupported by school leadership in carrying out my teaching duties.	0 (0.0%)	20 (9.9%)	33 (16.3%)	111 (55.0%)	38 (18.8%)	3.83	.849
Encouragement and feedback from school leaders motivate me to improve learner performance.	3 (1.5%)	1 (0.5%)	62 (30.7%)	104 (51.5%)	32 (15.8%)	3.80	.762
My workload is reasonable, allowing sufficient time for lesson preparation and learner support.	1 (0.5%)	3 (1.5%)	50 (24.8%)	117 (57.9%)	31 (15.3%)	3.86	.699
Excessive teaching and administrative duties reduce my effectiveness in the classroom.	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)	54 (26.7%)	115 (56.9%)	31 (15.3%)	3.86	.684
A manageable number of lessons and classes helps me focus on improving learners' academic performance.	1 (0.5%)	22 (10.9%)	53 (26.2%)	86 (42.6%)	40 (19.8%)	3.70	.926
Aggregate composite score						3.89	.432

SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; M=Moderate; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree

School Working Conditions

Respondents generally perceived school working conditions positively ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.43$), indicating that the availability of teaching resources, supportive school leadership, and manageable workloads contribute to effective teaching and improved learner outcomes.

Availability of Teaching Resources

Most respondents agreed that adequate textbooks, teaching aids, ICT tools, and library/laboratory facilities support effective lesson delivery ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.82$; $M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.70$; $M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.63$, respectively). Qualitative findings corroborated these results, with head teachers reporting that adequate instructional resources improve lesson preparation, instructional clarity, and learner engagement, while inadequate resources constrain effective teaching.

Support from School Leadership

Teachers reported high levels of leadership support through supervision, guidance, and feedback ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.61$). Interview findings similarly indicated that supportive school leadership enhances teacher motivation, accountability, and instructional effectiveness by providing encouragement, professional guidance, and constructive feedback.

Workload

Respondents agreed that manageable workloads enable adequate lesson preparation and learner support, whereas excessive teaching and administrative responsibilities reduce classroom effectiveness ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.70$; $M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.68$). Qualitative findings further revealed that heavy workloads limit teachers' preparation time, reduce opportunities for individualized learner support, and negatively affect instructional quality.

4.4 Correlation analysis

Bivariate Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength, direction, and significance of the relationships between the school working conditions and academic performance of learners. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlation Results

Variable	Academic Performance	School Working Conditions
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	202
School Working Conditions	Pearson Correlation	.702**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	202

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

The findings indicated that the school working environment had a strong positive and statistically significant relationship with academic performance ($r = 0.702$, $p < 0.001$). This implied that a supportive, well-resourced, and enabling school environment is strongly associated with improved learner academic outcomes.

4.5 Regression Analysis

The regression analysis examined the extent to which school working conditions predict variance in learners' academic performance in comprehensive primary schools. The analysis further examined the model's statistical significance.

Table 53: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t
1	(Constant)	0.365	1.987		0.184
	School Working Conditions	.297	.052	.361	5.711
					.854
					.000

a. Dependent Variable: Academic Performance of Learners

The regression coefficients revealed that school working conditions had a positive and significant effect on academic performance ($B = 0.297$, $p < 0.001$).

For every one-unit increase in school working conditions, learners' academic performance is predicted to increase by 0.297 points, holding all other variables constant. The increase is highly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), showing that a supportive and well-resourced school environment strongly enhances learners' academic performance.

Furthermore, the beta coefficients indicated that the school working conditions ($\beta = 0.361$, $p < 0.001$) provided a strong, statistically significant influence on academic performance. This implies that improvements in teaching resources, administrative support, and workload management have the strongest direct effect on learners' outcomes. It suggests that a conducive and well-supported school environment is a critical driver of academic performance in public primary schools.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that school working conditions have a positive and statistically significant influence on learners' academic performance. The null hypothesis (H_0) stating that there is no significant relationship between school working conditions and academic performance was therefore rejected, and the corresponding alternative hypothesis was supported. This indicated that the availability of teaching resources, supportive leadership, and a manageable workload significantly enhance learners' academic outcomes.

6. Recommendations

Practical Implications: School management and stakeholders should ensure adequate teaching resources, supportive leadership, and manageable workloads to improve teacher effectiveness and learner outcomes.

Policy Implications: Education authorities should prioritize funding and policy development to improve school infrastructure, teaching materials, and workload management in public primary schools.

Theoretical Implications: The findings supported Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory by confirming that a conducive working environment enhances motivation, productivity, and learner achievement.

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