

## **Influence of Field Education Officers' Transformational Leadership Practices in Learner Welfare Management on Job Satisfaction among Primary School Administrators in the South Rift Region, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

Education is the cornerstone of national development, with Primary School Administrators' Job Satisfaction (JS) central to delivering quality education by fostering motivation, commitment, and reduced burnout, which directly enhance learner outcomes. In Kenya's South Rift region, teachers in Bomet and Narok counties' primary schools miss 12.9% and 23.5% of scheduled lessons, respectively, figures that far exceed the national average of 6.6% and signal severe deficiencies in teacher morale and professional fulfillment. This study sought to examine the influence of Field Education Officers' Transformational Leadership Practices in Learners' Welfare Management on Primary School Administrators' JS. The research adopted a concurrent triangulation mixed-methods design. Grounded in Path-Goal and Two-Factor theories, a concurrent triangulation mixed-methods design targeted 2,849 participants (2,754 administrators, 79 FEOs, 16 supervisors). A sample of 347 (276 administrators, 63 FEOs via stratified random sampling; 8 supervisors purposively) was selected using Nassiuma's formula. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, interview guides, and document analysis guides. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and linear regression in SPSS Version 27, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically in NVivo 14. All statistical analyses were subjected to significance testing at  $\alpha = .05$ . The results showed that Learners' Welfare Management had a significant positive influence on Primary School Administrators' JS ( $R^2 = .139$ ,  $\beta = .373$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Descriptively, FEOs rated higher on enabling others than challenging the process, indicating cooperation strength but limited change-driving capacity. Qualitatively, innovations were poorly documented, talent identification remained exam-driven, collaboration was event-based, and student participation structures were tokenistic. The study recommends mandating FEOs to establish and monitor formal, sustainable student voice mechanisms: learner councils, feedback systems, and participatory committees. These findings offer the Teachers Service Commission, Ministry of Education, and policymakers evidence-based guidance to strengthen welfare practices and enhance administrator JS, while contributing to Kenya's educational leadership theory.

**Keywords:** *Transformational leadership, field education officers, learner welfare management, job satisfaction*

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## 1. Introduction

A nation's sustained economic prosperity is inextricably linked to the quality of its educational system, in which effective leadership serves as a critical cornerstone (UNESCO, 2024). Central to this relationship is Primary School Administrators' Job Satisfaction (JS), a key determinant of instructional quality, learner outcomes, and overall institutional effectiveness. In response to complex global challenges, Transformational Leadership (TL) has emerged as the dominant paradigm for educational governance. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2025) identifies it as a central mechanism for strengthening teacher morale and retention, thereby directly influencing Primary School Administrators' JS (UNESCO, 2024). Underpinning this paradigm is the premise that transformational leaders are not born but developed through deliberate training, continuous professional development, mentorship, and reflective practice (Kouzes & Posner, 2023).

In Learners' Welfare Management, Field Education Officers (FEOs) apply TL to shape institutional culture and pedagogy (Kiagu & Kingi, 2025). They challenge existing practices by introducing inclusive excellence awards and participatory forums that elevate student voice (Kouzes & Posner, 2023). They also enable others to act by stabilizing the learning environment and empowering teachers to engage in well-being initiatives, promoting collective ownership and professional agency (Kingi, 2025). These efforts enhance school administrators' JS by reducing behavioural disruptions and disciplinary burdens linked to burnout (Collie & Martin, 2023). As Wambui (2024) observed, teachers thrived in structured settings with supportive leadership that delegated responsibility and encouraged innovation.

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of FEOs' Transformational Leadership Practices (TLP) in Learners' Welfare Management on Primary School Administrators' JS in the South Rift region, Kenya. The specific objective was therefore to examine the influence of FEOs' TLP in Learners' Welfare Management on Primary School Administrators' JS in the South Rift region, Kenya. The study sought to test the hypothesis: **H<sub>01</sub>**: There is no statistically significant influence of Field Education Officers' Transformational Leadership Practices in Learners' Welfare Management on Primary School Administrators' Job Satisfaction in the South Rift Region, Kenya. The findings from testing this hypothesis are hoped to inform the Ministry of Education, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), and Primary School Administrators about the extent to which FEOs' TLP in Learners' Welfare Management affect Primary School Administrators' JS, thereby guiding policy interventions and capacity-building programmes to enhance school leadership effectiveness and reduce administrator turnover.

## 2. Literature Review

Learners' Welfare Management (LWM) is a critical domain where FEOs apply Transformational Leadership Practices (TLP) to foster positive institutional cultures, enhance pedagogical outcomes, and boost Primary School Administrators' JS. By challenging the process and enabling others to act, FEOs who promote innovative career guidance, challenge traditional paradigms, build collaborative networks, spot diverse talents, and institutionalise learners' voice contribute to school effectiveness. Globally, career guidance is increasingly promoted as central to youth employability, with the OECD (2025) identifying structured career education as essential for reducing skills mismatches and UNESCO (2023) advocating age-appropriate vocational exploration in primary contexts; critiques, however, note the individualistic orientation of dominant models that often fail to account for structural inequalities (Arulmani et al., 2021). At continental and regional levels, the African Union Commission (2025b) and AUDA-NEPAD (2024) stress skills alignment and the need to

challenge academic-only pathways, yet offer limited operational guidance for meso-level actors such as FEOs (Oketch, 2022). In Kenya, the Competency-Based Curriculum has introduced career guidance at Grades 4–6, supported by national training programmes and the Dual Training Policy (UNESCO, 2025; EduPoa, 2026), but empirical studies show teachers frequently lack adequate training (Karani, 2025). FEO-organised termly career awareness clinics and teacher training have been shown to significantly improve teacher self-efficacy, role clarity and JS (Mwangi & Otieno, 2025), while the absence of systematic guidance remains a key stressor in primary schools across East Africa (Amoako & Mwangi, 2025).

FEOs further strengthen learners' welfare by building collaborative networks and operationalising systematic talent spotting. Global and regional frameworks advocate multi-stakeholder partnerships (OECD, 2023), and Kenyan county-level examples, such as Primary School Cluster Welfare Committees and extended "Manyatta learning" groups, demonstrate that sustained FEO coordination is associated with higher teacher JS and lower turnover (Ndirangu & Mwangi, 2025). However, when donor funding ceases without local ownership, satisfaction can decline sharply (Wekesa, 2025). Complementing network-building is the shift toward flexible talent-development models (Plucker, Meyer & Makel, 2026). In Kenyan primary schools, FEO-facilitated talent-search days and standardized identification clinics have produced higher teacher JS scores and greater professional fulfillment (Mutwiri, 2025), yet talent spotting often remains ad hoc or examination-driven, undermining satisfaction (Bitok & Kiogora, 2026).

Finally, transformational FEOs institutionalise learners' voice to deepen welfare management. Globally and across Africa, authentic learner participation is promoted as essential to inclusive schooling (UNESCO, 2023), while Kenyan policy has evolved through student council reforms and capacity development (Simiyu, 2025). In primary schools, non-tokenistic learner welfare assemblies and councils that produce tangible improvements are linked to significantly higher teacher JS and more cooperative climates (Ombati & Moraa, 2025). Persistent tokenism, in which councils serve mainly disciplinary or compliance functions, correlates with lower satisfaction and increased teacher strain (Chepkwony et al., 2019), underscoring the need for intentional FEO leadership to translate policy aspirations into genuine primary-school practice.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

A concurrent triangulation mixed-methods design was adopted in this study. This design facilitated the simultaneous collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the influence of TLP by FEOs on the JS of Primary School Administrators (Rani et al., 2024).

Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to Primary School Administrators and FEOs, while qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with FEOs' Immediate Supervisors and document analysis of relevant policy and supervisory records. Integrating these complementary data strands helped minimise researcher bias and enhanced the dependability, credibility, and trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By corroborating statistical patterns with rich narrative accounts, the concurrent triangulation design provided robust validation of the empirical results and strengthened inferences about the relationship between TLP and JS.

3.2 Participants of the Study

The target population consisted of three distinct professional groups in the South Rift Region: 2,754 Primary School Administrators (comprising Heads of Institutions, Deputy Heads of Institutions, and Senior Teachers), 79 FEOs responsible for grassroots monitoring and supervision, and 16 immediate supervisors of FEOs who provided regional oversight. This resulted in a total target population of 2,849 participants (MOE, Bomet and Narok Counties, 2025). The inclusion of these multi-level stakeholders, ranging from frontline school leadership to meso-level policy implementers and high-level regional supervisors, ensured a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between educational leadership and professional fulfillment.

Sample size determination was based on Nassiuma’s (2000) formula, which is particularly suitable for social science research as it incorporates a coefficient of variation (C) to account for heterogeneity across population strata. Applying the formula to the total population of 2,849, with a coefficient of variation of 0.5 (50%) and a precision level of 0.0286 (2.86%), yielded a sample of 276 primary school administrators and 63 FEOs. The primary school administrators were proportionally allocated across the three strata, with 92 respondents selected from each category (Heads of Institutions, Deputy Heads, and Senior Teachers) to ensure balanced representation. In addition, eight FEOs’ Immediate Supervisors were purposively sampled for the qualitative phase, following Saunders et al. (2023), who advocate selecting in-depth interview participants based on their expert knowledge. Interviews continued until data saturation was reached, with no new significant themes emerging. The overall sample, as shown in Table 1, comprised 347 respondents, representing approximately 12.18% of the target population (10.02% of Primary School Administrators, 79.75% of FEOs, and 50.0% of their FEOs’ Immediate Supervisors).

Table 1: Table of determining Sample sizes

| Participant Category          | Population (N) | Sample (n) | Sampling Technique    |
|-------------------------------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Primary School Administrators | 2,754          | 276        | Stratified Random     |
| Field Education Officers      | 79             | 63         | Stratified Random     |
| FEOs' Immediate Supervisors   | 16             | 8          | Purposive (Interview) |
| Total                         | 2,849          | 347        |                       |

3.3 Research Instruments and Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Questionnaires captured quantitative data from Primary School Administrators and FEOs on their perceptions of TLP and Primary School Administrators’ JS (Rani et al., 2024). Semi-structured interviews with six FEOs’ Immediate Supervisors provided in-depth qualitative insights (Saunders et al., 2023), while document analysis of meeting minutes and retooling records offered corroborative evidence (Neuendorf, 2022).

Prior to data collection, ethical and institutional approvals were secured, including authorization from Bomet University's Board of Postgraduate Studies, a research permit from NACOSTI, clearance from Teachers Service Commission headquarters, and access letters from County Commissioners in the South Rift Region. Questionnaires were administered via a drop-and-pick method at zonal offices and schools to minimise contamination and allow adequate response time (Check & Schutt, 2020). Interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent and supplemented by field notes (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2022).

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Both quantitative and qualitative datasets were organized and categorized in alignment with the specific research questions. Qualitative data obtained from interviews and documents were uploaded into NVIVO 14 for systematic coding, data reduction, thematic analysis, interpretation, and reporting. Quantitative data were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The quantitative findings were then integrated with the emerging themes from the qualitative component to offer a comprehensive interpretation of the results (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This concurrent triangulation mixed-methods design enhanced the credibility and depth of the study's conclusions by drawing on multiple sources of empirical evidence.

### **3.5 Research Ethics**

Strict ethical protocols were observed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were fully briefed on the research purpose, procedures, and their rights, including the voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed through the use of pseudonyms and secure password-protected data storage. The researchers maintained data integrity by avoiding fabrication, falsification, or selective reporting, ensuring all findings were presented honestly and transparently.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

The analyses included descriptive statistics, inferential statistics (simple linear regression and hypothesis testing), and thematic analysis.

### **4.1 Descriptive Analysis**

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics. The analysis focused on two practices from Kouzes and Posner's transformational leadership model: Challenging the Process and Enabling Others to Act. Mean scores and standard deviations were computed for individual items and sub-scales, with interpretation guided by the following scale: 1.00–1.80 (Very low), 1.81–2.60 (Low), 2.61–3.40 (Medium), 3.41–4.20 (Highly transformational), and 4.21–5.00 (Extremely high transformational).

**Table 2: FEOs’ Transformational Leadership Practices in Learners’ Welfare Management**

| Statement                                                                                       | N          | Mean         | Std. D       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Challenging The Process</b>                                                                  |            |              |              |
| Pilots new career guidance initiatives in schools                                               | 246        | 3.51         | 0.601        |
| authorizes teachers to trial new methods for identifying individual learner needs               | 246        | 3.84         | 0.369        |
| proposes changes to school award ceremonies to include categories for diverse talents           | 246        | 3.73         | 0.656        |
| Sticks to traditional career talks and avoids organizing events with diverse professionals.     | 246        | 3.23         | 0.855        |
| Conducts review meetings with teachers, using learner feedback data to adjust welfare programs. | 246        | 3.95         | 0.737        |
| <b>Sub-scale mean</b>                                                                           | <b>246</b> | <b>3.65</b>  | <b>0.665</b> |
| <b>Enabling Others to Act</b>                                                                   | 246        |              |              |
| Challenges learners to think beyond "doctor" or "engineer" and to link careers to local needs.  | 246        | 4.14         | 0.351        |
| Organizes events where learners design and present solutions to local problems                  | 246        | 4.19         | 0.524        |
| focuses only on academic pathways and rarely arranges exposure to TVET or creative fields.      | 246        | 3.64         | 0.662        |
| supports learners in establishing and managing small projects                                   | 246        | 3.99         | 0.797        |
| establishes forums to ensure every student's voice is heard on school matters.                  | 246        | 4.00         | 0.568        |
| <b>Sub-scale Mean</b>                                                                           | <b>246</b> | <b>4.036</b> | <b>0.58</b>  |
| <b>Overall Mean</b>                                                                             | <b>246</b> | <b>3.843</b> | <b>0.663</b> |

The results yielded an overall mean of 3.843 (SD = 0.663), which falls within the 3.41–4.20 range designated as “Highly Transformational,” indicating that administrators perceive FEOs as demonstrating high-level transformational behaviours in supporting learner welfare. The sub-scale means reveal a meaningful distinction, with Challenging the Process (M = 3.65, SD = 0.665) sitting at the lower end of the “Highly Transformational” band, while Enabling Others to Act (M = 4.036, SD = 0.58) approaches the “Extremely High Transformational” threshold (4.21). This suggests that FEOs are viewed as considerably stronger in enabling schools to collaboratively address learner welfare than in challenging existing welfare processes.

The highest-scoring enabling item, organizing events where learners design solutions to local problems (4.19, SD = 0.524), directly reduces administrative workload by providing authentic, student-led extracurricular structures. A 2023 study in Bureti Sub-County found that principals’ problem-solving skills significantly influenced the management of student discipline, with effective problem-solving reducing disciplinary incidents and associated administrative burden (Velody & Koskei, 2023). When FEOs facilitate events in which learners design solutions to local challenges, head teachers spend less time managing discipline and more time on instructional leadership. The low standard deviation (0.524) indicates uniform implementation across the South Rift, which contributes to consistent satisfaction levels across schools. However, the mean of 4.19 falls just short of the “Extremely High Transformational”

threshold (4.21), suggesting that targeted improvements, such as increasing the frequency of these events or integrating them into school improvement plans, could yield additional gains in satisfaction.

The enabling item “challenges learners to think beyond ‘doctor’ or ‘engineer,’ linking careers to local needs” (4.14, SD = 0.351) is particularly relevant to the South Rift context, where many learners come from agricultural and informal-economy households. Primary School Administrators who perceive FEOs promoting locally relevant career aspirations report higher satisfaction because they feel the school is better serving community expectations. A 2025 Kakamega County study found that career guidance services were a significant predictor of course satisfaction among TVET trainees ( $r = .511$ ,  $p = .000$ ), highlighting that learners and their families appreciate clear, actionable career pathways (Garuda, 2025). When school administrators can point to structured career guidance supported by FEOs, they face less pressure from parents who are anxious about post-school transitions. The extremely low standard deviation (0.351) suggests that this practice is almost universally applied by FEOs, likely because it is a national policy emphasis under the Competency-Based Curriculum and the Senior School transition guidelines. Yet the mean of 4.14 indicates that even with universal application, the practice has not reached the “Extremely High” level, implying that some Primary School Administrators still perceive the practice as occurring only moderately or occasionally, perhaps because FEO-led career sessions are held annually rather than termly.

Finally, the relatively high ratings for proposing changes to school award ceremonies to include diverse talents (3.84, SD = 0.369) and authorising trials of new methods for identifying individual learner needs (3.73, SD = 0.656) indicate that FEOs are perceived as moderately innovative in rethinking recognition and assessment. However, these scores are lower than the enabling scores, confirming the broader pattern that Primary School Administrators value FEOs who empower them to act more than FEOs who mandate changes from above. A 2024 study in Addis Ababa found that principals practising transformational leadership push staff members to consider new thoughts and use a variety of technologies, but that such challenging behaviours are most effective when paired with supportive, enabling structures (Htut, 2025). In the South Rift, FEOs who focus only on challenging existing welfare practices without providing the tools, resources, and autonomy to implement changes are rated lower, and their administrators report lower satisfaction.

## 4.2 Regression Analysis

To determine the extent to which FEOs’ TLP in LWM predicts Primary School Administrators’ JS, inferential statistical analysis was conducted using simple linear regression. This analysis, as displayed in Table 3, examined the strength, direction, and statistical significance of the predictive relationship between the independent variable (FEOs’ TLP in LWM) and the dependent variable (primary school administrators’ JS). Before interpretation, key assumptions of linear regression, including linearity, normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, and independence of errors, were tested and largely satisfied.

| Table 3: Model Summary                                   |                   |          |                   |                            |                   |          |     |     |             |               |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|-------------|---------------|
| Model                                                    | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics |          |     |     |             | Durbin-Watson |
|                                                          |                   |          |                   |                            | Square Change     | F Change | df1 | df2 | Sig. Change |               |
| 1                                                        | .373 <sup>a</sup> | .139     | .135              | .24108                     | .139              | 39.339   | 1   | 244 | <.001       | 1.814         |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), LWM                           |                   |          |                   |                            |                   |          |     |     |             |               |
| b. Dependent Variable: Primary School Administrators' JS |                   |          |                   |                            |                   |          |     |     |             |               |

The regression model reveals a moderate positive correlation ( $R = .373$ ) between FEOs' Transformational Leadership practices in LWM practices and Primary School Administrators' JS, explaining 13.9% of the variance in JS ( $R^2 = .139$ ). The adjusted  $R^2$  of .135 confirms this fit remains robust after accounting for sample size, while the standard error of the estimate (.24108) indicates reasonably precise predictions. The F Change statistic (39.339,  $df_1=1$ ,  $df_2=244$ ,  $Sig. < .001$ ) demonstrates the model significantly outperforms a null model, and the Durbin-Watson value of 1.814 suggests no substantial autocorrelation in the residuals, supporting the reliability of the analysis.

Furthermore, the coefficient analysis presented in Table 4 confirmed a significant positive influence of LWM on the JS of Primary School Administrators in the South Rift region, Kenya.

**Table 4: Regression coefficients**

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients |  | t      | Sig.  | Correlations |         | Collinearity Statistics |               |
|-------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--|--------|-------|--------------|---------|-------------------------|---------------|
|       | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |  |        |       | Zero-order   | Partial | Part                    | Tolerance VIF |
| 1     | (Constant) 3.528            | .118       |                           |  | 29.848 | <.001 |              |         |                         |               |
|       | LWM .209                    | .033       | .373                      |  | 6.272  | <.001 | .373         | .373    | .373                    | 1.000 1.000   |

a. **Dependent Variable:** School Administrators' Job Satisfaction

The unstandardised coefficient ( $B = 0.209$ ,  $SE = 0.033$ ,  $t = 6.272$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) as presented in Table 4 indicates that for every one-unit increase in perceived LWM practices, JS is predicted to increase by 0.209 units, with the baseline constant (3.528). The standardised coefficient ( $Beta = 0.373$ ) matches the overall model correlation, while the zero-order, partial, and part correlations (all .373) affirm the consistent explanatory power of the LWM construct. As the collinearity tolerance (1.000) and VIF (1.000) fall within non-problematic ranges, multicollinearity is absent from this simple regression.

Based on the regression statistics, the null hypothesis, 'H01: There is no statistically significant influence of Field Education Officers' Transformational Leadership Practices in Learners' Welfare Management on Primary School Administrators' Job Satisfaction in the South Rift Region, Kenya', was rejected. The derived regression equation is  $JS = 3.528 + 0.209(LWM)$ . Given the conventional null hypothesis ( $H_0: \beta_{LWM} = 0$ ), the t-statistic of 6.272 led to rejection of the null at  $p < 0.001$ , supporting the alternative hypothesis that FEOs' LWM practices positively influence Primary School Administrators' JS.

Although the single-predictor model explained only 13.9% of the variance ( $R^2 = .139$ ), this effect size is consistent with recent meta-analyses of leadership research. For example, a 2025 meta-analysis of 50 studies by Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. found that principal TL accounted for

approximately 15–18% of the variance in Primary School Administrators JS, aligning with the moderate  $R^2$  observed here. Similarly, a 2024 meta-analysis by De Nobile and McCormack (K-12 leadership) reported that single-domain leadership predictors (e.g., instructional leadership) typically explain between 10% and 20% of variance in satisfaction outcomes, placing the present result well within expected ranges.

The aforementioned modest explanatory power serves as a scholarly critique of over-relying on external field support; it suggests that while FEOs function as influential catalysts, internal school climates and macro-systemic variables likely play a more dominant role in determining the morale of Primary School Administrators. The substantive role of FEOs in managing learner welfare, particularly through the coordination of career guidance and innovative career programs, represents a progressive shift in the Kenyan pedagogical landscape. As mandated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (2021) and facilitated by the outreach initiatives of the Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS, 2024), FEOs act as vital intermediaries between national CBC pathways and school-level execution. By facilitating "Career Mentorship Days" and integrating digital vocational platforms, FEOs theoretically mitigate the "administrative overload" identified by Sang (2026) as a primary driver of leadership burnout. This is further corroborated by Okonkwo and Ibrahim (2023), who observed that when external supervisors provide specialized student-support frameworks, institutional heads report a measurable reduction in role-related anxiety.

However, a critical contradiction emerges when examining the "role clarity" of these FEOs. Theoretical discourse suggests that when FEOs immerse themselves deeply in learner-centric welfare, it may precipitate "role blurring," in which Primary School Administrators perceive their local authority as compromised by external "micro-management" under the guise of support. This tension can lead to a regression in satisfaction, particularly in high-autonomy environments. This is echoed by Martinez et al. (2023), who found that in bureaucratic educational systems, frequent external interventions into school-level welfare can be perceived as "unnecessary interference" rather than collaborative support, potentially neutralizing the benefits of TL.

While the current study emphasizes the transformational benefits of FEO support, contradicting evidence suggests that in highly bureaucratic contexts, school administrators often prioritize transactional efficiency, such as the timely disbursement of capitation funds, over "visionary" career guidance (MOE, 2022). Thompson and Lee (2024) reinforce this critique, noting that the impact of external leadership is heavily moderated by the Primary School Administrator's perceived autonomy; if welfare initiatives are perceived as unfunded mandates imposed without local consultation, the positive impact on JS is effectively negated. Ultimately, these results confirm that while FEOs provide an essential professional safety net by managing the complexities of learner welfare, their influence is strictly delimited by the broader operational and systemic constraints of the Kenyan education sector.

#### 4.3 Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with FEO immediate supervisors and systematic document analysis provided deeper contextual insights into FEOs' Transformational Leadership Practices in Learners' Welfare Management. Four major themes emerged from the analysis.

### **Theme 1: Traditional Career Paradigms challenged**

FEOs' Immediate supervisors noted that FEOs encouraged teachers to move away from narrow, exam-oriented career guidance toward diversified pathways such as TVET, agribusiness, and creative fields. Documentary evidence confirmed occasional innovative proposals (e.g., TVET-awareness tours), but these efforts remained sporadic.

### **Theme 2: Building Collaborative Welfare Networks**

FEOs were reported to facilitate collaboration among teachers, parents, and community stakeholders through talent-focused awards and co-curricular events. However, these initiatives were largely event-based rather than sustained, structured programmes.

### **Theme 3: Innovation in Pathways and Talent Spotting**

Policy documents and newsletters reflected a philosophical shift toward holistic learner support and talent development. Nevertheless, there was limited evidence of systematic implementation, follow-up tracking, or integration of these innovations into school-level practices.

### **Theme 4: Weak Institutionalization of Student Voice**

Although FEOs' supervisors emphasised the importance of student participation, both interview accounts and documentary records revealed that formal structures for meaningful learner voice in welfare and career decisions were largely absent. Student input remained ad hoc, symbolic, and poorly documented.

Qualitative evidence from supervisor interviews and document analysis largely corroborated the quantitative emphasis on enabling practices, highlighting FEOs' efforts in stakeholder mobilisation and learner-centred activities. However, it also exposed notable limitations, including the weak institutionalization of student-voice mechanisms and the largely ad hoc implementation of career-guidance innovations. This gap between policy aspiration and sustained practice mirrors persistent challenges documented in Sub-Saharan African education systems, where national reforms often struggle with translation into routine school-level operations (VVOB, 2025).

## **5. Conclusion**

FEOs' Transformational Leadership in Learners' Welfare Management significantly and positively influences Primary School Administrators' Job Satisfaction in Kenya's South Rift Region. By challenging the process through innovative career guidance, broader talent identification, learner-centred problem-solving, and questioning exam-oriented practices, and by enabling others to act through teacher empowerment, stakeholder collaboration, and participatory structures, FEOs help schools adapt to learners' needs, strengthen shared ownership, and ease administrative burdens. Although their overall practices were rated highly transformational, they proved stronger at facilitating cooperation than at consistently driving and institutionalising innovation. Qualitative evidence, however, shows persistent gaps: career guidance efforts are often poorly documented, talent identification remains partly ad hoc and exam-oriented, collaborative initiatives tend to be event-based, and learner voice mechanisms are weakly embedded or tokenistic. Effective challenge therefore requires sustained experimentation, local adaptation, and integration into school plans, while genuine enablement demands training, resources, autonomy, and ongoing support. As meso-level catalysts linking policy to practice, FEOs most strongly enhance Primary School Administrators' JS when they combine constructive challenge with real empowerment, shifting from sporadic supervision to

systematic support for learner councils, career programmes, talent systems, and participatory welfare structures.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following three recommendations are proposed:

- i. The Ministry of Education and TSC should design and implement targeted professional development programmes for FEOs focused on change management, innovative career guidance, and data-driven learners' welfare programming.
- ii. FEOs should be mandated to work with primary schools to establish and monitor formal, sustainable student voice mechanisms such as learner councils, regular feedback systems, and participatory welfare committees.
- iii. The Ministry of Education and County Education Offices should develop a standardised monitoring and evaluation framework for FEO-led learner welfare initiatives. This should include mandatory documentation templates, tracking of talent development, and follow-up mechanisms for career guidance and problem-solving projects to reduce the current ad hoc approach.

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