

# **Influence of School Administrators' Leadership Styles on Academic Performance of Secondary Schools in Yatta Sub County, Machakos County, Kenya.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The academic performance of secondary schools in Kenya is a matter of critical importance, not only for the students themselves but also for the nation's socio-economic development. The administrative strategies embraced in management of public schools have great influence on the overall academic performance of the institutions. The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of administrative styles on academic performance of public secondary schools in Yatta Sub County, Machakos County. The study was guided by the following research objectives; to determine the influence of school administrators' leadership styles on academic performance of secondary schools in Yatta Sub County, Machakos County. The study is significant since it provides crucial insights to policy makers and other stakeholders in the education sector into the influences of administrative styles on academic performance of public secondary schools.

The study adopted descriptive research design and the target population was 16 public secondary schools in Yatta Sub County with 262 teachers out of which a sample size of 158 respondents was drawn. Data was collected using self-administered structured questionnaires and later analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences version 23 using multiple regression analysis to establish the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable. The study found out that there is a great influence of school administrator's leadership styles on the overall academic performance of public schools. Based on these findings the study therefore concludes that school administrators' leadership styles have a substantial influence on the overall academic performance of public secondary schools in Yatta sub county in Machakos county. Regarding these conclusions, the study therefore recommended that: School administrators should engage in diverse leadership development programs that expose them to a range of leadership styles and their potential impacts on student motivation and academic commitment.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background of the study**

The educational system in Kenya stands as a pillar of national development, with secondary education playing a pivotal role in shaping the future of its youth and, by extension, the nation's progress. In this regard, the effectiveness of administrative strategies within public secondary schools becomes a matter of paramount importance. As the cornerstone of academic institutions, effective administration is known to wield a profound influence on the overall educational experience and academic performance of students (Salome, 2020).

Leadership and management styles are often a key factor that makes the difference between effective and ineffective institutions (Abas & baba, 2018). Strong institutions all over are therefore based on competent leaders acquainted with skills necessary to take an institution from one level to another (Aysha, 2015). According to Al-mahdy, Emam & Hallinger (2018) school administrators with effective leadership and management skillfulness encourage constructive climate which embraces school culture, teaching and learning, assessment for

educational and non-academic performance, inter-communication, answerability, teacher and students' mind-sets, harmonious relationships among schools, families and wider community. This confirms leadership and management skills being critical for competent leader.

Secondary schools therefore require strong leadership and management for optimum effectiveness. It is a trait both inbuilt and acquired that connects human psychology and expert tactics as asserted by Zhang and Bartol, (2010). Institutional leadership emphasizes development of skills and abilities relevant across the board. This conveys potential of an individual to counteract challenges during critical conditions. It is true that lack of quality skills of leadership and management spells doom to any institution. This identifies and distinguishes leaders from managers. (Wong & Giessner, 2016).

Yoon, (2012) asserts that a model institutional principal should embrace democracy. He should give guidance to those he leads; ensure good judgment, act responsibly and give purposive direction in line with successful achievement of school set goals. Such administrative skills will ensure effective and efficient leadership which results to the required development hence bring about institutional resilience to contemporary challenges and changes (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015).

Highly ambitious leaders are meticulous, self-confident, intelligent, energetic, have motivation to lead, thorough knowledge of their job, exercise honesty and flexibility hence high likelihood of succeeding as institutional managers. Effective leaders promote leadership skills such as teamwork, cooperation, efficient communication, group dynamics, conflict resolution, decision making and problem-solving skills (Maggitti, Slay & Klark, 2010). Leadership occurs when the leaders guide their employees towards the organizational goals, communicate and motivate them and ensure right positioning of every member for maximum utilization of their talents and total commitment to their work (Mittal, 2015).

According to Walumbwa (2015) school principals as leaders and managers should clearly communicate and clarify the institutional vision, mission, policies and procedures. They should ensure effective and efficient institutional operations which are of paramount importance to staff motivation and morale. Such operations help members develop their competency and give positive contributions towards the achievement of the set institutional goals. This is imperative for institutional manager and it ethically provides desirable values to an individual and society at large.

Globally, in an effort to achieving global institutional results, leadership and management are of paramount importance (Hallinger, 2011). Across the world, institutional systems have been subject to periods of sporadic reform and intervention in the pursuit of right leadership and management (Jamelaa & Jainabee, 2011). Institutional wave of leadership and management reforms, particularly in the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), Canada and Australia, has manifested itself in the form of national standards, testing and prescribed curricula for learning institutions (Halili, Rahman, & Razark 2014).

The global drive for improved public secondary school leadership and management demands for answerability, placing tight approved objectives amid well-organized changes (Van Dyne, Ang & Livermore, 2010). Institutions therefore require strong leadership and management skills in order to enact the necessary changes. Racicot and Ferry (2016) investigated the dynamics of leadership and management in New Zealand. They found that the concepts of leadership and management have an overlapping relationship hence accorded diverse prominence in due time and under differing circumstances. The fraction usage varies crosswise in different countries and specialized ethnicities. School principals' role as leaders and managers in some countries such as Russia, Australia, Canada, and India for instance, is portrayed as of primary significance in raising and maintaining standards and promotion of school development. On the contrary, school leadership and management in Netherlands and Scandinavian countries focus on individuals' competency and the resultant benefits to the society (Harris, Jones, Cheah, Devadason & Adams, 2017). These differences are clear indicators of disparities in operations of leadership system, their past, nationalized and regional guiding principles on leadership and management role in secondary schools (Harrison, 2012).

Regionally, Despite the African developments in scholarly literatures on leadership and management in education, researchers have generally observed that the field has not received enough attention in line with

rigorous empirical studies and knowledge accumulation Asuga (2015). In Nigeria, failure of effective leadership and management in public secondary schools can be attributed to various dynamics contextualized to the sphere of influence of principals, school stakeholders, instruction language, wider society and government policies (Hinrichs, 2011). It is said that leadership and management has been considered the cornerstone for development since it forms the basis for performance, acquisition of skills, advances in, technology and ability to bring together human capital and other physical resources in an effort to achieve societal set goals (FRN, 2015).

According to Le Farve and Robinson (2015) in South Africa for instance, the competence of school principals is challenged by inadequate comprehensive understanding of their instructional leadership role. Ramthun and Matkin (2012) carried out his study in Nigeria to investigate principal's effectiveness in Leadership and management to secondary schools. They based their judgment on leaving examination metric and annual national assessment (ANA). They found that Nigerian secondary school principals were really providing inadequate leadership and management as reflected in the education of their learners. Boateng (2014) asserted that the reason for little improvement in South African secondary schools is because leadership and management were either dysfunctional or did not function optimally. This was as a result of principal's incapacity to engage in planning, controlling and organizing of school processes (Ogunde 2014)

Locally, Kenyan secondary schools have been experiencing a myriad of leadership and management challenges leading to poor performance in national examinations, student unrest that has sparked a lot of debate in the education sector among the stakeholders and teacher dissatisfactions that have resulted in industrial actions in many occasions, most of these challenges have been attributed to lack of managerial skills on the part of school administrators, lack of School resources such as inadequate infrastructural facilities, teacher/student ratios imbalance, poor staff morale and motivation and poor teaching/learning strategies (Algahtani, 2014).

## **Study Objective**

To determine the influence of administrators' leadership styles on academic performance of secondary schools in Yatta Sub County, Machakos County, Kenya.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Review**

#### **Behavioral leadership theory.**

This behavioral leadership theory was developed in 1950s and the proponent is Dr Resins Likert. This theory posits that no single leadership style is preeminent in every situation since a manager can effectively lead people towards achieving organizational goals while employee participates in structuring the work in organization. Leadership researchers such as Widder, Kolthoff, and Brindley, (2016) observe that truthful effectual leadership is far much beyond the leader's qualities as it regards striking the correct sense of balance between behaviors and needs in various contexts.

Behavioral leadership is an ability by the leader to position, look forward to, plan and prepare for the future (Hinrichs, 2011). Worth noting is the performance of a group is dictated by the kind of leadership style employed and characterized by the spirit of team work rather than hostility. Behavioral leadership theory is therefore based on the belief that great leaders are made not born. In relation to the researcher's study, school leaders should have skills through training and observation since it focuses on actions of individuals. Behavioral leadership theory contextualized with democratic leadership where members of one group perform well in the absence of their leader. The techniques of participative and decision-making by majority rule are used in the training involvement of members of the group to perform well in the presence or absence of the leader (Hinrichs, 2011).

The character of a democratic leader partly explains reasons behind of employees' empowerment as a prominent trend in many institutions. Evidence of his early work proves that leaders approach leadership either autocratically or democratically. Nevertheless, Shalhoop and Sanger, (2012) highlight that leadership behavior may exist on a continuum and reflect different levels of participation employee.

In relation to this study, for the success of the institution, school administrators should be fond of leadership that regards recognizable actions and responses among leaders and their subordinates in their work places. Secondary schools should be behaviorally contextualized to focus on leaders' behaviors and actions. The assumption is that leaders are made rather than being born and their success in leadership should be rooted on definite and behavior that can be easily learned. According to behavioral theorists, a leader's way of life best predicts his leadership best determine of his leadership achievement or failure (Hinrichs, 2011).

The practical application of the behavioral theory in an institution is application of appropriate behavior on the performance at different circumstances and times (Filipovic & Matijevic, 2014). Leaders' professionalism is enhanced by allowing possible evaluation and understanding the effects of their behavioral style on their relationship with team and how it enhances commitment and contribution towards institutional goals. The theory helps school leaders and managers to strike balance between differing leadership productivity in styles and necessities proper decision making on leadership, based on for people's concerns and their (Hassan, Mahsud, Yukl & Prussia, 2013)

## **EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW**

Rashid, Ul Amin & Amin (2021) conducted a quantitative study to explore the relationship between leadership styles and academic performance. The study has provided crucial insights into leadership styles embraced by principals in secondary schools and their influence on academic performance. Correlational research approach was used to determine the existing relationship between leadership styles and academic performance. The research population included 64 secondary schools. Random selection procedures were embraced in the process of choosing 32 secondary schools from the research population. The quantitative research involved the use of questionnaires as the major data collection tool. Statistical methods were utilized to examine the collected data. The findings showed that transitional leadership, democratic leadership and authoritarian leadership are the most popular leadership styles that are embraced by administrators in secondary schools.

Maqbool, et al. (2022) conducted a quantitative study about role of leadership in sustaining academic excellence. The quantitative research method was used. The sample size included 540 teachers from 103 secondary schools. Findings revealed that leadership styles embraced in secondary schools play an important role in determining academic performance. Eguzoroibe (2022) studied the influence of leadership styles of principals on academic performance of students. Descriptive survey was embraced. Sample was comprised of 724 respondents. The quantitative research embraced questionnaires in collecting primary data. Findings showed that democratic and autocratic leadership styles influence academic performance of students. Mgozi (2021) conducted a qualitative study about effects of leadership styles of academic performance. Methodology involved use of a case study research design. Purposive sampling was used in getting the sample of 30 respondents. Interviews and questionnaires were used in collecting data. Findings revealed that leadership styles influence cooperation between administrators and teachers thus enhancing academic performance.

According to Matheka (2012) the principal is responsible for controlling the accruing revenue from the school as well as making sure cautious utilization of levies. He should plan and articulate plans on how to operate with the school finance to enable better running of school program. Complementing government efforts by raising funds by school principals as a management strategy calls for an establishment of good rapport with Parents Association (PA), Board of Management (BoM), school alumni and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO). The rapport does not only motivate the associates to streamline the cohesion to financial progress but also will maintain the momentum flow of resources (Philips, 2010). The success of the organization lies in the hands of the principal who controls the school direction and has the power to influence employee's motivation to take the institution to greater heights.

According to survey conducted by Makori and Onderi (2013) acquisition and maintenance of infrastructural facilities is of great consideration. School administrators should be highly concerned about physical environment and facilities within the school. Dilapidated structures, neglected projects, dark buildings, rough floors among others demoralize people, particularly the students in any school hence affecting principal's leadership (Brigid & David, 2019). Therefore, it is the administrators' responsibility to ensure that facilities are in good condition even



when resources at their disposal are scanty. It is their responsibility to provide instructional staff with essential resources for successful teaching (<http://www.philliphallinger.com>., 2015).

According to Leithwood, Wahlstrom and Anderson (2010) principal's leadership will therefore be influenced by the shortage of resources given that one of the areas of focus by quality assurance (QA) is the teaching /learning process. School resources in any school leadership are necessary to realize its dream and attain expected performance. (Hallinger, 2018) contends that quality assurance is focusing on teaching and learning process in conjunction with learning environment. Principal as chief executive officer with his management should understand that any progress in poorly facilitated environment is doomed to fail. Motivation is another task to be considered by the principal in school organization.

Ajayi and Oguntoye (2016) assessed the influence of personnel motivation on principal's leadership and management; they said that institutional stability is detained by encouraging and motivating their employees. It goes without question that school training of principal in the act of school administration and acquaintance with the guiding principles controlling administrative processes is mandatory. He is expected to modify staff attitudes and encourage them to do their best in achieving educational set goals. Ajayi and Oguntoye (2016) add that motivated staff perform well and bring about good yields. The functions of the school principal involve obtaining and availing all educational information for the staff, observing teachers in classrooms; checking and offering professional guidance for improvement in their work performance (Tobin, 2014). He should be firsthand information as chief executive officer of the institution to offer valid information to the subordinates and encourage them in job description for purpose of expected performance. Tweedie and Holley (2016) used a descriptive survey design and carried the survey in America to investigate the change management in American academics. They targeted 300 high schools, 50 administrators and a sample of 30 administrators. The outcome was that school principal is responsible for facilitating change. The effort to enhance the school quality is key to making change occur and it facilitated by financial stability. He should struggle to obtain relevant information from necessary sources as change agent to become a current dynamic leader.

Bush (2018) applying a descriptive survey design carried a study in Nigerian secondary schools on relationship between finance and leadership quality. He targeted 150 high schools, 50 administrators and a sample of 20 administrators. He noted that the quality of performance in leadership and management in any organization is positively related to finance. The input-output analysis revealed that recurrent maintenance and repairs expenses positively correlate with the quality of school leadership and management.

Andambi (2013) studied effectiveness of resource utilization and its effectiveness on student in Homa Bay County and proposed that enough class rooms equipped with appropriate materials provides expected learning outcome to the students hence attaining school goals and objectives. School leadership takes initiative of providing and maintaining the physical facilities of the institution. Full concern on the physical environment and school facilities is considered as part of principals' leadership responsibilities. The needs of every potential student in the school should be well accommodated (Musee, 2017).

Andambi (2013) majoring on cross-sectional survey further investigated the effectiveness of teaching-learning resources in Kenyan schools. The target was 70 secondary schools, 20 administrators and a sample of 5 administrators. The findings show that shortage of resources has been more pronounced in district schools than provincial ones. He notes that it is the work of school leadership to identify any shortage of particular resource and take the right measure in providing them.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Orodho (2012) states that descriptive survey design is suitable because it is used to obtain information that describes existing phenomena by asking individuals about their perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, or values. This design was used since it enables the researcher collect data across the sampled population using the same instrument. The target population for this study entailed individuals who fitted in the specification of school administrators. The target population for this study was 262 teachers in the 16 public secondary schools in Yatta Sub County, Machakos County.. This study adopted stratified sampling method where the population was divided into homogeneous sub-population called strata.

The strata were determined by the roles played in the school administration. Each stratum was then sampled using simple random sampling. The sample size from each stratum was obtained using the slovin's formula

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n is the sample size

N is the population size

e is the tolerance error.

The confidence level based on the margin of error will range from 95% to 99% implying a tolerance error of 0.05 and 0.01 respectively (Ariola, 2018). This study used a 95% confidence level implying a 0.05 tolerance error. Therefore, using this formula, the sample size for this study was calculated as:

$$n = \frac{262}{1 + 262(0.05)^2}$$

n = 158.3081 so sample size is 158

Table 3.1: Sample Size

Stratum	Population number	Selected no. of samples	Selected respondents
Principals'	16	$(16/262) * 158 = 10$	10
Deputy Principals'	16	$(16/262) * 158 = 10$	10
Teachers	230	$(230/262) * 158 = 138$	138
Total	262	$(262/262) * 158 = 158$	158

The researcher developed and used questionnaires to collect data from the respondents. Based on study objectives, the researcher developed structured questionnaire for the collection of required data. The researcher used 5-likert scale questions to obtain data from the respondents. Inferential data analysis was done using multiple regression analysis models using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Simple regression model was used to ascertain the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the regression analysis in Table 4.1 R value shows the regression coefficient of the analysis of (.685<sup>a</sup>) which shows there is a fairly strong and positive relationship between leadership style applied by school administrators and academic performance of schools. Coefficient of determination (R Square) is .469. This shows that 46.9% variation in the dependent variable (school performance) is explained by the independent variables which are: fostering of a positive and supportive learning environment by the school leadership, clear communication of the school vision and goals for academic excellence to all teachers by the school leadership, accessibility of the school leadership to address academic concerns and provision of necessary support when needed and leadership styles in the school which influence students' motivation and commitment to their academic pursuits.

The adjusted R Square (.458) is less than R Square because of error adjustment therefore the remaining 53.1% changes in academic performance would be explained by other factors (like parental support, government policies, learners' entry behavior etc) other than leadership styles.

Table 4.19: Regression analysis on influence of administrator's leadership style

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.685 <sup>a</sup>	.469	.458	.782	.343	4.068	5	39	.005

Table 4.2 ANOVA Analysis of leadership styles and school academic performance

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.703	1	7.923	26.389	.000b
	Residual	34.285	103	.347		
	Total	42.988	104			

The ANOVA analysis results (table 4.2) shows a p-value of .000 ( $= < .005$ ) indicating a very strong level of statistical significance and a significant influence of school administrators' leadership styles on the academic performance of the school.

These findings agree with those of Maqbool, et al. (2022) who conducted a quantitative study about role of leadership in sustaining academic excellence in Pakistani. The quantitative research method was used. The sample size included 540 teachers from 103 secondary schools. Findings revealed that leadership styles embraced in secondary schools play an important role in determining academic performance. Mgozi (2021) conducted a qualitative study about effects of leadership styles on academic performance. Methodology involved use of a case study research design. Purposive sampling was used in getting the sample of 30 respondents. Interviews and questionnaires were used in collecting data. Findings revealed that leadership styles influence cooperation between administrators and teachers thus enhancing academic performance.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The examination of respondents' responses concerning the influence of leadership styles on students' motivation and commitment revealed a diverse spectrum of viewpoints. From the presented data, it is evident that a significant proportion of respondents acknowledge the considerable role that leadership styles play in shaping students' academic performance. This underscores the pivotal role that administrators' leadership styles have in creating an environment that fosters student motivation and commitment to their studies. This study therefore concludes that there is a great influence of school administrators' leadership style on the overall academic performance of the school. The study further recommends that School administrators should engage in diverse leadership development programs that expose them to a range of leadership styles and their potential impacts on student motivation and academic commitment. This will enable administrators to adapt their leadership approaches based on the unique needs and dynamics of their schools. The government should organize regular workshops and training sessions for school administrators to enhance their understanding of various leadership styles and their implications. These workshops should also emphasize the importance of aligning leadership practices with the school's vision and goals.

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