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*Original Paper*

## Recognition as a Determinant of Teacher Motivation in Public Secondary Schools in Kwale County, Kenya

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### **Abstract**

The teaching profession in Kenya has in the recent past experienced disharmony which has been occasioned by teachers' strikes, withdrawal of labour and teacher turnover. These industrial disputes have majorly been linked to remuneration. However, the clamour for better salary could be masking other unmet needs in the country's teaching profession. This is what informed the study whose core objective was to determine whether teachers' need for recognition has been adequately met in public secondary schools in Kwale County, Kenya. Using a self-delivered five-point likert scale instrument, data were collected from 255 public secondary school teachers in the county who were randomly selected from a target population of 752 teachers. Data were analysed using arithmetic mean and simple regression analysis at .05 alpha level. The composite mean score for the items in the instrument stood at 2.49 out of a maximum mean score of 5.00. This implied that teachers' appreciation as measured against the items in the instrument was below average. The relationship between recognition and teacher motivation was statistically significant ( $t=.298$ ;  $p=.000$ ). The generated beta ( $\beta$ ) coefficient was also statistically significant ( $\beta=.546$ ;  $p=.000$ ). These coefficients implied that the items on recognition captured in the study were reliable predictors of teacher motivation in the study locale. These findings offer useful lessons to teacher managers on how to enhance teacher motivation which is a critical variable in students learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** Teacher Motivation, Recognition, Public Secondary Schools, Kwale County, Kenya

### **1. Introduction**

Human resource management is considered as one of the fundamental pillars of organisational development. This is because human resources are the key enablers of an organisation's competitiveness in business markets. Securing the right employees and then maintaining them represents the fundamental test to organisations (Smith & Hoy, 2013). This implies that an organisation's employees are the most valuable assets, and their management is the central challenging task. The main objective of human resource management is to ensure greater employee motivation which is necessary for enhancing organisational performance (Aktar, Sachu, & Ali, 2012). The improvement in productivity by employees is indeed the main goal for any organisation where all departments work closely to increase the performance of their organisation through different management strategies. For this reason, employee motivation has been regarded as an important determinant of employee productivity and continued organisational success.

In the context of education delivery, there is no denying that teacher motivation is key to students' success within and outside the school system. Teacher motivation denotes the efforts that teachers put in the course of executing their role expectations so as to satisfy their needs (Snowman, Mcown, & Biehler, 2008).

Teachers have a wide range of needs that influence their motivation to not only teach but also teach effectively. One of these needs is the need for recognition. This need relates to the desire for appreciation by their seniors for the role they play in nurturing learners to the expectations of the society. This has the implication that one of the strategies for creating enthusiasm among teachers is to

appreciate their performance. Specifically, those charged with the role of managing teachers should create conditions in which teachers' need for recognition will be met. For instance, teachers' extra effort, including goal attainment should be recognized by way of material rewards or verbal appreciation by their seniors. This will undoubtedly motivate teachers to sustain the rewarded behaviour to the benefit of learners. Contrarily, if teachers' efforts and achievements are unappreciated, there are high chances that they will be frustrated and by implication less motivated to put extra effort at the workplace (Lindsay, Sugai, & Depry, 2002).

From an organizational perspective, worker's motivation is triggered and sustained by an individual's need to achieve in addition to being recognized for achievement, including the ability to manage a challenging task, being offered responsibilities, and opportunities to advance in his/her career (Brady, 2016). This observation implies that if employees needs are not met, workers' motivation will be compromised thereby lowering their performance (in terms of offering quality services) and consequently organizational output. Organizations, regardless of whether they are in the manufacturing or service provider sectors of an economy, are now realizing the impact of motivated work force who in the past, were considered as just like any another input in the process of production of goods and services (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). As the competition is growing, managers are more concerned in running the organisations more efficiently. Bringing out the best from an employee has the most enduring impact on the organisation and motivation is the way to do so (Baron, 2002). Employees are the engine of any organization and any finely tuned engine plays a crucial role in operating the organisation more effectively and efficiently (Amstrong, 2006).

Kenya's secondary education sector has in the recent past experienced industrial disharmony which has been occasioned by teachers' persistent demand for better working conditions. Although teacher motivation and more specifically teacher recognition for the efforts they put in their teaching duties is a great determinant of students' success, it has been accorded limited attention by researchers. Moreover, studies done in Kenya on potential ways of improving teacher performance (see for example Okumbe, 1992; Akali, 2010; Njoroge, 2011; Maina, 2020) have focussed on job satisfaction which is not synonymous with motivation. This observation is predicated on the fact that while job satisfaction denotes teachers' contentness with their job, motivation refers to the effort, commitment, persistence and creativity that teachers bring to their job so as to fulfil their needs. Therefore, in order to get a clearer perspective of the root causes of industrial disharmony in Kenya's secondary education sector, there is a need to determine the extent to which teachers need for recognition has been met in the sector.

### *1.1 Purpose of the Study*

The study sought to find out whether teacher recognition can predict teacher motivation in public secondary schools in Kwale County, Kenya.

### *1.2 Research Hypothesis*

In order to achieve the stipulated purpose of the study, one null hypothesis was developed and stated as follows:

Ho<sub>1</sub>: Recognition has no statistically significant influence on teacher motivation in public secondary schools in Kwale County, Kenya.

## **2. Literature Review**

The topic of the perceived link between recognition and employee motivation has been and continuous to be a thought-provoking issue among researchers the world over. This scenario is motivated by the need to validate the hypothesized relationship between recognition and employee motivation to perform better in their work places. Karava's (2010) study in Greece for instance sought to determine whether teacher motivation was related to recognition and the extent to which this relationship impacted on teacher performance. The study conclusively indicated that there was a positive relationship between recognition by the employer, school governors and parents, and teacher motivation. The study additionally demonstrated that in schools where level of teacher recognition was high, students' performance was also higher. The converse was the case in schools where recognition

was relatively low.

Another study conducted in South Africa by Robbins, Judge, Odendaal and Roodt (2009) on 1,500 employees in different work settings concluded that employees considered recognition as the most powerful motivator at the workplace. Similarly, Phillips and Gully's (2012) study also concluded that recognition was among the most powerful motivational tools managers have at their disposal. This is due to the fact that for one to accept a job offer and decide how much effort to exert, the rewards and recognition being offered play a big role in the final decision.

A study conducted by Debra (2019) in the United Kingdom among 500 employees and 500 senior decision makers provides more evidence of the value of continuous recognition. The findings from the study revealed that an overwhelming proportion (84%) of employees felt that managers and leaders should spot good work emanating from workers and give praises and thanks whenever it happens. The study also revealed that in the opinion of 80% of employees, employee recognition should be a continuous process. In addition, the study also revealed that almost half (49%) of the workers had an inclination to leave the company if they were not regularly thanked and recognized for their efforts. This implies that managers must address the importance of continuous recognition with a view to motivating and retaining the best workers in organisations.

Cheemam, Shujatt and Alam's (2013) study in Karachi, India undertook five independent variables including; training, recognition for performance, opportunities for career advancement, effective communication channels, and job security to identify their impact over employee's job-related motivation. The findings of the study confirmed the existence of a positive significant relationship between three of the five non-monetary rewards (i.e., opportunities for career development, effective communication channels, and job security). However, the two independent variables, i.e. training and performance recognition were not found to be significant. These findings contradicted an earlier study by Abel and Sewell (1999) which reported that inadequate administrative support and a lack of recognition for good teaching were principal causes of stress and demotivation for teachers.

A study carried out by Danish and Usman (2010) on private sector employees in Pakistan, revealed that rewards and recognition had a positive impact on employee's work motivation. Similarly, research conducted by Manzoor (2012) concluded that recognition had a significant impact on employee motivation. In a related study by Ali and Ahmed (2009) in Pakistan, a significant and positive link between recognition and teacher motivation was established. The study further showed that when a teacher gets recognized and appreciated with exceptional amusement and excitement, that experience becomes more tremendous for the recipient. This observation is consistent with Cherrington (2012) who asserted that recognition in form of non-financial reward such as verbal praise has the potential of promoting employees' motivation in the work place.

A study conducted by Akali (2010) in Kenya concluded that the principal's public acknowledgement of a teacher's accomplishments positively influenced teachers' confidence and self-esteem. The study further revealed that teachers who are appreciated by their principals and colleagues based on the teacher's achievement in successfully completing a task, tend to work harder in their duties than those who are not appreciated. These findings are consistent with an earlier study carried out by Kyongo (2006) which revealed that employees' successes do not have to be monumental before being recognized. Individuals at all levels of organization want to be recognized for whatever level of achievements they may have accomplished in their jobs. Njoroge (2011) averred that when teachers are recognized through promotion including allocation of more challenging and demanding job, they feel trusted and their contributions valued in the education system.

The foregoing studies have undoubtedly demonstrated that employees are more likely to be demotivated and consequently put minimal effort in their task areas if their input is not recognised by the employer. This view is supported by empirical findings (see for example, Fraser, Draper and Taylor, 1998; and Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2006). These studies consistently demonstrated that non-appreciation of employees' contribution in an organisation was a significant de-motivator. Another study that generated similar findings is the one carried out by Popoola (2009) among 2000 secondary school teachers in Nigeria. Specifically, the study revealed that low teacher recognition by the society was the main source of demotivation among the study participants. This finding is also consistent with

the findings of previous studies in Saudi Arabia (see for example Al-Harbi, 2003; Al-Amer, 1996; and Al-Zahrani, 1995), China (Sergeant & Hannun, 2005), Kenya (Okumbe, 1992) including the finding of a recent study in Kenya by Njoroge (2011).

### *2.1 Theoretical Framework*

This study was guided by the two factor theory which was developed by Herzberg in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The theory argues that there are two sets of needs which people strive to fulfil. These are the lower order needs and the higher order needs. He referred to the lower order needs as the hygiene factors while the higher order needs are what is referred to as the growth factors or motivators in the theory. In the context of working environment, the hygiene factors include salary/wages, job security, working conditions, collegiality, and supervisory practices. On the other hand motivator factors include achievement, recognition, autonomy, promotion, and responsibility.

The theory argues that the two sets of factors are separate and distinct since they are concerned with two different sets of needs and they also work independently from one another. Specifically, hygiene factors are concerned with the maintenance of a good working environment while the motivator factors are concerned with the need for growth. The factors are therefore related to the job characteristics. If opportunities to fulfil these needs are available, employees will be satisfied with their jobs and hence motivated (Merwe, 2008).

Hygiene factors, as pointed out by the theory are concerned with the work environment. If these needs are met, the employee will be satisfied with the job but he/she will not be motivated. However, if the needs are not properly addressed, employees will be dissatisfied thereby making it rather difficult to motivate them. On the other hand, motivator factors are capable of arousing and sustaining the motivation to work. These observations have the implication that for teacher motivation to be aroused and sustained there is a need to first create a satisfying work environment and then motivate the teachers. For instance an employee will only report to his/her job if the organization offers reasonable pay and safe working environment, but these factors will not make the employee work harder at his/her job when she/he is there.

Based on the foregoing explanations of the two factor theory, it can be argued that teacher motivation is dependent on two groups of factors. These are the hygiene factors which can demotivate teachers if not present but cannot motivate them alone. For instance, salary and job security cannot motivate teachers but have the potential to demotivate them if they are inadequately met. After providing the teachers with the basic hygiene factors, the teachers need to be motivated to achieve higher levels of performance. This can be accomplished through improving the nature and the content of the job. For instance, giving teachers more responsibilities in the school (job enlargement), giving them challenging tasks (job enrichment), and delegating authority or simply decision making power in their teaching areas (empowerment). Adopting these strategies will undoubtedly raise teachers' satisfaction with their profession and also contribute immensely to teacher motivation (Mehmood and Ahmed, 2012).

### *2.2 Conceptual Framework*

The study reasoned that recognition (independent variable) has the potential to influence teacher motivation (dependent variable). The study hypothesized that the influence of recognition on teacher motivation may be confounded by three extraneous variables, namely, the teacher's social status, perception of principals' management style and his/her attitude towards the professional practice. The conceptualized relationship between the three categories of variables (i.e., independent, dependent and extraneous variables) is presented in Figure 1.

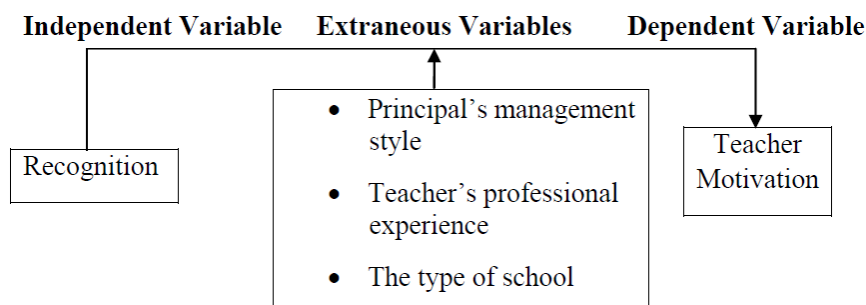


Figure 1. Hypothesized Relationship among Variables Subsumed in the Study

Extraneous variables have the potential to generate competing hypotheses that might explain the result of a study thereby compromising its internal validity (Marczyk, Dematteo, & Festinger, 2005). This observation has the implication that extraneous variable in a research undertaking needs to be controlled so as to minimize their effect. In this regard, the study controlled the aforementioned extraneous variables through randomization. This helped to minimize the error effect that could have been generated by the three extraneous variables.

### 3. Methodology

This study adopted *ex-post facto* research design. This is a research design which is applied in a situation where the independent and dependent variables have already interacted (Kerlinger, 1986). In this regard, the researcher cannot manipulate the independent variable(s) with a view to establishing its/their impact on the dependent variable. The design was deemed ideal in view of the fact that the independent variable in the study (that is, teacher recognition) had already impacted on teacher motivation, implying that the outcome of their effect could only be explored retrospectively.

#### 3.1 Instrumentation

This study used a questionnaire to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire was chosen because it is efficient and practical including its capacity to gather data from a large sample in addition to being easy to administer and score responses (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). The questionnaire is particularly useful in surveying subjects who are dispersed over a wide geographical area as was the case in this study (Salkind, 2009).

The questionnaire had three parts labelled A, B, and C. Part A gathered respondents' bio-data in relation to gender, age, years of teaching experience, academic qualification, and longevity of teaching in their current schools. Part B contained six (6) likert scale items which measured teachers' level of motivation in regard to recognition. The items had five response options labelled, "to a very large extent", "to a large extent", "to a moderate extent", "to a small extent and to a very small extent". The responses were allocated 5,4,3,2 and 1 scores respectively. A higher score implied that the factor in question had a high motivation value and vice versa.

#### 3.2 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Instrument validity denotes the degree to which an instrument measures the construct(s) it purports to measure (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Content validity was accomplished by requesting the two supervisors of this study to evaluate the instrument in terms of the targeted content validity domains. Changes to the instrument suggested by the two supervisors including those amendments to the instrument that were deemed ideal on the basis of responses to the instrument by the pilot group were effected with a view to enhancing the validity of the instrument prior to mounting the main study.

Reliability contains two measurement properties which were the focus of reliability estimate in this study. These are internal consistency and the external reliability which denotes the ability of an instrument to generate consistent data when administered to a group of subjects on two different occasions under similar conditions (Bryman & Cramer, 2011). Internal consistence reliability domain

was estimated through Cronbach alpha in which a reliability coefficient of  $r = .85$  was generated. This implied that the items were sufficiently correlated. External reliability on the other hand was estimated by administering the instrument in the neighbouring Kilifi County. The instrument was administered to the same group of teachers after two weeks. Scores from the two instrument administration sessions were correlated using Pearson correlation coefficient. A coefficient of  $r = .83$  was generated which implied that the instrument's level of external reliability was high (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000).

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Data analysis was conducted at two stages. In the first stage, the influence of recognition on teacher motivation was determined by computing mean scores from the subjects' (teachers) responses to the six statements on recognition in the instrument. The result of this analysis is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents' Motivation Mean Scores on Recognition

Statement	Mean Score	Standard deviation
Recognition for excellent teaching by the school management	2.27	.812
Appreciation for commendable students' performance by the parents	2.14	.810
Acknowledgement by the principal for good performance during staff meetings	2.98	.838
Provision of non-cash rewards to teachers by BoM after the school posts good KCSE exam results	2.82	.827
Recognition of my department (e.g., through trips) by BoM for over-shining other departments in either academic or non-academic tasks	2.69	.808
Recognition by the school management for my role in bettering the community	2.03	.825
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.49</b>	<b>.821</b>

Source: Field data, 2020

An analysis of the data presented in table 1 show that the overall mean score stood at 2.49. This implies that the motivational effect of the six recognition factors was moderate. The data further shows that recognition factor that had the highest motivational influence was acknowledgement by the principal for good performance during staff meetings (mean=2.98), followed by provision of non-cash rewards to teachers by the BoM after the school posts good results in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) exit examination (mean=2.82), recognition of one's department by BoM for over-shining other departments in either academic or non-academic tasks (mean=2.69), recognition for excellent teaching by the school management (mean=2.27), appreciation for commendable students' performance by parents (mean=2.14) and lastly recognition by the school management for ones role in bettering the community (mean=2.03).

The mean scores were further subjected to regression analysis. This analysis was done to confirm the truth of the assumption held by the null hypothesis which was formulated as follows:

Ho: Recognition has no statistically significant influence on teacher motivation in public secondary schools in Kwale County, Kenya.

To ascertain the truth of this supposition, the hypothesis was tested using simple regression statistic at .05 alpha level. The result of this analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Simple Regression between Recognition and Teacher Motivation

Variable		R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> <sub>adjusted</sub>	Constant	df	F	P- value
Dependent	Teacher recognition	.546	.298	2.564	1,238	100.934	.000*
Independent	Teacher motivation		$\beta = .546$	Regression coefficient .304		t= 10.047	.000*

(\* means significant at .05 alpha level)

Table 2 presents statistical output in regard to the link between recognition and teacher motivation. From the table it can be learnt that the F-value was significant (F=100.943; df=1,238; p=.000) which implies that there was a linear relationship between recognition and teacher motivation. This implies that there was a positive relationship between recognition and teacher motivation. In other words, the selected recognition factors were jointly capable of predicting teacher motivation in public secondary schools in Kwale County. The table further shows that the beta value ( $\beta = .546$ ) was positive and statistically significant (t=10.047; p=.000). This indicates that recognition factors were positively influencing teacher motivation. The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value (R<sup>2</sup><sub>adjusted</sub>=.295) implies that recognition accounted for 30% of total variation in teacher motivation levels in public secondary schools. Further, using the data from the table, a simple regression equation was developed to help in predicting the level of teacher motivation in relation to recognition. This is summarized in equation 1.

$$TM = 2.564 + 0.304X_1 \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Equation (1) reveals that for every unit change of recognition, teacher motivation level increases by 30% keeping other factors constant. This implies that recognition factors entered in the model explained 30% of change or variation in teacher motivation (TM) while 70% was explained by factors not captured in the model.

Based on the foregoing findings, the stated null hypothesis (Ho) was rejected and the conclusion made that the selected recognition factors and teacher motivation were not statistically independent. This implies that the selected recognition factors were a reliable predictor of teacher motivation in public secondary schools in Kwale County.

The finding that teacher recognition had a statistically positive influence on teacher motivation is consistent with earlier studies by Reena and Ahamed (2009) which revealed that recognition factors, specifically when workers see their efforts being recognized, the quality of their work improves. Akali's (2010) study further revealed that the principal's public acknowledgement of a teacher's accomplishments positively influenced the teachers' confidence and self-esteem. Similarly, other studies (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2006; Popoola, 2009; Pastor & Erlanson, 2001) observed that lack of recognition and perceived devaluing of the teaching profession by the society all contribute to teacher demotivation and consequently low level of learners performance.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendation

Findings accruing from the study have demonstrated that the job recognition factors which were focussed by the study had the capacity to predict teacher motivation. The findings have additionally revealed that the motivation impact of the six job factors was below teachers' expectations. This observation is predicted on the fact that while the expected maximum mean score was 5.0, the actual respondents' mean score stood at 2.49. This implies that teachers' need for recognition was inadequately met.

In view of the foregoing observation, there is a need for the TSC and school managers, specifically BOMs to give teachers recognition aspect of teacher motivation the seriousness it deserves. For instance, there is a need to come up with a wide range of teacher recognition strategies, including material and non-material appreciation of teachers who excel in their duties.

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