GREAT JOURNS

Impact of Student Strikes on Academic Performance in Secondary Schools of Bungoma County, Kenya

Khaemba Lorna Nanjala

**Doctor of philosophy in Educational Management and Policy Studies
Kibabii University.**
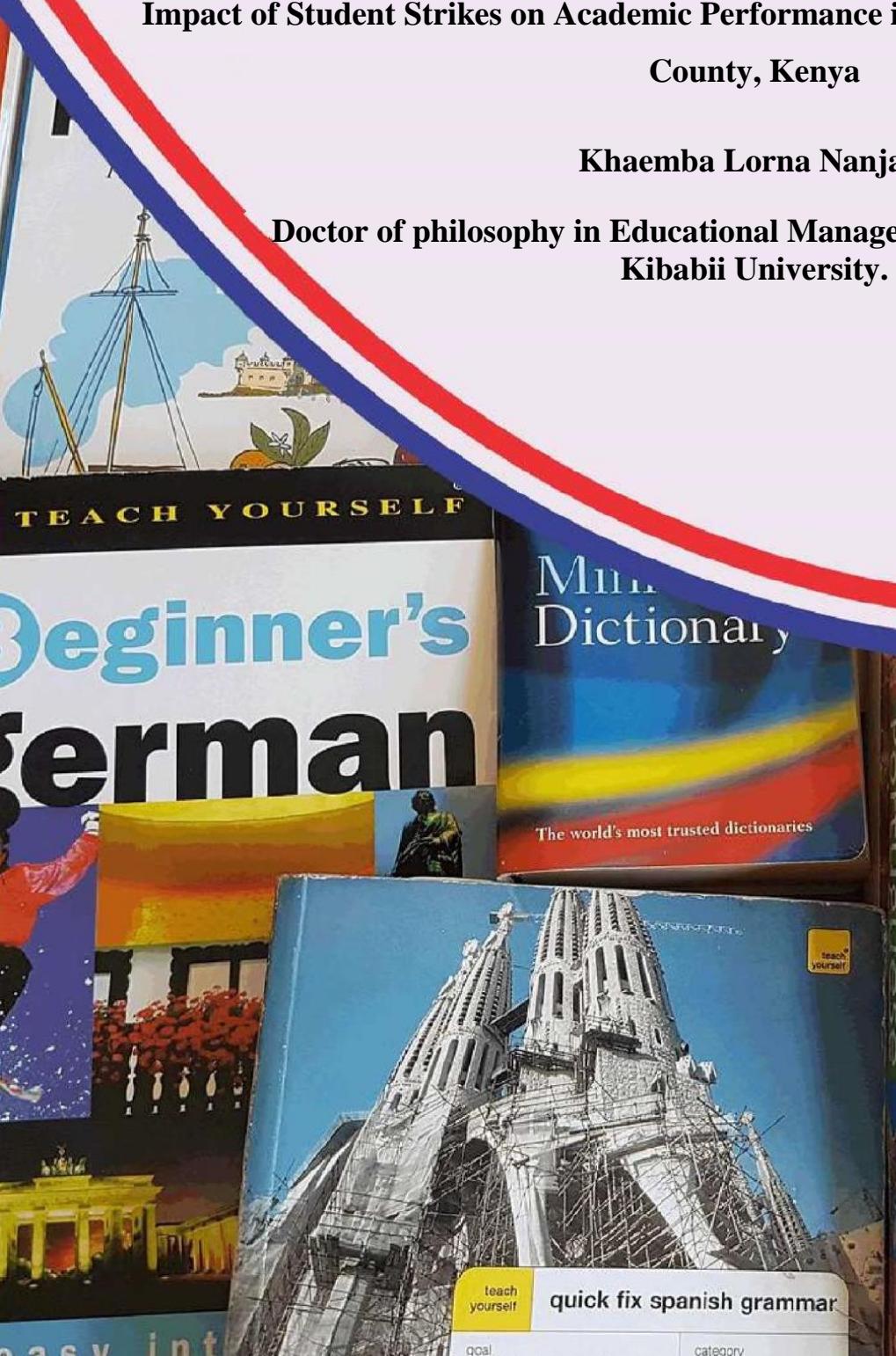
ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of student strikes on academic performance in secondary schools within Bungoma County, Kenya. The frequency and intensity of student strikes were identified as significant issues affecting the educational environment and students' academic outcomes. The research aimed to assess how these strikes influenced academic performance, identify underlying causes, and suggest strategies to mitigate their negative effects. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Data was collected through structured questionnaires and interviews with students, teachers, and school administrators. The sample size for the study consisted of 139 respondents, including 100 students, 30 teachers, and 9 school administrators, drawn from a target population of 630 individuals. The findings revealed that student strikes considerably disrupted academic progress, leading to lower achievement levels and a deteriorating school environment. The study found that student strikes significantly disrupt academic progress and negatively impact teacher-student relationships. Additionally, frequent strikes lead to lower academic achievement and affect the overall school environment. The study concluded that student strikes cause significant educational disruptions, leading to lower academic performance, increased psychological stress, and a tense school environment that hampers overall educational quality. The study recommended implementing conflict resolution mechanisms, improving communication between students and administrators, and enhancing policies to address the root causes of student strikes.

Keywords: *Student Strikes, Academic Performance, Secondary Schools, Bungoma County, Kenya*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A student strike is a form of collective action in which students deliberately cease participating in academic activities to protest against perceived issues within their educational institutions or to advocate for specific changes (Thomas, 2019). These strikes are driven by a range of grievances, including demands for improved facilities, changes in academic policies, or broader socio-political concerns. The primary aim of student strikes is to draw attention to the issues at hand and prompt institutional or governmental responses.

The occurrence of student strikes disrupts the normal academic schedule, leading to significant interruptions in the learning process. Such disruptions often result in a loss of instructional time, which hinder students' ability to engage with the curriculum effectively (Johnson & Lee, 2021). Research indicates that the extent of this disruption adversely affects academic performance, as students face challenges in maintaining their educational progress due to the interrupted delivery of course content (Brown, 2022).

Beyond the direct impact on instructional time, student strikes also have psychosocial effects on students. The stress and uncertainty generated by strikes impact students' mental health, reducing their motivation and engagement in academic tasks (Williams *et al*., 2023). The psychological strain associated with such disruptions further exacerbate the decline in academic performance, as students struggle to manage the stress and maintain focus on their studies (Taylor & Francis, 2020).

Educational institutions' responses to strikes play a critical role in shaping their impact on academic performance. Effective management strategies, such as timely communication, contingency planning, and support for affected students, mitigate some of the negative consequences of strikes (Hayward, 2019). Conversely, inadequate responses lead to prolonged disruptions and increased challenges for both students and faculty (Green, 2021).

Student strikes in Kenya have become increasingly prevalent, impacting the educational sector significantly. These strikes often result from various grievances, including issues related to school management, academic policies, and student welfare. The consequences of these strikes extend beyond immediate disruptions, affecting long-term academic performance and student outcomes. This study focuses on secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya, aiming to explore how these strikes influence academic performance and to identify potential solutions.

II: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the U.S., Theoharis (2020) explored the profound impact of high school student protests on the Black Power movement in Los Angeles during the 1960s and 1970s. In his chapter, "WALKOUT!": High School Students and the Development of Black Power in LA, he illustrated how these student-led walkouts and demonstrations were instrumental in shaping the trajectory of the movement. Through an in-depth analysis of historical records and primary sources, the study uncovered that students' activism, driven by demands for racial justice and better educational conditions, played a critical role in challenging existing norms and advancing both educational reform and broader civil rights objectives. His work highlighted the significant influence of these young activists in pushing for social change and highlighted their lasting impact on American society.

In Brazil, Silva and Costa (2022) investigated the influence of student protests on academic performance in secondary schools. The study utilized data from school records and conducted interviews with students and teachers to assess the impact of these protests. The findings revealed that while the protests aimed to address crucial issues within the educational system, they caused substantial interruptions in the academic calendar. These disruptions negatively affected students' academic achievements by reducing instructional time and delaying the coverage of the curriculum. The research underscored the need for balancing the need for student activism with strategies to mitigate its adverse effects on educational outcomes.

In Nigeria, Adebayo and Johnson (2023) conducted a study on the *Impact of Student Protests on Academic Performance in Nigerian Secondary Schools*. The research investigated how student protests, including strikes, influenced academic performance across secondary schools in Nigeria. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study combined surveys of students and teachers with the analysis of academic performance data. The findings indicated that student protests caused significant disruptions in learning, which led to lower academic performance and increased dropout rates. The study highlighted that the disruption of instructional time and heightened student stress were major factors contributing to these adverse effects. Additionally, the research

revealed that the frequent interruptions due to protests also negatively impacted teacher morale and effectiveness, which further exacerbated the decline in academic outcomes.

In Kenya, Gikungu and Karanja (2018) explored the epistemic dimensions of student strikes in selected secondary schools, The study employed a qualitative research approach, the authors conducted in-depth interviews and surveys with students, teachers, and school administrators to understand the causes and effects of these strikes. The study identified that student strikes were often driven by grievances related to school management, socio-economic conditions, and educational policies. These strikes led to significant disruptions in academic schedules, negatively impacting academic performance by reducing instructional time and causing delays in curriculum coverage (Karanja, 2018). The research highlighted the importance of addressing student concerns through effective dialogue and conflict resolution strategies to minimize educational disruptions and improve academic outcomes.

Despite the existing studies on the impact of student strikes on academic performance, a notable research gap exists in the context of Bungoma County, Kenya. While previous research has provided valuable insights into the general effects of student protests and strikes on educational outcomes, there is limited focus on the specific regional dynamics and unique challenges faced by secondary schools in Bungoma County. The existing literature lacks a detailed examination of how local socio-economic factors, cultural contexts, and specific school management practices influence the impact of student strikes on academic performance in this region. Furthermore, there is a need for longitudinal studies that track the long-term effects of strikes on students' academic trajectories and future opportunities. Addressing these gaps could offer a more nuanced understanding of the issue and inform targeted interventions to improve educational resilience and performance in Bungoma County.

III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Research Design

The study employs a **descriptive research design** to explore the relationship between student strikes and academic performance. Descriptive research design is used to describe the characteristics of a phenomenon or the relationships between variables without manipulating them (Creswell, 2014). This design is appropriate for this study as it provides a comprehensive overview of how student strikes affect various aspects of students' educational experiences, including their academic performance, learning environment, and overall school climate. The goal is to identify patterns and correlations rather than to establish causation.

3.2 Target Population

The target population for this study is defined as the specific group of individuals from whom data is collected (Stratton, 2021). The target population included 500 students, 100 teachers, and 30 school administrators from secondary schools in Bungoma County, totaling 630 individuals. This diverse group ensures a comprehensive examination of the issue from multiple perspectives,

facilitating a thorough analysis of the effects of student strikes on various aspects of the educational system.

Table 3.1 Target Population

Respondent Categories	Target Population
Students	500
Teachers	100
School Administrators	30
Total	**630**

Source: *Bungoma County Education Department ,2024*

3.3 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The sample size was determined using a proportional sampling method, where a fraction of the target population was selected to represent each category of respondents. The sample size for the study consisted of 139 respondents, including 100 students, 30 teachers, and 9 school administrators, drawn from a target population of 630 individuals. For students, 20% of the total was chosen, reflecting their large number relative to the overall population. For teachers and administrators, a higher proportion was selected to ensure adequate representation from these smaller groups. This approach helps to capture a diverse range of perspectives on the impact of student strikes.

Table 3.2 Sample Size

Respondent Categories	Target Population	Sample Size
Students	500 x 0.2	100
Teachers	100 x 0.3	30
School Administrators	30 x 0.3	9
Total	**630**	**139**

Source: Bungoma County Education Department, 2024

3.4 Data Collection Document

Data were collected using structured questionnaires for quantitative data and semi-structured interviews for qualitative insights.

3.4.1 Questionnaires

The study utilized structured questionnaires were developed to collect quantitative data on the frequency of student strikes, their causes, and their impacts on academic performance. The questionnaires included closed-ended questions with predetermined response options, designed to quantify the extent of strikes and their perceived effects. Questions were crafted based on existing literature and expert consultations to ensure relevance and comprehensiveness (Fink, 2017). The use of standardized questionnaires allows for systematic data collection and analysis.

3.4.2 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with a subset of respondents to gain qualitative insights into their personal experiences and perceptions regarding student strikes. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to allow for flexibility in exploring themes and issues that arose during the conversation (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Interview questions were open-ended, enabling respondents to provide detailed responses and elaborate on their experiences.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

3.5.1 Reliability

The **reliability** of the research instruments was assessed through a pilot study involving a small sample of respondents. The pilot study aimed to test the consistency and accuracy of the questionnaires and interview guides. Reliability was measured using statistical techniques such as Cronbach's alpha to ensure that the instruments produced stable and consistent results over time (Taber, 2018). Adjustments were made based on feedback from the pilot study to improve the reliability of the instruments.

3.5.2 Validity of Research Instruments

Validity refers to the extent to which research instruments measure what they are intended to measure (Coleman, 2022). To ensure validity, expert reviews and feedback from a pre-test group were utilized. The instruments were assessed for content validity, ensuring that they covered all relevant aspects of the research topic. Any necessary adjustments were made to enhance the relevance and accuracy of the questions.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection involved **self-administered questionnaires** and **in-person interviews.** The questionnaires were distributed to respondents through schools and collected at designated times to maximize response rates. Interviews were conducted in a controlled environment to facilitate open and honest discussions. The data collection process was carefully managed to ensure that all procedures adhered to ethical standards and research protocols (Neuman, 2014).

3.7 Method of Data Presentation and Analysis

3.7.1 Data Presentation

Data were presented using tables and charts to provide a clear visual representation of the findings. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data and highlight key trends.

3.7.2 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using **statistical methods** to determine correlations between student strikes and academic performance. Techniques such as regression analysis were used to explore relationships and identify significant factors. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically, identifying common themes and insights through coding and categorization (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the impact of student strikes from multiple perspectives.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

In the study, ethical considerations were rigorously observed. Informed consent was secured from all participants before data collection commenced, with participants being fully informed about the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time. To ensure confidentiality, participants' identities and responses were kept secure and anonymized. (Arifin, 2018). Data were stored in a manner that safeguarded privacy, adhering to ethical standards in research.

IV: RESULTS

4.1 Impact of Student Strikes on Academic Performance

Table 4.1 presents the results from the survey regarding the impact of student strikes on academic performance. This table summarizes respondents' views on several aspects of how student strikes affect academic progress, the school environment, academic achievement, and teacher-student relationships.

Each statement is accompanied by the number and percentage of respondents who strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), were undecided (U), disagreed (D), or strongly disagreed (SD) with the statements.

Table 4.1 Impact of Student Strikes

Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD	N
	70	55	7	4	3	**139**
Student strikes significantly disrupt academic progress.	50.4	39.6	5.0	2.9	2.2	**100**
	65	60	10	3	1	**139**
Strikes affect the overall school environment negatively.	46.8	43.2	7.2	2.2	0.7	**100**
	60	50	15	10	4	**139**
Frequent strikes lead to lower academic achievement.	43.2	36.0	10.8	7.2	2.9	**100**
	62	50	15	8	4	**139**
Teacher-student relationships deteriorate due to frequent strikes	44.6	36.0	10.8	5.8	2.9	**100**

V: SUMMARY

5.1 Human Resource Planning Influence on Organizational Performance

The study's goal was to evaluate how student strikes impact academic performance. The results indicated that **Student strikes significantly disrupted academic progress.** A majority of respondents, 70 (50.4%), strongly agreed that student strikes significantly disrupt academic progress. Another 55 respondents (39.6%) agreed with this statement, Only 7 respondents (5.0%) were undecided, In contrast, four respondents (2.9%) disagreed, and a small minority, 3 respondents (2.2%), strongly disagreed with the statement, reflecting a belief that strikes do not notably disrupt academic progress.

Regarding whether strikes affect the overall school environment negatively, the data revealed that 65 respondents (46.8%) strongly agreed that strikes negatively impact the overall school environment. 60 respondents (43.2%) agreed with this sentiment. Only 10 respondents (7.2%) were undecided, conversely, three respondents (2.2%) disagreed, and just one respondent (0.7%) strongly disagreed, showing a small proportion of respondents who do not perceive a negative impact on the school environment from strikes.

The perception that frequent strikes lead to lower academic achievement is supported by 60 respondents (43.2%) who strongly agreed Another 50 respondents (36.0%) agreed with this statement. A total of 15 respondents (10.8%) were undecided. In contrast, 10 respondents (7.2%) disagreed with the statement, and 4 respondents (2.9%) strongly disagreed, suggesting a minority who either do not believe in or minimize the negative impact of strikes on academic achievement.

Finally, regarding the deterioration of teacher-student relationships due to frequent strikes, 62 respondents (44.6%) strongly agreed. Additionally, 50 respondents (36.0%) agreed. Fifteen respondents (10.8%) were undecided, showing some hesitation or lack of clear opinion on this issue. Meanwhile, eight respondents (5.8%) disagreed with the statement, and four respondents (2.9%) strongly disagreed, reflecting a minority who do not believe that strikes negatively impact the relationship between teachers and students.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concluded that, Student strikes lead to significant interruptions in the educational process. These disruptions hinder the continuity of instruction and prevent students from fully engaging with the curriculum. Prolonged periods of strike action result in incomplete syllabi and insufficient preparation for examinations, thereby negatively affecting students' learning experiences and academic outcomes.

The impact of strikes is directly observable in students' academic performance. Schools affected by strikes tend to report lower grades and reduced academic achievement. The loss of instructional time and the subsequent scramble to cover missed material contribute to a decline in students' overall academic performance. This effect is often compounded by the emotional and psychological stress that strikes impose on students, further impairing their ability to concentrate and perform well academically.

Strikes create a tense and unstable environment within schools. The atmosphere during and after a strike is often marked by heightened conflict and reduced morale among students, teachers, and administrators. This challenging environment further exacerbate the difficulties faced by students, affecting their motivation and engagement with their studies. Additionally, the focus of school management often shifts from educational priorities to resolving the issues that led to the strike, detracting from the overall quality of education provided.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

- Schools should establish and maintain effective conflict resolution mechanisms to address grievances proactively. This includes creating platforms where students express concerns and seek resolutions before issues escalate into strikes.

- Enhanced communication between students, teachers, and school administrators is crucial. Developing regular, open communication channels help resolve issues early, preventing misunderstandings and conflicts from escalating into strikes.
- Schools should develop and implement policies that directly address the root causes of student strikes. This includes improving student welfare, addressing concerns related to school management practices, and ensuring that policies are enforced consistently to prevent disruptions.

REFERENCES

Adebayo, O., & Johnson, T. (2023). Impact of student protests on academic performance in Nigerian secondary schools. *Journal of Educational Research, 45*(2), 120-135.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

Brown, S. (2022). Disruptions and their effects on academic performance. *Educational Review Quarterly, 78*(1), 55-68.

Coleman, P. (2022). Validity and reliability within qualitative research for the caring sciences. *International Journal of Caring Sciences*, *14*(3), 2041-2045.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.

Gikungu, J. M., & Karanja, B. W. (2018). An epistemic understanding of strikes in selected secondary schools Kenya. *Mediterranean Journal of social sciences*, *5*(5), 191.

Green, R. (2021). Managing educational disruptions: Strategies and challenges. *Educational Administration and Policy Review, 52*(4), 375-389.

Hayward, J. (2019). Effective responses to student strikes: A case study approach. *Journal of School Management, 40*(2), 99-115.

Johnson, A., & Lee, C. (2021). The impact of disruptions on instructional time and learning. *Journal of Classroom Management, 33*(2), 142-156.

Karanja, M. (2018). Causes and effects of student strikes in Kenyan secondary schools. *East African Journal of Education Research, 29*(1), 45-60.

Neuman, D. (2014). Qualitative research in educational communications and technology: A brief introduction to principles and procedures. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, *26*, 69-86.

Silva, P., & Costa, J. (2022). The influence of student protests on academic performance in Brazilian secondary schools. *Brazilian Journal of Education Studies, 50*(3), 256-272.

Taber, K. S. (2018). The use of Cronbach's alpha when developing and reporting research instruments in science education. *Research in science education*, *48*, 1273-1296.

Taylor, R., & Francis, L. (2020). Psychological impacts of academic disruptions on students. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 85*(4), 289-304.

Theoharis, J. (2010). "WALKOUT!": High School Students and the Development of Black Power in LA. In *Neighborhood Rebels: Black Power at the Local Level* (pp. 107-129). New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.

Thomas, A., Cretney, R., & Hayward, B. (2019). Student Strike 4 Climate: justice, emergency and citizenship. *New Zealand Geographer*, *75*(2).

Williams, D., Smith, J., & Adams, K. (2023). The psychosocial effects of student strikes on academic performance. *International Journal of School Psychology, 18*(2), 175-190.