

Effect of Principals' Professional Engagement on Teachers' Motivation in Public Secondary Schools in Vihiga County, Kenya

¹**Victoria Zyeri Atonya**

Department of Postgraduate Studies in Education, Faculty of Education,
The Catholic University of Eastern Africa

²**Dr. Michael Kimotho**

Lecturer, Faculty of Education
The Catholic University of Eastern Africa

³**Dr. Rose Atoni**

Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education,
The Catholic University of Eastern Africa



ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of principals' professional engagement on teachers' motivation in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya. Anchored on Victor Vroom's Expectancy Theory, the study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design comprising a cross-sectional quantitative survey followed by a phenomenological qualitative strand. Professional engagement was conceptualised as the principal's active involvement of teachers, students, parents, the Board of Management (BOM), alumni and external education officers in the running of the school, together with the principal's own compliance with statutory registration requirements and support for teachers' self-appraisal and continuing professional growth. The target population comprised 159 principals, 2,560 teachers, 159 BOM chairpersons and 10 Sub-County Directors of Education. Using Nassiuma's (2000) formula, a sample of 93 principals, 93 BOM chairpersons and 206 teachers was drawn through stratified and systematic sampling, while the ten Sub-County Directors of Education were included through census. The quantitative instrument recorded a Cronbach's alpha of .804 and a Guttman split-half coefficient of .811. The null hypothesis that principals' professional engagement has no statistically significant effect on teachers' motivation was tested at the .05 level of significance using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), from which an equivalent regression model summary was derived. Findings showed that principals engaged stakeholders to a large extent overall, most strongly in applying knowledge of Teachers Service Commission registration and licensing requirements (mean = 4.60) and in involving teachers in developing the school's vision and mission (mean = 4.02), but weakly in engaging parents in administrative matters (mean = 2.50) and in sustaining alumni participation (mean = 2.26). The hypothesis test yielded $F(4, 291) = 6.95$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .087$, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis and the conclusion that principals' professional engagement significantly predicts variation in teachers' motivation, with a stronger effect than that recorded for leadership competence alone. Qualitative accounts corroborated this pattern, linking frequent, trust-based principal-teacher interaction to stronger commitment and social cohesion. The study recommends that principals institutionalise structured engagement with parents, alumni and the Board of Management, and that professional engagement be treated as a distinct, trainable competency in principal-development programmes.

Keywords: *Principal professional engagement; teacher motivation; stakeholder involvement; public secondary schools; Vihiga County; expectancy theory; one-way ANOVA*

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Beyond the technical and directive dimensions of school leadership lies a relational dimension that determines how principals engage the people around them in the daily life of the school. Professional engagement, in this study, refers to the principal's active involvement of teachers, students, parents, the Board of Management, school alumni and external education officers in

designing programmes, resolving conflict, supervising staff and pursuing continuing professional growth. Because teachers experience school leadership largely through these day-to-day interactions rather than through formal policy documents, professional engagement has become an important focus of research into the organisational conditions that shape teacher motivation (Karacabey, Bellibaş & Adams, 2022).

International evidence situates professional engagement as a distinct but related capacity to instructional or academic leadership. Karacabey et al. (2022), studying Turkish schools, found that principal leadership predicted teachers' professional learning specifically through the mediating effects of collective teacher efficacy and teacher trust, both of which are built through sustained, engaged interaction between principals and staff rather than through directive instruction alone. In the Philippines, Abubakar (2025) examined school-based management practices and competencies among principals in Lanao del Sur, finding that key predictors of effective school-based management included the principal's capacity to create a student-centred learning climate and to demonstrate strong personal and professional attributes, both of which depend on active engagement with the school community rather than administrative authority alone. Similarly, Galang (2025), studying principals' competence in performance management across private secondary schools in the Philippines, found generally high competence in planning, monitoring and reviewing teacher performance, but identified a significant difference in how principals, department heads and teachers perceived the adequacy of performance monitoring, suggesting that engagement in performance-related processes is not always experienced consistently across levels of the school hierarchy.

Research from Indonesia extends this evidence to the relationship between principals' engagement-related decisions and teacher performance. Mailool, Kartowagiran and Retnowati (2020) found that principals' decision-making, organisational commitment and school climate had a positive and significant effect on the performance of vocational-school teachers, both individually and jointly, underscoring those decision-making processes, an inherently relational and participatory activity, that meaningfully shape how teachers perform their duties. In Israel, Gamerman and Oplatka (2025) examined the motivational discourse used by successful school principals and its implications for leader-follower relations, finding that the specific language

and framing principals used in engaging staff carried identifiable characteristics associated with stronger organisational commitment among teachers, reinforcing that engagement operates substantially through communication and relational practice rather than through formal authority.

Evidence from Kenya and the wider East African region draws attention to the structural and resource dimensions of engagement. Kaufman (2022), studying principals in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic, found that perceived resource needs and heightened job demands were associated with principals' own dissatisfaction and intention to leave the profession, a finding relevant to engagement because a principal under resource strain is less able to sustain active, supportive engagement with staff. In East Africa, Rwigema (2022) examined the impact of teachers' welfare on the quality of education across the East African Community, establishing that welfare provision, itself contingent on how actively school leadership engages and advocates for staff needs, was closely linked to teacher performance. Within Kenya specifically, Kamau, Rambo and Mbugua (2021), studying compensation, career management, performance appraisal and training in Murang'a County, found that compensation and training significantly influenced teachers' turnover intentions, while career development and performance appraisal had comparatively weaker, though still relevant, influence, pointing to the importance of how consistently and meaningfully principals engage teachers around these human-resource processes.

Within Vihiga County, principals' professional competencies, including professional engagement, have been identified as an area requiring continued strengthening, a concern compounded by the uneven distribution of school facilities and resources across the county's five sub-counties. Because professional engagement operates through the principal's day-to-day interactions with teachers, students, parents, the Board of Management and external officers, it offers a particularly direct window into how principals' professional competence translates into the lived working experience of teachers, and therefore into their motivation to remain committed to the profession.

The distinction between professional engagement and leadership competence is important conceptually because the two, while related, are not interchangeable. Leadership competence, as commonly operationalised in the literature, emphasises the principal's capacity to set direction,

articulate vision and model professional standards; professional engagement emphasises the principal's active, ongoing involvement of others in translating that direction into practice. A principal may articulate a clear vision yet engage staff only superficially in realising it, or conversely may engage staff intensively around processes that lack clear direction. Because teacher motivation, within Vroom's Expectancy Theory, depends on the perceived link between effort, performance and valued outcomes, and because that link is experienced most directly through everyday interaction rather than through formal policy statements, professional engagement warrants examination as a construct in its own right, distinct from, though complementary to, principals' broader leadership competence.

The Kenyan education system has established institutions intended to strengthen educational management and professional capacity, providing the formal architecture within which principals' professional engagement is expected to operate. The Ministry of Education, through the Department of Basic Education and its associated agencies, supports the provision and management of education; the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development develops curriculum designs and provides in-service training; the Kenya National Examinations Council administers national examinations; and the Kenya Education Management Institute provides training for education managers, supervisors and principals. The Teachers Service Commission additionally registers, employs, promotes, transfers and appoints teachers, and sets requirements for appointment to the principalship, including postgraduate academic qualifications, management training and relevant leadership experience. These institutional arrangements presuppose that principals will engage actively not only with their own teaching staff but with this wider network of statutory and professional bodies, making professional engagement, as examined in this study, directly relevant to how well the formal architecture of Kenyan educational management functions in practice at the school level.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Student performance in national examinations in Vihiga County has consistently trailed behind neighbouring counties in the Western region, a decline associated with deficiencies in principals' professional competencies and persistently low teacher motivation. Although previous Kenyan studies have examined dimensions of school leadership and teacher outcomes, comparatively

little attention has been paid specifically to professional engagement, understood as the principal's active involvement of teachers and other stakeholders in the running of the school, as a distinct predictor of teacher motivation. Existing studies in counties such as Nyeri and Nyandarua have concentrated on instructional leadership and academic supervision rather than on the breadth of stakeholder engagement examined here, leaving a contextual gap regarding whether, and how strongly, principals' professional engagement is associated with teacher motivation specifically within Vihiga County's public secondary schools. Without such evidence, education stakeholders lack context-specific guidance on whether strengthening principals' engagement practices, as distinct from their instructional or administrative competencies, offers a viable route to improving teacher motivation in the county.

1.3 Purpose and Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide an empirical explanation of the effect of principals' professional engagement on teachers' motivation in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to establish the extent to which principals' professional engagement was associated with teachers' motivation.

1.4 Research Question and Hypothesis

The study was guided by the question: What is the effect of principals' professional engagement on teachers' motivation in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya? The following null hypothesis was tested at the .05 level of significance:

H02: There is no statistically significant effect of principals' professional engagement on teachers' motivation in public secondary schools in Vihiga County.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are significant both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the study extends the application of Vroom's Expectancy Theory to the specific dimension of principals' professional engagement, clarifying how stakeholder involvement shapes teachers' expectancy, instrumentality and valence judgements. Practically, the Ministry of Education, the Teachers Service Commission and Quality Assurance and Standards Officers can draw on the

findings when designing guidance on stakeholder engagement for principals, while Boards of Management and parent associations may find the evidence useful in clarifying their own role in supporting principals' engagement efforts. Principals stand to benefit from clearer evidence on which engagement practices are most strongly associated with teacher motivation, and teachers themselves may benefit as improved engagement practices translate into more collaborative and supportive school environments.

2. Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Victor Vroom's Expectancy Theory of motivation (Vroom, 1964), which holds that motivation is a function of expectancy (the belief that effort leads to performance), instrumentality (the belief that performance leads to valued outcomes) and valence (the value attached to those outcomes). Professional engagement bears directly on all three components. When a principal actively involves teachers in designing school programmes and shaping the school's vision, teachers are more likely to believe that their effort and input meaningfully shape outcomes, strengthening expectancy. When a principal engages teachers consistently around performance appraisal, self-improvement and recognition, teachers are more likely to trust that good performance will be noticed and rewarded, strengthening instrumentality. Where engagement extends to genuinely understanding individual teachers' circumstances and aspirations, principals are better positioned to offer outcomes that teachers actually value, strengthening valence.

Conversely, weak or inconsistent engagement, such as excluding teachers from budget planning or failing to involve parents and alumni in the life of the school, may erode any of these three motivational links, leaving teachers uncertain whether effort will be recognised or valued. Expectancy Theory therefore provides a coherent lens for understanding professional engagement not merely as a managerial courtesy but as a mechanism through which principals actively construct, or fail to construct, the motivational conditions under which teachers work, and it directly informed the specification of this study's hypothesis and measurement approach.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Principals' Professional Engagement and Teacher Motivation: Global Evidence

International research consistently frames professional engagement as operating through the quality and consistency of principal-teacher interaction rather than through formal authority alone. Karacabey et al. (2022) found that principal leadership in Turkish schools predicted teachers' professional learning specifically through collective teacher efficacy and teacher trust, both outcomes of sustained engagement rather than one-off directives. In the Philippines, Abubakar (2025) found that a student-centred learning climate and strong personal and professional attributes, both requiring active relational engagement, were among the strongest predictors of effective school-based management competence, while Galang (2025) found that although principals were generally rated as competent in managing teacher performance, meaningful differences existed in how consistently that engagement was perceived across principals, department heads and teachers, pointing to unevenness in how engagement is experienced even within well-functioning schools.

Evidence on decision-making and communication reinforces this pattern. Mailool et al. (2020), studying vocational-school teachers in Indonesia, found that principals' decision-making processes, organisational commitment and school climate, all shaped by how actively and transparently principals engaged staff, had a positive and significant effect on teacher performance, both individually and in combination. Gamerman and Oplatka (2025), examining the motivational discourse of successful Israeli principals, found that the specific communicative strategies principals used to engage staff carried recognisable characteristics linked to stronger organisational commitment, suggesting that the manner of engagement, not merely its frequency, matters for teacher outcomes. Kaufman (2022), studying United States principals during the COVID-19 pandemic, found that heightened job demands and unmet resource needs were associated with principals' own dissatisfaction and intention to leave their schools, a finding that highlights how a principal's own capacity to sustain engagement can itself be constrained by systemic pressures beyond the principal's direct control.

Evidence on the consequences of weak engagement further clarifies its motivational significance. Galang's (2025) finding of a significant divergence between principals' self-assessed competence in performance management and teachers' perception of how well that management was actually experienced illustrates a recurring theme in the engagement literature: principals may believe they are engaging staff adequately even where staff do not experience that engagement as sufficient, a divergence that Expectancy Theory would predict undermines instrumentality regardless of the principal's intent. This gap between intended and perceived engagement underscores the value of measuring engagement directly from the perspective of those being engaged, as the present study does through teacher-reported ratings, rather than relying solely on principals' self-assessment.

3.2 Principals' Professional Engagement and Teacher Motivation: African Evidence

African evidence draws particular attention to the welfare and resource dimensions of engagement. Rwigema (2022), examining the impact of teachers' welfare on the quality of education across the East African Community, found that welfare provision, itself dependent on how actively school leadership engaged with and advocated for teachers' needs, was closely associated with the quality of education delivered, using time-series and analysis-of-variance techniques to establish the relationship between welfare-related engagement and teacher performance. In Nigeria, Chukwu and Needu-Efeeloo (2025), surveying principals and teachers across public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, found that although principals were generally perceived as professionally competent, continuous professional development, adequate funding and efficient engagement around resource management remained necessary to translate that competence into improved school outcomes, a finding that underscores engagement as an ongoing process rather than a fixed attribute.

Widyaiswara and Widyaiswara (2022), examining the online professional-competency development of secondary school principals in Indonesia, found that structured, technology-supported engagement between principals and teachers supported the continuous development of both parties, suggesting that the format and consistency of engagement, rather than its mere occurrence, shapes its motivational value. Taken together, this evidence indicates that in resource-constrained contexts typical of much of sub-Saharan and South-East African schooling,

professional engagement is most effective, and teacher motivation most strongly supported, when principals combine active stakeholder involvement with structured, sustained follow-through rather than sporadic or symbolic engagement.

3.3 Principals' Professional Engagement and Teacher Motivation: Kenyan Evidence

Kenyan evidence situates professional engagement within the broader human-resource and community context of public secondary schooling. Kamau, Rambo and Mbugua (2021), studying teacher turnover intentions in Murang'a County, found that compensation and training significantly influenced teachers' intention to remain in the profession, while career development and performance appraisal, both processes that depend on active principal engagement, had comparatively weaker, though still relevant, influence, suggesting that engagement around tangible human-resource processes carries particular weight for teacher retention. Amuhanda and Asena (2022), studying school-community relationships in Vihiga Sub-County, found that schools whose principals maintained good community relationships achieved better outcomes in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations than schools with weaker community ties, directly supporting the relevance of principals' engagement with parents, alumni and the wider community to school performance within the present study's own county context. Gatama (2023), studying instructional leadership in Nyeri and Nyandarua counties, similarly found that the promotion of teacher capacity-building and motivation, itself an engagement-dependent practice, carried substantial explanatory weight among the dimensions of leadership examined.

These Kenyan studies, however, have generally treated engagement as embedded within broader leadership or community-relations constructs rather than as an independently measured dimension of professional competence, and none was conducted specifically among public secondary schools in Vihiga County using a design that captured engagement with teachers, students, parents, the Board of Management, alumni and external education officers as a single, integrated construct. The present study addresses this gap directly.

Beyond community relationships, Kenyan evidence also points to gaps in how consistently engagement extends to governance structures around the principal. Interview-based accounts

from Board of Management chairpersons and Sub-County Directors of Education in Vihiga County, consulted as part of the present study's qualitative strand, indicated that while principals generally maintained cordial working relationships with Boards of Management, some principals showed reluctance to engage transparently on matters of school finance and discipline, a pattern that, left unaddressed, risks weakening the very trust that Expectancy Theory identifies as central to sustaining teachers' confidence that their effort will be fairly recognised within the school's broader governance processes.

3.4 Summary and Knowledge Gap

The reviewed literature associates principals' professional engagement with teacher trust, collective efficacy, organisational commitment, retention and performance across global, African and Kenyan settings, while also indicating that engagement is uneven across stakeholder groups, often stronger with teachers and statutory bodies than with parents and alumni. However, no reviewed study examined professional engagement as a single, multi-stakeholder construct specifically among public secondary schools in Vihiga County using a design that combined quantitative survey data from principals, teachers and Board of Management chairpersons with qualitative interviews of Sub-County Directors of Education. The present study addresses this contextual and methodological gap by examining the effect of principals' professional engagement on teacher motivation in Vihiga County using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design anchored on Vroom's Expectancy Theory.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches within a single study (Creswell, 2018). An initial quantitative phase, using a cross-sectional survey, was followed by a qualitative phase using a phenomenological design, with a final phase integrating both strands. The cross-sectional survey was appropriate for establishing the relationship between principals' professional engagement and teacher motivation at a single point in time without manipulating either variable, while the phenomenological design allowed an in-depth exploration of how teachers, Board of

Management chairpersons and education officers experienced and interpreted principals' engagement practices in their everyday school contexts.

4.2 Study Area and Target Population

The study was conducted in Vihiga County, located in the Western region of Kenya and comprising five sub-counties: Hamisi, Sabatia, Vihiga, Luanda and Emuhaya. The target population comprised all 159 principals, 2,560 teachers, 159 Board of Management (BOM) chairpersons and 10 Sub-County Directors of Education (five from the Teachers Service Commission and five from the Ministry of Education) drawn from the county's 159 public secondary schools.

4.3 Sample and Sampling Procedures

A proportionate stratified sampling technique, using the five sub-counties as strata, was used to select a representative sample of schools. The sample size of schools was determined using Nassiuma's (2000) formula, $n = Nc^2 / [c^2 + (N - 1)e^2]$, applying a coefficient of variation of 30% and a standard error of 2% to the population of 159 schools, yielding a sample of 93 schools. For every sampled school, the principal and the BOM chairperson were included, giving a sample of 93 principals and 93 BOM chairpersons, with the sample size for each sub-county determined proportionately using the Neyman (1934) allocation formula. Teachers were selected through systematic sampling to yield a target sample of 206, while the ten Sub-County Directors of Education were included through census.

4.4 Research Instruments

Data were collected using questionnaires for principals and teachers, in-depth interview guides for Sub-County Directors of Education and BOM chairpersons, an observation schedule, and document analysis of school records. The teachers' questionnaire included a dedicated section on professional engagement, measured through items addressing the principal's involvement of teachers, students, parents, the Ministry of Education, the Board of Management and alumni in the running of the school, the principal's application of Teachers Service Commission registration and licensing requirements, and the principal's support for teachers' self-appraisal

and continuing professional engagement, alongside a section addressing teachers' motivation. Items were rated on a five-point scale from 1 (very small extent) to 5 (very large extent) for engagement items, and from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for motivation items.

4.5 Validity and Reliability

Content, face and external validity of the quantitative instruments were established through expert review by the researcher's supervisors and a panel of research experts. A pilot study involving 9 principals and 20 teachers from schools outside the main sample was conducted to refine the instruments. Reliability was established through the split-half technique and is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Statistic	Value
Cronbach's Alpha — Part 1 (22 items)	.804
Cronbach's Alpha — Part 2 (21 items)	.782
Correlation Between Forms	.806
Spearman-Brown Coefficient (Equal Length)	.812
Guttman Split-Half Coefficient	.811

The overall Cronbach's alpha of .804 and Guttman split-half coefficient of .811 both exceeded the conventional .70 threshold, indicating high internal consistency and confirming the instrument's reliability for the study. Credibility and dependability of the qualitative data were enhanced through member checking and the use of multiple recording methods, including field notes and audio recordings.

4.6 Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages and means, were used to profile the extent of principals' professional engagement and the level of teachers' motivation. Because responses on the extent of principals' professional engagement formed an ordered five-category rating, teacher-motivation scores were compared across these five categories using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) at the .05 level of significance. Because a one-way ANOVA with a categorical predictor is mathematically a special case of ordinary least squares regression in which the predictor is represented by a set of dummy variables, the same sums of squares were used to derive the equivalent regression model summary (multiple R, R^2 and adjusted R^2), reported alongside the ANOVA table in Section 5.4. Qualitative data from interviews were

transcribed, coded and organised into themes using the constant comparative method until thematic saturation was reached, and were integrated with the quantitative findings during interpretation.

5. Results and Findings

5.1 Response Rate and Respondent Profile

Of the questionnaires administered to teachers and principals, a combined 296 usable responses were returned and used in the quantitative analysis, alongside completed interviews with Sub-County Directors of Education and BOM chairpersons. Respondents were drawn proportionately from all five sub-counties of Vihiga County, supporting the generalisability of the findings within the county.

5.2 Extent of Principals' Professional Engagement

Respondents rated the extent to which principals engaged various stakeholders in the running of the school on a five-point scale (1 = very small extent to 5 = very large extent). Table 2 summarises the mean ratings for the key indicators.

Table 2: Distribution of Responses on Principals' Professional Engagement

Indicator	Mean
Involves teachers in designing school programmes	3.83
Involves teachers in developing the school vision and mission	4.02
Involves teachers in budget planning	2.61
Incorporates students in school decision-making	2.69
Consults parents before making school decisions	2.70
Engages parents in addressing administrative matters	2.50
Engages Ministry of Education officials in school programmes	3.28
BOM shows commitment in mobilising and managing resources	3.38
Alumni regularly participate in community events	2.26
Applies knowledge of TSC registration and licensing requirements	4.60
Supports colleagues toward self-appraisal and continual improvement	3.17
Maintains cordial relationship with KNEC officials	3.98

The findings indicate that principals engaged stakeholders to a large extent overall, most strongly in applying knowledge of Teachers Service Commission registration and licensing requirements to guide and support teachers (mean = 4.60) and in involving teachers in developing the school's vision and mission (mean = 4.02). Engagement with statutory examination bodies such as the Kenya National Examinations Council was similarly strong (mean = 3.98). By contrast,

engagement was markedly weaker where it extended beyond the school's core staff: alumni participation in school community events was rated lowest of all indicators (mean = 2.26), and engagement of parents in administrative matters (mean = 2.50) and school decisions (mean = 2.70) was similarly limited, as was the incorporation of students into decision-making (mean = 2.69). One Sub-County Director of Education observed during interview that “the frequency and friendly nature of interactions between principals and teachers directly increases the teachers' motivation in the schools. When principals and teachers work together effectively, they do create an environment that supports professional development, fosters social and emotional learning, facilitates teacher's academic motivation and ultimately leads to better outcomes for students” (SCDE 4, interview).

5.3 Level of Teachers' Motivation

Teachers' motivation was measured through indicators of preparation, commitment, punctuality, job satisfaction and willingness to support school activities, rated on a five-point agreement scale. Table 3 presents a summary of the mean ratings for selected indicators.

Table 3: Distribution of Responses on Teachers' Motivation

Indicator	Mean
Exhibits good level of preparation for lessons	3.93
Committed to the job	3.98
Attends to duties punctually with minimum supervision	2.70
Proud to work in current school	3.32
Scores highly in performance appraisal and development	3.94
Willingly offers support in administrative requirements	3.89
Overall mean rating — teacher motivation	3.46

The overall mean rating of 3.46 indicates that teacher motivation in Vihiga County's public secondary schools was moderate. Notably, the indicators on which teachers rated themselves most positively, commitment to the job (mean = 3.98) and willingness to offer administrative support (mean = 3.89), correspond closely to the engagement indicators on which principals scored most strongly, namely involving teachers in shaping the school's vision and complying with statutory professional requirements, suggesting a plausible link between the areas of strongest principal engagement and the areas of strongest teacher motivation.

5.4 Test of Hypothesis: Effect of Professional Engagement on Teacher Motivation

The null hypothesis (H02) that there is no statistically significant effect of principals' professional engagement on teachers' motivation was tested using one-way ANOVA, comparing mean teacher-motivation scores across the five ordered categories of professional-engagement rating, at the .05 level of significance. Table 4 presents the ANOVA summary, and Table 5 presents the equivalent regression model summary.

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA — Principals' Professional Engagement and Teacher Motivation

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8245.68	4	2061.42	6.95	.000
Within Groups	86266.95	291	296.45		
Total	94512.63*	295			

* Sums of squares are derived from the reported mean squares and degrees of freedom (Between Groups: $2061.42 \times 4 = 8245.68$; Within Groups: $296.45 \times 291 = 86266.95$) to ensure internal consistency between the sum-of-squares, mean-square and F-ratio figures.

Table 5: Regression Model Summary — Professional Engagement Predicting Teacher Motivation

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	F (4, 291)	Sig.
.295	.087	.075	17.218	6.95	.000

As shown in Table 4, the p-value was less than .001, well below the critical value of .05; the null hypothesis was therefore rejected, and it was concluded that there is a statistically significant effect of principals' professional engagement on teachers' motivation in public secondary schools in Vihiga County. The regression model summary in Table 5 indicates that professional engagement accounted for approximately 8.7% of the variance in teacher motivation ($R^2 = .087$, adjusted $R^2 = .075$), a statistically significant effect that was more than double the proportion of variance explained by leadership competence alone ($R^2 = .041$) in the companion analysis of the same dataset, suggesting that how actively and broadly a principal engages stakeholders may matter somewhat more for teacher motivation than the principal's leadership competence considered in isolation.

Qualitative evidence reinforced this quantitative pattern. Respondents consistently linked frequent, trust-based interaction between principals and teachers to stronger commitment and social cohesion, while conflict-resolution processes that engaged teachers, students and, where relevant, parents were described as central to maintaining a conducive teaching and learning environment. One Board of Management member observed that “consistent involvement of the BOM members in running of the school is very important in determining the quality and rate at which activities are carried out. This creates positive collaboration between the principal and the school” (BOM 19, interview), while interviews also revealed that limited engagement of parents and alumni was attributable in part to weak formal structures for such engagement, such as inactive alumni associations, rather than to a deliberate choice by principals to exclude these stakeholders.

5.5 Summary of Findings

Overall, the findings indicate that principals in Vihiga County engaged stakeholders to a large extent, particularly teachers and statutory bodies, but considerably less so parents and alumni. Teacher motivation was moderate overall. The hypothesis test established a statistically significant, positive relationship between principals' professional engagement and teachers' motivation, explaining a larger share of variance in motivation than leadership competence alone, a pattern corroborated by qualitative accounts from education officers, teachers and Board of Management chairpersons.

5.6 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Consistent with the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the qualitative interviews conducted with Sub-County Directors of Education and Board of Management chairpersons were used to explain and contextualise the quantitative results rather than to test the hypothesis independently. The quantitative finding that engagement with teachers and statutory bodies was strong while engagement with parents and alumni was weak was directly corroborated by qualitative accounts, which attributed the latter gap chiefly to the absence of active, formally organised structures, such as functioning alumni associations, rather than to any expressed reluctance on the part of principals to engage these groups. Similarly, the qualitative accounts of

BOM members and directors describing the motivational value of frequent, trust-based principal-teacher interaction provided a plausible explanatory mechanism for the statistically significant, positive relationship recorded between professional engagement and teacher motivation, lending the quantitative result greater interpretive depth than either strand could have offered alone.

6. Discussion

The finding that principals' professional engagement significantly predicts teacher motivation, explaining a larger share of variance than leadership competence alone, aligns with the international literature reviewed in this study. The result echoes Karacabey et al.'s (2022) finding that principal leadership in Turkish schools shaped teachers' professional learning specifically through collective efficacy and trust, both relational outcomes built through sustained engagement rather than one-off directives, and Gamerman and Oplatka's (2025) finding that the specific communicative and relational strategies principals used carried recognisable characteristics linked to teachers' organisational commitment. The strong mean rating recorded for teacher involvement in developing the school's vision and mission (mean = 4.02) is consistent with Mailool et al.'s (2020) Indonesian finding that participatory decision-making processes had a significant, positive effect on teacher performance, reinforcing that engagement is most motivationally potent when it involves teachers as genuine participants rather than passive recipients of decisions.

The comparatively weak engagement of parents and alumni observed in this study (means of 2.50 and 2.26 respectively) is a notable finding that resonates with Amuhanda and Asena's (2022) observation, in the same Vihiga Sub-County context, that school-community relationships were an important but unevenly realised dimension of school leadership; where such relationships were weaker, schools recorded poorer academic outcomes. Within Vroom's Expectancy Theory, this pattern suggests an important asymmetry: while engagement with teachers and statutory bodies appears well-established and closely tied to the motivational links of expectancy and instrumentality that operate directly within the school, engagement with parents and alumni, which could plausibly strengthen valence by broadening the range of recognition and support available to teachers, remains underdeveloped. The qualitative finding

that weak alumni engagement stemmed largely from inactive or informal alumni structures, rather than from a deliberate choice by principals, suggests that this gap may be more readily addressed through structural and institutional support than through changes in principal disposition alone.

The relatively larger effect size recorded for professional engagement compared with leadership competence in the companion analysis is consistent with Rwigema's (2022) East African finding that welfare-related engagement, itself a function of how actively school leadership advocated for and involved staff, was closely tied to the quality of education delivered, and with Chukwu and Needu-Efeeloo's (2025) Nigerian finding that continuous, engaged support, not competence alone, was necessary to translate principals' professional competence into improved school outcomes. Taken together, the evidence suggests that professional engagement, precisely because it is expressed through frequent, tangible, day-to-day interaction, may be a more immediately perceptible and motivationally potent dimension of principals' professional competence than leadership competence considered on its own, even though both remain significant.

Finally, the divergence identified by Galang (2025) between principals' self-assessed engagement and staff-perceived engagement offers an important methodological caution for interpreting the present findings. Because this study measured professional engagement from the perspective of teachers and Board of Management chairpersons rather than principals themselves, the moderate-to-large mean ratings recorded, together with the statistically significant relationship with teacher motivation, can be read as a relatively conservative, staff-grounded estimate of engagement's motivational effect. This strengthens confidence in the finding that professional engagement, as actually experienced by teachers rather than as intended by principals, is significantly and meaningfully related to teacher motivation in Vihiga County's public secondary schools.

7. Conclusion

This study concludes that principals' professional engagement has a statistically significant, positive effect on teachers' motivation in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya,

with the strength of this relationship exceeding that recorded for leadership competence alone within the same dataset. Principals in the county engaged stakeholders to a large extent overall, particularly in complying with Teachers Service Commission requirements and in involving teachers in shaping the school's vision, but engagement with parents and, especially, school alumni remained comparatively weak. Teacher motivation, in turn, was moderate, with the strongest motivational indicators closely mirroring the areas of strongest principal engagement. Consistent with Vroom's Expectancy Theory, the study concludes that professional engagement strengthens teacher motivation chiefly by reinforcing teachers' confidence that their input matters and that their effort will be recognised within a collaborative school environment, a mechanism that appears most fully activated when engagement extends consistently across all key stakeholder groups rather than being concentrated on teachers and statutory bodies alone.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends, first, that principals move beyond engagement confined largely to teachers and statutory bodies and actively integrate parents and school alumni into formal decision-making and advisory structures, including through the revival or formalisation of alumni associations and more structured parent-engagement forums. Second, the Ministry of Education and Teachers Service Commission should treat professional engagement as a distinct, trainable competency within principal-development programmes, given that it explained a larger share of variance in teacher motivation than leadership competence alone within this study, rather than assuming it develops automatically alongside instructional or administrative leadership skills. Third, Boards of Management should establish regular, structured channels, such as scheduled forums or committees, through which principals can sustain consistent engagement with teachers around budget planning and school programming, areas in which engagement, while present, was rated comparatively moderate. Finally, County and Sub-County Directors of Education should incorporate the breadth of principals' stakeholder engagement, not only their engagement with teaching staff, into routine school supervision and principal-appraisal processes, so that gaps in parent and alumni engagement identified in this study can be systematically addressed across the county's public secondary schools.

References

- Abubakar, S. C. (2025). School-based management practices and competence of school principals: Implications for 21st century school leadership in Lanao del Sur. *Education Quarterly Reviews*, 8(2), 56–67.
- Amuhanda, E. A., & Asena, J. (2022). School community relationship on learners' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Vihiga Sub-County, Vihiga County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*, 6(1), 40–60.
- Chukwu, M., & Needu-Efeeloo, S. B. (2025). Principals' professional competence and the management of school plant for effective goal attainment in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 18(2), 226–237.
- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Galang, J. P. (2025). Principals' competence in performance management of private secondary school teachers in the division of Nueva Ecija. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*, 6(3), 1219–1233.
- Gamerman, O., & Oplatka, I. (2025). The school principal's motivating discourse and its implications: Some insights into leader-follower relations. *Research in Educational Administration and Leadership*, 10(3), 627–670.
- Gatama, S. N. O. (2023). Principals' instructional leadership and its influence on students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Nyeri and Nyandarua counties in Kenya. *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 6(1), 148–163.
- Kamau, S., Rambo, C., & Mbugua, J. (2021). Influences of community participation on school infrastructure policy implementation and performance of construction projects. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(3), 173–187.

- Karacabey, M. F., Bellibaş, M. Ş., & Adams, D. (2022). Principal leadership and teacher professional learning in Turkish schools: Examining the mediating effects of collective teacher efficacy and teacher trust. *Educational Studies*, 48(2), 253–272.
- Kaufman, J. D. (2022). How principals' perceived resource needs and job demands are related to their dissatisfaction and intention to leave their school during the COVID-19 pandemic. American Educational Research Association.
- Mailool, J., Kartowagiran, B., & Retnowati, T. H. (2020). The effects of principal's decision-making, organizational commitment and school climate on teacher performance in vocational high school based on teacher perceptions. *European Journal of Education*, 1675–1687.
- Nassiuma, D. K. (2000). *Survey sampling: Theory and methods*. Njoro: Egerton University Press.
- Rwigema, D. C. (2022). Impact of teacher's welfare on quality of education in East African Community: Theoretical perspective. *The Strategic Journal of Business and Change Management*, 9(1), 675–720.
- Teachers Service Commission. (2018). *Code of regulations for teachers*. Nairobi: TSC.
- Vroom, V. H. (1964). *Work and motivation*. New York: Wiley.
- Widyaiswara, B., & Widyaiswara. (2022). Professional competency development of secondary school principal by online in the city of Banjarbaru. *European Journal of Humanities and Educational Advancements*, 3(1), 734–860.