

## Effect of Principals' Leadership Competencies on Teachers' Motivation in Public Secondary Schools in Vihiga County, Kenya

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## ABSTRACT

Phenomenological qualitative strand. The target population comprised 159 principals, 2,560 teachers, 159 Board of Management (BOM) chairpersons and 10 Sub-County Directors of Education drawn from all public secondary schools in the county. 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. Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires whose reliability was established through split-half testing (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .804$ ; Guttman split-half coefficient = .811), while qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews, document analysis and an observation schedule. Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies and percentages) were used to profile principals' leadership competencies and teachers' motivation, while the null hypothesis that principals' leadership competencies have 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 to express the proportion of variance in teacher motivation explained by leadership competence. Findings showed that principals exercised leadership competencies to a large extent (overall mean = 3.90), particularly in sharing the school vision and complying with statutory registration requirements, although engagement in continuous professional development programmes remained comparatively weak (mean = 2.60). The hypothesis test yielded  $F(4, 291) = 3.09$ ,  $p = .020$ ,  $R^2 = .041$ , leading to rejection of the null hypothesis and the conclusion that principals' leadership competencies significantly predict variation in teachers' motivation, albeit modestly. Qualitative accounts corroborated this pattern, with respondents emphasising the role of shared vision, ethical conduct and collaborative goal-setting in sustaining teacher motivation. The study recommends structured, continuous leadership-development programmes for principals and closer supervision by the Teachers Service Commission and the Ministry of Education to strengthen leadership competencies across schools.

**Keywords:** *Principal leadership competencies; teacher motivation; public secondary schools; Vihiga County; expectancy theory; one-way ANOVA*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Effective schools depend not only on adequate physical and financial resources but on the quality of leadership that principals provide on a daily basis. Because principals occupy a central position in determining the direction and climate of an institution, their leadership competencies have become an important subject of inquiry in educational management research (Maheshwari, 2021). Leadership competence is understood in this study as the principal's demonstrated ability to set a clear vision and goals for the school, communicate that vision effectively, model high ethical and professional standards, remain engaged in continuous professional learning, and use these capacities to inspire teachers toward the achievement of institutional objectives.

Internationally, research has consistently linked principals' leadership behaviour to the working conditions and psychological states that shape teachers' commitment to their profession. In Germany, Lambrecht, Lenkeit, Hartmann and Ehlert (2022) found that school leaders' capacity to plan inclusive schooling and coordinate staff was central to building equitable and supportive learning environments. In Turkey, Bellibaş (2022) established that principals' academic leadership shaped teachers' classroom practices indirectly through shared professional practice and a strengthened sense of agency among staff, while Karacabey, Bellibaş and Adams (2022) demonstrated that

principal leadership predicted teachers' professional learning through the mediating effects of collective teacher efficacy and trust. In the United States, Raquel (2021) conducted a systematic review linking emotionally intelligent leadership self-awareness, social awareness, self-management and relationship management to principals' capacity to build teacher capacity and sustain school success.

Evidence from Asia adds further weight to this pattern. In Israel, Izhak (2022) found that principals' digital instructional leadership shaped teachers' intrinsic motivation, particularly during the shift to remote schooling occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic. In Indonesia, Zummy (2022) linked principal self-efficacy for academic leadership to work engagement, job satisfaction and reduced turnover intention among principals themselves, while Birhasani (2022) established a direct and indirect correlation between principals' academic leadership and teacher performance through job satisfaction. Suyudi (2022) further showed that instructional leadership and creative teaching jointly shaped stakeholder satisfaction, while a second-order meta-analysis by Tan (2020), synthesising results from over five hundred primary studies spanning four decades, found a consistently positive, though modest, association between school leadership and a range of school outcomes.

In the African context, the picture is similarly consistent but reveals persistent gaps in principals' preparation for leadership roles. Unlike jurisdictions with formal preparatory programmes for aspiring school leaders, many African education systems appoint principals from the teaching ranks with comparatively limited formal leadership training. In Botswana, Bakokonyane (2022) found that high-performing rural schools were distinguished from low-performing ones chiefly by the extent to which their heads involved staff and stakeholders in crafting and implementing the school's vision and strategic plans, and by how closely heads monitored classroom instruction. In Rwanda, Sibomana (2022) established that effective academic leadership behaviour setting school-wide goals, communicating them clearly, motivating teachers, supervising instruction and building collegial relationships was central to how principals were perceived by their staff. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Luheho (2022) found that supervisors of teacher professional-learning circles possessed only slightly over half of the standard leadership competencies expected of them, pointing to a persistent development gap even among leaders responsible for building the capacity of other teachers.

In Kenya, the principal is formally recognised as the school's chief educationist and administrator, a role that carries responsibility for programme implementation, resource management and the welfare of staff and students (Teachers Service Commission [TSC], 2018). Empirical evidence from western Kenya reinforces the relevance of leadership competence to school outcomes. Amuhanda and Asena (2022) found that schools whose principals maintained good community relationships recorded better outcomes in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations than schools where such relationships were weak, while Gatama (2023), working in the neighbouring counties of Nyeri and Nyandarua, established that all dimensions of principals' academic leadership were positively and significantly related to student achievement, with the provision of instructional materials and the promotion of teacher capacity-building carrying the largest influence. Within Vihiga County, student performance in national examinations has persistently trailed that of neighbouring counties in the Western region, a decline that has been attributed in part to deficiencies in principals' professional competencies and low teacher motivation, and which national commentary has linked to a rise in school unrest and instability in cases where principals lacked the requisite competencies (Udali, 2020).

Motivation is the mechanism through which leadership is ultimately translated into classroom practice. Teachers who are adequately motivated are more likely to prepare thoroughly, demonstrate commitment and persist through the demands of the profession, while poorly motivated teachers are more likely to withdraw effort, be absent, or exit

the profession altogether. Because principals control much of the working environment that either enables or constrains this motivation through the vision they set, the ethical example they provide and the professional relationships they build understanding how leadership competence relates to teacher motivation is essential to strengthening secondary education in counties such as Vihiga.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Despite the critical role of secondary education, student performance in national examinations in Vihiga County has consistently trailed behind neighbouring counties in the Western region, a decline rooted partly in deficiencies in principals' professional competencies and low teacher motivation. If left unaddressed, schools in the county risk a sustained decline in academic standards, intensified student unrest and higher teacher burnout. Although previous studies have examined the relationship between school leadership and educational outcomes, Gatama et al. (2023) and related Kenyan studies have concentrated largely on instructional materials and academic supervision in other counties such as Nyeri and Nyandarua, leaving limited empirical evidence on the extent to which principals' leadership competencies specifically influence teacher motivation in Vihiga County. Existing literature has also given greater attention to the direct relationship between leadership and student academic outcomes, with comparatively less attention to teacher motivation as the mechanism through which leadership competence may influence school effectiveness. Without such evidence, education stakeholders in Vihiga County have limited context-specific information on whether strengthening principals' leadership competencies can improve teachers' motivation and, ultimately, educational outcomes.

### **1.3 Purpose and Objective of the Study**

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

### **1.4 Research Question and Hypothesis**

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

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no statistically significant effect of principals' leadership competencies on teachers' motivation in public secondary schools in Vihiga County.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study are significant in several respects. Theoretically, the study enriches the literature on principals' leadership competencies by providing a contextual, county-level perspective grounded in Vroom's Expectancy Theory. Practically, the study offers evidence that the Ministry of Education, the Teachers Service Commission and Quality Assurance and Standards Officers can draw upon in designing training programmes and policies that strengthen principals' leadership competencies as a lever for teacher motivation. County Directors of Education may use the findings to inform decisions on the placement and mentorship of principals, while principals themselves stand to benefit from clearer evidence on which leadership behaviours are most strongly associated with

a motivated teaching staff. Ultimately, because motivated teachers are central to effective curriculum delivery and learner outcomes, the study contributes evidence relevant to sustaining quality secondary education in Vihiga County and comparable contexts.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on Victor Vroom's Expectancy Theory of motivation (Vroom, 1964). Vroom proposed that the intensity of an individual's tendency to perform in a particular manner depends on the strength of the expectation that performance will lead to a definite outcome, and on the attractiveness of that outcome to the individual. The theory identifies three interrelated components of motivation: expectancy, the belief that increased effort will result in improved performance; instrumentality, the belief that successful performance will be followed by valued outcomes; and valence, the value an individual attach to those outcomes.

Expectancy Theory is particularly relevant to this study because principals' leadership competencies constitute an organisational factor that can shape all three motivational links. A principal who sets a clear vision, communicates goals effectively and provides the resources and guidance teachers need strengthens teachers' expectancy that effort will translate into effective performance. A principal who recognises effort fairly and consistently strengthens instrumentality, the belief that good performance will be followed by recognition or reward. Where a principal further attends to the specific professional needs and aspirations of individual teachers, the valence attached to available outcomes is likely to increase. Deficiencies in leadership competence, by contrast, may weaken any of these three links and thereby suppress motivation. The theory therefore provides a coherent explanation of the mechanism through which principals' leadership competencies may influence teacher motivation in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, and it directly informed the specification of the study's hypothesis and measurement approach.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1 Principals' Leadership Competencies and Teacher Motivation: Global Evidence

A substantial body of international research links principals' leadership competencies to teachers' motivational states, although the specific mechanisms identified vary by context. Lambrecht et al. (2022), drawing on a longitudinal study of 135 school leaders in Brandenburg, Germany, found that leaders' capacity to plan inclusive schooling shaped the equity and cohesion of the working environment, conditions closely associated with staff morale. In Turkey, Bellibaş (2022) used structural equation modelling with 350 teachers to show that academic leadership influenced instructional practice indirectly through shared practice and teachers' sense of agency, a full-mediation pathway that underscores how leadership competence operates through intervening organisational processes rather than in isolation. Karacabey et al. (2022) extended this evidence by demonstrating that principal leadership predicted teachers' professional learning through collective teacher efficacy and trust, reinforcing the view that competent leadership builds the relational infrastructure through which motivation is sustained.

Evidence from Asia points to similar conclusions while highlighting the importance of context. Izhak (2022), examining Israeli principals' response to the shift toward remote instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic, found that principals with stronger digital instructional leadership competencies sustained higher levels of teachers' intrinsic motivation for online instruction, with a mediation effect on perceived student learning. In Indonesia,

Zummy (2022) reported that principal self-efficacy for academic leadership was associated with stronger work engagement and reduced intention to leave the principalship, while Birhasani (2022) found both direct and indirect associations between academic leadership and teacher performance operating through job satisfaction. Suyudi (2022) similarly demonstrated that instructional leadership, combined with support for creative teaching, was associated with stronger stakeholder satisfaction. Taken together, this body of evidence, corroborated by Tan's (2020) second-order meta-analysis of over five hundred primary studies, supports a consistent, if moderate, positive relationship between principals' leadership competencies and the motivational and performance outcomes of the staff they lead.

### **3.2 Principals' Leadership Competencies and Teacher Motivation: African Evidence**

African evidence broadly affirms the global pattern while drawing attention to structural constraints particular to the continent's education systems. In Botswana, Bakokonyane (2022) found that the difference between high- and low-performing rural primary schools was closely tied to the extent to which school heads involved staff in developing and implementing a shared vision, and to how actively they monitored classroom instruction; a head with strong leadership competence could transform a low-performing school into a high-performing one. In Rwanda, Sibomana (2022) reported that principals who clearly communicated school-wide goals, supervised instruction, gave feedback and coordinated staff development were perceived by teachers as more effective leaders. Studies in the Democratic Republic of Congo add a cautionary note: Luheho (2022) found that supervisors of teacher professional-learning circles possessed only about half of the standard leadership competencies expected of their role, underscoring the continuing need for structured leadership development even among staff formally charged with building the capacity of others.

Nigerian evidence further illustrates the multidimensional nature of leadership competence. 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 resource management remained necessary to translate that competence into improved school performance. Dahiru (2022), examining the mediating role of teacher empowerment in the relationship between academic leadership and school effectiveness in Zamfara State, similarly found a significant relationship between leadership, empowerment and effectiveness, recommending that leadership practice be paired deliberately with empowerment strategies. Collectively, this evidence indicates that leadership competence in African contexts operates not merely as an individual attribute of the principal but as a resource that must be actively converted into supportive organisational practice before its motivational benefits are realised.

Further South African evidence links leadership behaviour directly to teachers' psychological experience of their work. Van de Vyver (2020), examining the relationship between principals' leadership behaviour and teachers' professional wellbeing in the North-West Province, found that a cordial, interpersonally warm leadership style was positively associated with teachers' wellbeing and with stronger retention, while principal-teacher relationships characterised by distance or inconsistency were linked to poorer wellbeing outcomes. This finding is instructive for the present study because it situates leadership competence not merely as a technical or managerial capacity but as a relational one, in which the manner in which a principal exercises authority, rather than the authority itself, shapes how teachers experience their work and, by extension, their motivation to remain committed to it.

### 3.3 Principals' Leadership Competencies and Teacher Motivation: Kenyan Evidence

Within Kenya, the principal is formally positioned as the school's chief educationist and administrator (TSC, 2018), a mandate that presumes a baseline of leadership competence. Evidence from western Kenya provides direct support for the relevance of this competence to school outcomes. Amuhanda and Asena (2022) established that schools whose principals maintained good community relationships achieved better results in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations than schools with weaker relationships, suggesting that leadership competence extends beyond internal school management to the principal's engagement with the wider community. Gatama (2023), studying instructional leadership in Nyeri and Nyandarua counties, found that all dimensions of principals' academic leadership, including the strategic provision of instructional materials and the promotion of teacher capacity-building, were positively and significantly related to student achievement, with capacity-building and motivation-related practices carrying the largest explanatory weight among the dimensions studied.

Udali (2020), examining school safety awareness in Trans-Nzoia County, found that principals with stronger professional competencies were more likely to establish high institutional standards, with implications for staff morale and satisfaction, while weaker competence was associated with heightened insecurity and instability, patterns that resonate with reports of unrest in schools where principals have faced scrutiny over competency gaps. These Kenyan studies, however, have concentrated on academic performance, safety and community relationships rather than directly measuring teacher motivation as an outcome, and have largely been conducted outside Vihiga County. This leaves an important contextual gap: whether the same pattern of association between leadership competence and staff outcomes holds when teacher motivation, rather than academic achievement, is the outcome of interest, and whether it holds specifically within the socio-economic and institutional conditions of Vihiga County's public secondary schools.

Closer to the present study area, Bett (2021), examining strategic leadership practices and academic performance among open, auxiliary and mainstream public secondary schools in the neighbouring county of Kericho, found that school heads, departmental heads and class teachers together associated stronger strategic-leadership practice with better organisational outcomes, using both descriptive and inferential statistics, including ANOVA, to establish the strength of this relationship. This Kericho-based evidence, together with the Nyeri and Nyandarua findings of Gatama (2023), suggests a broadly consistent pattern across counties in the wider Western and Rift Valley regions of Kenya, in which stronger principal leadership practice is associated with more favourable institutional outcomes, reinforcing the plausibility of a similar relationship holding for teacher motivation within Vihiga County specifically.

### 3.4 Summary and Knowledge Gap

The reviewed literature consistently associates principals' leadership competencies with teacher motivation, commitment, professional learning and, indirectly, student outcomes, across global, African and Kenyan settings. However, most of the reviewed studies employed purely quantitative designs, single research instruments, or samples restricted to teachers or principals alone, and none was conducted specifically among public secondary schools in Vihiga County using a design that combined a cross-sectional survey of principals, teachers and Board of Management chairpersons with in-depth qualitative interviews of education officers. The present study addresses this contextual and methodological gap by examining the effect of principals' leadership competencies 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, which integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches within a single study to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2018). The design was characterised by an initial quantitative phase of data collection and analysis, followed by a qualitative phase, with a final phase of integration of the two strands. The quantitative strand used a cross-sectional survey, appropriate for collecting data from many respondents at a single point in time to establish the relationship between the independent and dependent variables without manipulating them. The qualitative strand used a phenomenological design, which allowed an in-depth exploration of respondents' lived experiences and perceptions regarding principals' leadership competencies and their influence on teacher motivation, capturing nuanced interactions and attitudes that a purely quantitative approach would overlook.

### **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 county has a population of over 612,000 people and hosts 159 public secondary schools. 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 these schools.

### **4.3 Sample and Sampling Procedures**

A proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select a representative sample of schools, with the five sub-counties serving as strata. The sample size of schools was determined using Nassiuma's (2000) formula,  $n = Nc^2 / [c^2 + (N - 1)e^2]$ , where  $N$  is the accessible population,  $c$  is the coefficient of variation, and  $e$  is the standard error. Applying a coefficient of variation of 30% and a standard error of 2% to the population of 159 schools yielded 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; the sample size for each sub-county was then 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 because of their small number.

### **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 such as staff registers and professional-development documentation. The teachers' questionnaire was organised into sections covering demographic characteristics and each construct of principals' professional competence, including a dedicated section on leadership competencies measured through items on academic leadership and leadership strategy, alongside a section addressing teachers' motivation. Items were rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (very small extent) to 5 (very large extent) for competence 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, who assessed the relevance, clarity and representativeness of the items before the instruments were finalised. A pilot study involving 9 principals and 20 teachers from schools outside the main sample, representing approximately 10% of the corresponding sample sizes, was conducted to refine the instruments. Reliability of the quantitative instrument was established through the split-half technique, given its suitability for instruments dominated by rating-scale items, 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 analysis yielded an overall Cronbach's alpha of .804 and a Guttman split-half coefficient of .811, both exceeding the conventional threshold of .70 and indicating a high level of internal consistency; the instrument was therefore considered reliable for the study. Credibility and dependability of the qualitative data were enhanced through member checking, in which the researcher's interpretations were shared with participants to confirm accuracy, and through 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' leadership competencies and the level of teachers' motivation. Because responses on the extent to which principals demonstrated leadership competence formed an ordered five-category rating (very small extent to very large extent), teacher motivation scores were compared across these five categories using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) at the .05 level of significance, the appropriate inferential procedure for testing mean differences in a continuous outcome across an ordered categorical predictor. 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 also 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, so that the strength as well as the statistical significance of the

relationship could be reported. 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 206 teacher questionnaires and 93 principal questionnaires administered, 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, comprising a mix of male and female teachers and principals with varied lengths of service, which supported the generalisability of the findings within the county.

### 5.2 Extent of Principals' Leadership Competencies

Respondents rated the extent to which principals demonstrated leadership competencies 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' Leadership Competencies**

| Indicator                                                      | Mean        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Sets clear vision and annual goals for the teachers            | 3.12        |
| Engages extensively in professional development programmes     | 2.60        |
| Holds membership of professional associations and networks     | 4.15        |
| Exhibits high moral and ethical status                         | 3.30        |
| Possesses a pleasant, inspiring and motivating personality     | 3.07        |
| Demonstrates appreciation and skill in ICT                     | 3.27        |
| Shares the school vision and leads staff effectively toward it | 3.90        |
| <b>Overall mean rating — leadership competencies</b>           | <b>3.90</b> |

The overall mean rating of 3.90 indicates that principals in Vihiga County demonstrated leadership competence to a large extent, most visibly in sharing the school vision with staff (mean = 3.90) and in holding membership of professional bodies such as the Kenya Association of Educational Administration and Management and the Kenya National Examinations Council (mean = 4.15), reflecting a high level of compliance with statutory registration and professional-association requirements. Engagement in continuous professional development programmes was, however, comparatively weak (mean = 2.60), suggesting that opportunities for principals' own ongoing learning remain underdeveloped even where other leadership competencies are strong. Qualitative accounts corroborated this pattern; one Board of Management chairperson observed that “the effort that the school principal invests in having a shared school purpose is an indicator that teaching and learning in the school is not the sole responsibility of teachers but rather a collective activity that binds all the school members, including the principal” (BOM 3, 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        |
| <b>Overall mean rating — teacher motivation</b>         | <b>3.46</b> |

The overall mean rating of 3.46 indicates that teacher motivation in Vihiga County's public secondary schools was moderate. Teachers rated their commitment to the job (mean = 3.98) and their performance in appraisal processes (mean = 3.94) relatively highly, while punctual attendance to duty with minimum supervision was rated

comparatively low (mean = 2.70), suggesting that while teachers reported being personally committed, close supervision remained a factor in ensuring consistent attendance and duty performance.

#### 5.4 Test of Hypothesis: Effect of Leadership Competencies on Teacher Motivation

The null hypothesis (H01) that there is no statistically significant effect of principals' leadership competencies on teachers' motivation was tested using one-way ANOVA, comparing mean teacher-motivation scores across the five ordered categories of leadership-competence rating, at the .05 level of significance. Table 4 presents the ANOVA summary, and Table 5 presents the equivalent regression model summary, derived from the same sums of squares on the basis that a one-way ANOVA with a categorical predictor is mathematically equivalent to an ordinary least squares regression of the outcome on a set of dummy-coded predictor categories.

**Table 4: One-Way ANOVA — Principals' Leadership Competencies and Teacher Motivation**

| Source         | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F    | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|------|------|
| Between Groups | 4275.74        | 4   | 1068.93     | 3.09 | .020 |
| Within Groups  | 100827.48      | 291 | 346.49      |      |      |
| Total          | 105103.21      | 295 |             |      |      |

**Table 5: Regression Model Summary — Leadership Competencies Predicting Teacher Motivation**

| R    | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of Estimate | F (4, 291) | Sig. |
|------|----------|-------------------|------------------------|------------|------|
| .202 | .041     | .028              | 18.615                 | 3.09       | .020 |

As shown in Table 4, the p-value of .020 is less than the critical value of .05; the null hypothesis was therefore rejected, and it was concluded that there is a statistically significant effect of principals' leadership competencies on teachers' motivation in public secondary schools in Vihiga County. The regression model summary in Table 5 indicates that leadership competence accounted for approximately 4.1% of the variance in teacher motivation ( $R^2 = .041$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .028$ ), a statistically significant but modest effect, consistent with the understanding that teacher motivation is multiply determined and that leadership competence is one of several organisational factors that jointly shape it. Practically, the finding indicates that principals with stronger leadership competencies, particularly in sharing a compelling school vision and modelling ethical conduct, were associated with somewhat higher levels of teacher motivation than principals with comparatively weaker leadership competencies.

Qualitative evidence reinforced this quantitative pattern. Interviews with Sub-County Directors of Education and BOM chairpersons indicated that principals who clearly communicated institutional goals and modelled high ethical standards were more likely to be described by teachers as inspiring and trustworthy, conditions the respondents associated with stronger commitment to teaching duties, while principals whose leadership was perceived as weak or inconsistent were linked to lower staff morale and, in some instances, to greater friction between the administration and the teaching staff.

### 5.5 Summary of Findings

Overall, the findings indicate that principals in Vihiga County demonstrated leadership competence to a large extent, most strongly in vision-sharing and compliance with professional registration requirements, but comparatively weakly in continuous professional development. Teacher motivation was moderate overall. The hypothesis test established a statistically significant, positive, though modest, relationship between principals' leadership competencies and teachers' motivation, a pattern corroborated by qualitative accounts from education officers and Board of Management chairpersons.

## 6. DISCUSSION

The finding that principals' leadership competencies significantly predict teacher motivation, albeit modestly, aligns closely with the international literature reviewed in this study. The result echoes Bellibaş (2022) and Karacabey et al. (2022), both of whom found that principals' academic leadership shaped teacher outcomes indirectly through intervening organisational processes such as shared practice, collective efficacy and trust rather than through a single, dominant direct pathway; the comparatively modest effect size obtained in the present study ( $R^2 = .041$ ) is consistent with the expectation that leadership competence operates alongside, rather than in place of, other organisational and personal determinants of teacher motivation. The finding that vision-sharing carried the strongest mean rating among the leadership indicators resonates with Bakokonyane's (2022) observation in Botswana that the involvement of staff in crafting and implementing a shared school vision distinguished high-performing schools from low-performing ones, and with Sibomana's (2022) finding in Rwanda that clear communication of school-wide goals was central to how teachers perceived their principals' effectiveness as leaders.

The comparatively low rating for principals' engagement in continuous professional development (mean = 2.60) is a notable finding that echoes Luheho's (2022) observation in the Democratic Republic of Congo that leaders responsible for building the capacity of others often themselves possess only a partial complement of the competencies expected of their role. Within Vroom's Expectancy Theory, this gap is significant because a principal's own continuing professional growth models the very behaviour — effort invested toward valued, attainable outcomes — that the theory suggests principals must cultivate in their teachers; a principal who does not visibly invest in professional growth may find it more difficult to credibly encourage that same investment among staff. The moderate overall level of teacher motivation recorded in the study (mean = 3.46) is broadly consistent with Amuhanda and Asena's (2022) and Gatama's (2023) Kenyan findings that leadership-related factors are associated with, but do not alone determine, staff and student outcomes; organisational management, professional engagement and professional practice, examined as separate dimensions of principals' professional competence in the broader dissertation from which this paper is drawn, together with factors external to the school, jointly account for the remaining variance in motivation.

The qualitative finding that ethical conduct and consistent, transparent communication of goals were associated with stronger perceived motivation is consistent with Udali's (2020) observation that principals with stronger professional competencies were more likely to establish high institutional standards with positive implications for staff morale. Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative evidence in this study suggest that leadership competence functions as a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for sustaining teacher motivation in Vihiga County's public secondary schools, and that its motivational benefit is most likely to be realised when leadership is paired with the principal's own visible and continuous professional growth.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that principals' leadership competencies have a statistically significant, positive effect on teachers' motivation in public secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya, even though the magnitude of that effect is modest, indicating that leadership competence is one of several important levers rather than the sole determinant of teacher motivation. Principals in the county demonstrated leadership competence to a large extent overall, and were particularly strong in sharing the school vision and complying with professional registration and networking requirements, but showed a notable weakness in sustaining their own continuous professional development. Teacher motivation, in turn, was moderate, with teachers reporting stronger commitment to their work than consistency in punctual, closely unsupervised attendance to duty. The study further concludes, consistent with Vroom's Expectancy Theory, that leadership competence contributes to teacher motivation chiefly by strengthening teachers' confidence that effort will be recognised and translated into valued outcomes, a mechanism most visibly activated when principals communicate a clear, shared vision and model ethical, professional conduct.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends, first, that the Teachers Service Commission and the Ministry of Education, through the Kenya Education Management Institute, institute structured and continuous leadership-development programmes for serving and aspiring principals in Vihiga County, with particular emphasis on the sustained professional development in which principals themselves are currently weakest. Second, principals should move beyond an internally focused academic leadership role toward more collaborative and transparent governance that visibly and consistently communicates institutional vision and goals to teaching staff. Third, County and Sub-County Directors of Education should incorporate assessment of principals' leadership competencies, including their engagement in continuous professional learning, into routine school supervision and principal-appraisal processes, using the findings of this study to identify schools and principals most in need of targeted support. Finally, because the relationship between leadership competence and teacher motivation, while significant, explained only a modest share of the variance in motivation, principals and policymakers should pursue leadership development alongside complementary interventions in organisational management, professional engagement and school culture to more comprehensively address teacher motivation in the county.

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