



# Influence of Support Staff Promotional Opportunities on Learners' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools Kenya

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## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author HBO designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol, wrote the first draft of the manuscript, managed the analyses of the study and the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

**Original Research Article**

**Received 12 January 2021**

**Accepted 17 March 2021**

**Published 23 March 2021**

## **ABSTRACT**

The study examined the influence of Support Staff Promotional Opportunities on Learners' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya. The study utilized the convergent parallel mixed methods design. The study population consisted 68 principals, 68 Board of management chairpersons, 68 Director of Studies and 272 support staff who heads security, laboratory, kitchen and academic/secretariat departments. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used for data collection. Quantitative data from closed ended sections of the questionnaire were analysed by use of descriptive statistics and also inferential statistics such as Pearson Correlation. Qualitative data was analysed on content on the on-going process as themes as sub-themes emerged. The findings indicated that there was statistically significant positive correlation ( $r=.280$ ,  $n=88$ ,  $p=.008$ ) between support staff promotional opportunities and learners' academic performance. The themes which emerged from qualitative results were use of job experience in promotion, use of certificates acquired by a support staff, the length of stay in school and fairness in promotion.

*Keywords: Academic performance; support staff; promotional opportunities; learners'; public; secondary schools; Kenya.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Motivation results into job satisfaction and is a very important component to employee in any

organization [1]. Dissatisfied employees are likely to leave their jobs, thus understanding of employees, motivational and job satisfaction and its contributing variable are important for any

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organization to exist and prosper. Deci, [2], in his book "Need satisfaction," noted that motivation and well-being in the work organization counts. In Wales and England, Secondary School support staff felt less motivated with their posts in general, their contracts and conditions of employment, training and professional development or growth available to them. A research carried out by Society for Human Resources Professional (SHRM, 2007) in U.S.A. indicates that the top five contributors to inadequacy of motivation were job security, communication between employee and senior management, benefits of flexibility to balance work life issues and feeling safe in the work environment.

Promotion plays a crucial role in staff development motivation and enhancing performance. Promotion in any organization is aimed at influencing the achievement level as people work effectively and efficiently to be promoted [3]. Scott [4] observes that happy workers behave positively and are productive and further suggests job satisfaction indicator of good treatment which include incentives like appraisal and promotion. This will reflect how well an organization is performing. Sharma [5] observes that any fringe benefit attached either to official extra or work or promise of promotion has majorly in effect of causing the individual sacrifice towards work. Wetch [6], added that money, recognition, training, workers' qualifications, attitudes and experience are the basis tools required to motivate and train top performance. This is pointed out as well by Olayo, [7] who suggests that to maximize employees output, they need to be comfortable both at work and home so as to minimize stress and stressors.

In United Kingdom a study conducted by Lovel [8] on motivational practices confirm that members of a particular group working as a team base their success on trust and encourage all members to express their opinions, varied views and questions. At the same time, they view conflict on part of human nature and they react to it by treating it as an opportunity to hear about new ideas and opinions [9]. Mullins continues to note that everybody wants to resolve differences and problems constructively. They participate equally in decision making and understand that the leader might and have final decision if team cannot come to a consensus. It was observed in United Kingdom that in-service training provides an opportunity for growth through training and

development [10], and consequently all trained teachers have a professional obligation to attend conferences, seminars, workshops and other learning activities which can help in contributing to their professional growth and development as confirmed by Robinson [11] in his book management 7th Edition. In his study on job satisfaction in universities, Edward, [12] identified the factors that measure job satisfaction of faculty members in two major universities in Malaysia. The conclusions drawn from this study are that, the major sources of job satisfaction for Malaysia faculty members are shown to be institution policy and salary. According to his study, the relevant sources of dissatisfaction are personal achievement, personal growth, inter personal relations, recognition, responsibility, supervision, the work itself and overall working conditions.

The theoretical framework of this study was adapted from Fredrick Herzberg's two factor theory [13] who postulates that there are two job factors which when combined can result into job satisfaction, motivation or dissatisfaction. The second group of job factors yields positive satisfaction and they are inherent, intrinsic, symbolize psychological needs and were perceived as additional benefits. They included professional growth, recognition efforts, promotional opportunities in this study [13]. Saharuddin, [14] showed that the variables of promotion and compensation have significant and positive impact on job satisfaction, morale and work productivity; job satisfaction has significant and positive impact on work productivity; and morale has significant and positive impact on work productivity. A study carried out in India by Daljeet and Dalvinder, [15] revealed that three variables namely; environmental stress and work conditions, organizational factors like fair promotional opportunities and behavioural factors like adequate authority, salary and supervisors have a positive impact on motivation of workers. A fair promotion given to workers may encourage support staff in different departments to do their best at individual levels in their areas of specialties e.g. implementation of academic programmes where they possibly interact with learners who may give feedback about their performance in academics.

Naveed, Usman and Bushra, [16] showed that promotion has a modest and positive effect on job satisfaction. Thus the results show that promotion is a predictor of job satisfaction. A

research carried out by Leblibics [17] in Turkey on the impact of work place quality and employees' productivity in a bank revealed that, quality of environment with promotional opportunities in a work place determines the level of employee's motivation, subsequent performance and productivity. Mustapha and Zaizura [18] study indicated that there was a positive significant relationship between promotion opportunity and job satisfaction. Organization should consider this variable in promoting satisfaction among employees in order to retain their best brain. Koppensteiner, [19] study in Brazil reported that after the adoption of automatic promotion in treatment schools, the difference between treated and control schools almost completely disappears. The effect of automatic promotion is much smaller for the top two quantiles and not statistically significant, yet still negative and non-negligible in magnitude. The inverse u-shaped distribution of effects is consistent with the interpretation of the estimates as disincentive effect of automatic grade promotion, such that the treatment effect is largest for students left of the centre of the distribution close to the assumed grade promotion threshold and smaller for high performing students that are unlikely to be retained. Nwude and Uduji, [20] study was undertaken to identify ways of improving the job performance of the health workers in the federal teaching hospitals in Nigeria. This indicates that on its own, an intense desire for promotion will not motivate a health worker to a greater effort.

In Nigeria, Ademokoya [21] revealed that poor working conditions like delay in promotion, and salary payment, unattractive office and housing have significant adverse influence on working performance of both teachers and interpreters. The study further revealed that hours expected to work, arrival wage and job security play a vital role in the association between health and work related performance of both teachers and interpreters. Peter [22] assessed the impact of promotion to employees' performance at Dar es Salaam City Council of Tanzania. The research findings have shown that promotion has impacts to individual and organizational performance as it induces motivation, good performance, good relations and increased remunerations. The findings of study indicate that there were impacts for non-adherence to promotion procedure which affects individual performance and organization such as poor performance, accumulated promotion, poor relations and labour turnover. In Nigeria, Ozigi [23] in a study on promotion of

teachers by the Ministry of Education established that the practice contributes towards, increasing teacher's job satisfaction. In Uganda, Semugenyi [24] emphasized that provision of welfare services to employee is one of the practices that provide a satisfactory working environment.

In Kenya, a study carried out by Ngala and Odebero [25] concluded that teachers appreciate a professional career and promotion that allows them to grow and thus a positive academic influence on academic achievement of pupils. Another study in Kenya by Onyango [26] noted that appraisal system would motivate teachers if it's rating result to reward like salary adjustment to teachers. The study further revealed that teachers service commission (TSC) was not using Appraisal system process for the purpose it had intended like transfers, placement pay change, promotion, separation and reprimand of teachers, therefore view appraisal system as a formality whose undertaking had no consequences in relation to their profession.

Motivational practices are methods used by organizations to take care of the welfare of their employees. The practices induce employees to give their best to the organization in terms of performance so that the organizational objectives are achieved. All support staff contribute indirectly towards learners' academic performance in an institution. If cooks prepare meals in time, academic programme will run smoothly, other support staff carrying out duties which influence academic results include; Lab assistants, are involved in the preparation of practical lessons in science, secretaries and typists are involved in the processing of exams through printing/typing them and producing enough for all students, security officers keep vigil to ensure students property are safe and that there is law and order in school. When these duties are well done there will be a conducive atmosphere for learning and learners academic performance in an institution. The present study is justified to be carried out in Kisumu West and Seme Sub-counties of Kenya because of a number of reasons; the schools use a lot of resources on motivational practices like bonding trips and awards or offers to support staff yet good academic results are still a challenge in most schools (Educational Office Kisumu West Sub County, 2015).

### **1.1 The Present Study**

The study examined the influence of support staff promotional opportunities on learners' academic

performance in public secondary schools in Kenya

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1 Research Design

The study specifically utilized the convergent parallel mixed methods design, in which the researcher collected both quantitative and qualitative data, analyzed them separately and then compared the results to see if the findings confirm or disconfirm each other [27]. It involved collecting both types of data roughly at the same time, assessing information using parallel constructs for both types of data and comparing results through procedures such as a side-by-side comparison in a discussion, transforming the qualitative data set into quantitative scores or jointly displaying both forms of data [28].

### 2.2 Research Participants

The study population consisted 68 principals, 68 Board of management chairpersons, 68 Director of Studies and 272 support staff who heads security, laboratory, kitchen and academic/secretariat departments. Support staff who head different departments are also referred to as support staff H.O.Ds.

### 2.3 Research Tools

Questionnaires were used for data collection because they enabled the researcher to gather information from a large number of respondents within a limited time [29] like support staff, principals and DOS in 24 secondary schools. It is most commonly used method when respondents can be reached and are willing to co-operate. The interview schedules were administered to the Director of Studies, school bursars and the chairpersons of Board of Management of the respective schools. Interviews helped solicit more detailed information from the respondents as it gave the researcher opportunity to probe the respondents for more information [30]. Although pilot study was done to improve external validity of the instruments, internal validity of the constructs was tested by subjecting the survey data to suitability tests using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO Index) and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. In the current study, the value of Bartlett's test of Sphericity

was significant ( $p \leq 0.001$ ) for all the subscales of the questionnaire. In addition, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin indexes were all  $> .6$  which is a threshold for a sufficient internal validity.

### 2.4 Procedure

The researchers obtained authority from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovations (NACOSTI) in Kenya. The researchers also sought an introductory letter from the two sub-county Directors of Education offices. The researcher then visited the sampled schools to deliver questionnaires. The researchers used one aid assistant under his supervision to undertake data collection with questionnaires (data collection tools). The interviews were conducted under trees so as to avoid interference within the offices, to ensure confidentiality and to have a different environment. Each interview lasted for a period between 1 to ½ hours. The whole process of data was approximated to last for 4 months. On ethical considerations, the researcher, treated all in the data and information obtained from every respondent with extreme confidentiality.

### 2.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from closed ended sections of the questionnaire were analysed by use of descriptive statistics and also inferential statistics such as Pearson Correlation. The descriptive statistics consisted of the use frequency counts, percentages and means. The findings of the data analysis were presented using tables, bar graphs and pie-charts. Quantitative data was analysed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21.0. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient which is Inferential Statistical Test was used to ascertain the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables. Qualitative data collected by open ended sections of the questionnaire and interviews was analysed on content on the on-going process as themes as sub-themes emerged.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to investigate the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The information on Table 1 shows the information on gender, level of education and type of School of the respondents in the study.

**Table 1. Personal bio-data of the respondents**

Bio-data	Support Staff (n=88)		Principals (n=24)		Director of studies (n=24)	
	F	%	f	%	f	%
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	43	48.9	15	62.5	22	91.7
Female	45	51.1	9	37.5	2	8.3
Total	88	100.0	24	100.0	24	100.0
<b>Highest Educational Level</b>						
Primary	21	23.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Secondary	19	21.6	0	0.0	0	0.0
College	38	43.2	3	12.5	2	8.3
University	10	11.4	21	87.5	22	91.7
Total	88	100.0	24	100.0	24	100.0
<b>Type of School</b>						
Boys	19	21.6	6	25.0	7	29.2
Girls	9	10.2	4	12.5	3	12.5
Mixed	60	68.2	14	62.5	14	58.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that, there was a glaring imbalance in secondary school leadership in terms of gender, with males taking the larger proportion of school leadership positions (principals and director of studies). This was reflected by the demographic analysis results which showed that more than three out of five (62.5%) of principals and over nine out of ten (91.7%) of the directors of studies in the secondary schools which were sampled for the survey were males. On the other hand, although the gender disparity was narrower among the support staffs, it was evident that majority (51.1%) of the support staff in Public Secondary Schools in Kisumu West and Seme Sub-counties were females. On their ages, it was established from the results of the survey that a significant majority (87.5%) of the principals are above forty years. On their level of education, it was established from the results of the survey that the support staff had a varied level of education. However, many (43.2%) of them had college education, while those who had university education formed the least proportion (11.4%) of the support staff who were surveyed. Other levels of education were also represented, implying that the influence of intervening factor (support staff level of education) on the relationship between support staff motivational practices and learners academic performance has therefore been significantly excluded from the study. Support staff level of education is touted as a correlate of the support staffs' level of efficacy and by extension academic performance in school. Nonetheless, the fact that support staff with varied educational qualification were

represented in the study implies that the results of this study can be generalized across the students' population in Kisumu West and Seme sub-counties, with very minimal precaution. With regard to the type of schools where the respondents came from, the exploratory data analysis show that majority (68.2%) of the support staffs were from mixed secondary schools. This was in agreement with revelation that 62.5% of the schools were mixed secondary, as reflected by the distribution of the principals. Further, the results of the survey show that most of the respondents were under nine years of stay in their current working schools.

### 3.1 Relationship between Support Staff Promotional Opportunities and Learners Academic Performance

The study investigated the influence of support staff promotional opportunities on learners' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kisumu West and Seme Sub-counties of Kenya. To address this, the level of support staff promotional opportunities was examined and an inferential statistics was used to establish whether the support staff promotional opportunities has statistically significant influence on learners academic performance among secondary school. A Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis was used to investigate whether there is any statistical significant relationship between support staff promotional opportunities and learners' academic performance in secondary schools. This was

done by testing the null hypothesis, with scores on the support staff promotional opportunities as the independent variable and learners' academic performance as dependent variable. The support staff promotional opportunities was computed from frequency of responses and converted into continuous scale, where high scale ratings implied high perceived opportunities for support staff promotional opportunities and vice-versa. Learners academic performance was computed from school KCSE mean scores for the last four years. The significant level (p-value) was set at .05, such that if a p-value less than 0.05 means the null hypothesis would be rejected and conclusion reached that there is significant difference. However, a p-value larger than 0.05 would be concluded that a significant difference does not exist. Table 2 shows the correlation analysis results in SPSS output.

Table 2 reveals that there was statistically significant positive correlation ( $r=.280$ ,  $n=88$ ,  $p=.008$ ) between support staff promotional opportunities and learners academic performance, with high opportunities for support staff promotions associated to better learners academic performance and vice-versa. Given that the relationship between the two variables is statistically significant, the hypothesis that, "there is no statistically significant relationship between support staff promotional opportunities and learners academic performance" was rejected. Therefore, it was concluded that there is

statistically significant positive relationship between support staff promotional opportunities and learners academic performance. This suggests that learners' academic performance is improved when the support staff are aware that they have promotional opportunities. This finding agrees with Udin, Sani and Martono [31] who reported that there is a significant influence of promotion on job performance. The data diversity was explained using path analysis model of 62.2%, while the rest was explained by other variables not included in the model and error.

On the other hand, to estimate the level of influence of support staff promotional opportunities on learners academic performance, a coefficient of determination was computed using of regression analysis and the result was as shown in Table 3.

The model summary in Table 3 reveals that about 8% of variation in Learners Academic Performance was accounted for by the availability of support staff promotional opportunities, as signified by coefficient  $R^2=.079$ . This finding means that variation in the support staff promotional opportunities explains about 8% ( $R^2=.079$ ) of the variability in learners' academic performance. This finding agrees with Nwude and Uduji, (2013) who reported that an intense desire for promotion will not motivate a health worker to a greater effort.

**Table 2. Relationship between support staff promotional opportunities and learners academic performance**

		Staff promotional opportunities	Learners academic performance
Staff Promotional opportunities	Pearson Correlation	1	.280**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.008
	N	88	88
Learners Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	.280**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	
	N	88	88

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 3. Model summary on regression analysis of influence of support staff promotional opportunities on learners academic performance**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.280 <sup>a</sup>	.079	.068	1.08053	2.011

a. Predictors: (Constant), Staff Promotional opportunities

b. Dependent Variable: Learners Academic Performance

From qualitative findings, one theme which emerged was use of job experience in promotion. This was utilized in appointment to higher grades among support staff within school. However, it was not uniformly applied among all support staff. Some respondents reported that:

*We work very efficiently and our promotion is based on years of experience in one's job. I was promoted to a higher job group after I had stagnated for so long. (Bursar, 2)*

*Promotions are determined by the job experience in one's area. One of our cooks was promoted to the position of head cook because he had served the longest in that department, was handy in timely preparations of meals which enhance implementation of academic programs, he even became more useful in beating deadlines in his work in the department. (BOM Chair, 6)*

From the interview excerpts above, it can be concluded that promotion was available but it depended on years of experience of support staff. In agreement, Leblibics (2009) in Turkey reported that in quality of environment like promotional opportunities in a work place determines the level of employees' motivation, subsequent performance and productivity.

Another theme which emerged from qualitative findings was the use of certificates acquired by a support staff. This meant that promotion was awarded on the bases of new certificates that were acquired by the support staff. Some respondents reported that:

*We have had promotions which resulted from acquired papers, like our bursar, got promoted to another higher job group because he had attained higher accounting qualifications, we encourage students to follow their examples by working hard to get good grades for promotion to the next class or university in case of candidates. (Director of Studies, 3)*

*The support staff are promoted on the bases of the papers they obtain. In our case, once an individual attains some higher papers, they get promoted and this makes them work harder in their areas and serve as an example to the students that hard work pays. (Bursar, 6)*

From the interview data above, it can be concluded that the promotional opportunities that are available due to use of certificates makes support staff to be more diligent at work and this further enhances learners academic achievement of students. This finding is in agreement

with Koppensteiner, [19] study in Brazil which reported that after the adoption of automatic promotion in treatment schools the difference between treated and control schools almost completely disappears.

Another theme which emerged from the qualitative finding was the length of stay in school. This meant that some school workers were promoted on the bases of having been in school for quite long. This made the support staff felt appreciated. Some participants reported that:

*Yes.. we use length of stay in school as well to promote support staff. At times the principal promote workers who have been at the school for long due to their loyalty. (Bursar, 10)*

*This happens in school since there are workers who have stayed for so long in school without promotion. This has helped some workers to move from one grade to a higher grade. (Director of Studies, 7)*

From the qualitative findings, it can be concluded that promotion was available on the bases of length of stay in school. This made the support staff to feel that their skills are appreciated and they would then work harder to assist students. This finding agrees with Peter [22] study in Tanzania which reported that promotion has impacts to individual and organizational performance as it induces motivation, good performance, good relations and increased remunerations. The findings of study indicate that there were impacts for non-adherence to promotion procedure which affects individual and organization performance such as poor performance, accumulated promotion, poor relations and labour turnover.

Another theme which also emerged from qualitative findings was fairness in promotion. Most participants reported that the promotions were relatively fair and without favouritism in the manner in which they were done. One of the participants reported that:

*Our promotions are done fairly and they are in line with standard procedures. This encourages other support staff to be very positive and work hard. (Bursar, 18)*

From the interview excerpt above, it can be concluded that fairness in promotions led to increased work commitment which would eventually enhance learners' academic achievement among students. This finding

agrees with Saharuddin, [14] who reported that the variables of promotion and compensation have significant and positive impact on job satisfaction, morale and work productivity; job satisfaction has significant and positive impact on work productivity; and morale has significant and positive impact on work productivity. Similarly, Naveed, Usman, and Bushra, [16] also reported that promotion has a modest and positive effect on job satisfaction.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study examined the influence of Support Staff Promotional Opportunities on Learners' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools Kenya. The findings indicated a significant positive correlation ( $r=.280$ ,  $n=88$ ,  $p=.008$ ) between support staff promotional opportunities and learners' academic performance, with high opportunities for support staff promotions associated to better learners' academic performance. The model summary reveals that about 8% of variation in learners' academic performance was accounted for by the availability of support staff promotional opportunities, as signified by coefficient  $R^2=.079$ . This finding means that variation in the support staff promotional opportunities explains about 8% ( $R^2=.079$ ) of the variability in learners' academic performance. From qualitative findings, the themes which emerged was use of job experience in promotion, use of certificates acquired by a support staff, the length of stay in school and fairness in promotion. The study revealed that although promotional opportunities are available to support staff, they are few or rare. Experience, certificates and length of stay in school which are the yard sticks for promotion are also rarely or hardly recognized or used for promotion. The Ministry of Education should ensure that the structures in place are cost effective and there are predictable promotion procedures put in place by school management to give assurance to the support staff about their job mobility to sustain the productivity tempo because the findings of this study confirm that promotional opportunities contribute the lion share to influence on academic performance compared to other independent variables considered in the study.

#### ETHICAL APPROVAL AND CONSENT

The researchers obtained authority from National Commission for Science, Technology and

Innovations (NACOSTI) in Kenya. On ethical considerations, the researcher, treated all in the data and information obtained from every respondent with extreme confidentiality.

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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