



Principals' Strategy of Recognition of Teachers' Hard Work on Job Performance in Langata Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract: This purpose of this study was to assess the influence of the principals' strategy of recognition of teachers' hard work on job performance in Langata Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya. The study adopted Herzberg's motivational hygiene theory. It employed a mixed-method research approach and a convergent parallel mixed method design to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Purposive sampling technique was used to select Langata Sub-County, while the Census method was used to select all the public secondary schools under the Sub-County, and their principals. A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was applied to select the teachers, while proportionate and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the Form Four students. The target population was drawn from three public secondary schools within Langata Sub-County, targeting three principals, 80 teachers and 163 Form four students, making a total population of 246 respondents. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from the teachers and the students, while interview guides were utilized to collect qualitative data from the school principals. Content and face validity were used to validate the research tools. A pilot study was conducted in a public secondary school with similar characteristics in a nearby Sub-County. The reliability of the instruments was tested using Spearman's Correlation coefficient, and a score of 8.0 was obtained. Quantitative data were analyzed with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 24) using descriptive statistics and were reported in frequency tables, graphs, and charts. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis and grouped through content analysis. Data were presented in themes supported by direct quotes. Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to. The findings revealed that to some extent, the school principals implored measures for recognition of teachers' hard work to enhance effective job performance and motivation. However, some of the teachers believed there was a disconnect concerning teachers' recognition. Some teachers stated that they did not get any or little recognition. Furthermore, in some schools, it was revealed that most school principals tend to favor few teachers and often prefer monetary rewards. Therefore, there is a need for more effective and visible recognition for teachers to enhance their job performance and motivation in schools.

Keywords: Principal's strategy, Recognition, Teachers' job performance, communication, resource allocation, professional development and academic achievement

1.1 Background of the study

Job performance or employee performance is an integral component of workplace productivity and

safety; and in any organization, the job performance of employees is one of the fundamental issues that organizational managers seek to improve (Pradhan & Jena, 2017). This is because the job performance of employees is directly related to productivity and the success of the organization. Every organization exists within society for a specific purpose: to positively enhance society through their contributions or services rendered. Kurniawan & Heryanto (2019) stated that achieving this purpose requires prioritizing the human element, which is key to an organization's continued relevance in society. Human resources are very vital asset to an organization because they help an organization achieve its competitive edge against its competitors in the same industry (Watetu, 2017). It follows then that for an organization to achieve its goals and objectives, employees' involvement, commitment, and motivation play a key role (Nduati & Wanyoike, 2022). Consequently, whether private or public, organizations of all types and sizes require motivated employees to ensure that their operational efficiency and effectiveness are maximized. (Setiawan, 2020). As employees are the backbone of the survival and relevance of organizations in any society; hence, every institution has to come up with various strategies that are likely to boost the overall efficacy of its employees in achieving better results than ever before (Mama Irbo, 2018).

Globally, teachers' job performance involves all the teaching and learning activities they engage in to meet student's needs within the school system (Kulikowski, Przytuła and Sułkowski, 2022). Therefore, for the work of teaching and learning to be properly carried out, the teacher's hard work needs to be recognized in the school. This makes teachers become motivated, passionate and committed to achieving educational goals. Recognition, therefore, is an important factor that influences human behavior and performance in the workplace. Teaching makes learning take place and teachers determine the quality of instructions that will be given to learners. This is the reason why they should be recognized properly for effectiveness and efficiency in the educational system (Ofojebe & Ezugoh, 2010). Given this notion, motivation and recognition can be categorically said to be a central factor in moving performance to the desired level in any organization. Employee motivation is considered a force that works like a catalyst for the employees as a means to achieve the set ambitions and goals of the organization (Ahmad, 2021). Thus, motivation in education has a significant impact on teachers' performance, which in turn also affects the academic success of students. Motivated teachers not only perform their work enthusiastically but also transfer such enthusiasm to the students because they always teach with a smile on their faces and are always patient with the students (Scales, Van Boekel, Pekel, Syvertsen and Roehlkepartain, 2020).

In the Philippines, Hiolin and Billones (2019) carried out another study on principals' motivational strategies and teachers' performance among schools in the Pigcawayan West district. The study investigated the impact of positive leadership, guided counseling and rewards on teachers' job performance in the district, finding that these strategies implemented by principals had a notable positive effect. Positive leadership is reflected in the strategies used by the principals to encourage and motivate their teachers at work, it is at the heart of all the activities carried out in the school environment. This study discovered five benchmarks of positive leadership which include being optimistic, constructive, innovative, encouraging and offering recognition to teachers. Guided counseling given by the principals entails support in different forms that help the teachers navigate challenges encountered in the teaching and learning process. The principal as the leader of the school is expected to guide the teachers in making the right choices and also give the necessary support in implementing those choices and decisions that will lead to the achievement of academic goals. Rewards

are ways of recognizing teachers' efforts and encouraging them to meet their goals. It boosts their morale and keeps them focused and motivated. The study, therefore, concluded that the motivation of teachers is indispensable if they are to remain productive. When teachers are highly motivated, they do their work with enthusiasm and interest (Hiolin & Billiones, 2019). Hence the importance of researching principals' motivational strategies that can help teachers reach their goals and potential, as well as the goals of education. To fill the gap in this study, the present study expatiates more on how principals utilize the strategies of recognition to motivate their teachers in Langata sub-county, Nairobi, Kenya.

In Nigeria, Amaefule & Ossai (2023) examined the impact of principals' motivational strategies on teacher's job performance in public Senior Secondary Schools in Abuja Municipal Area Council. The study delved into the principals' strategies of teachers' recognition, teachers' welfare, and effective communication, and revealed that these strategies had a significant impact on teachers' job performance in the public Secondary Schools within Abuja Municipal Area Council. Recognition of teachers' job performance entails acknowledging the good work done by the teachers and appropriately rewarding them. It ranges from simple 'thank you' or praise to awarding certificates, plaques or monetary rewards, it can also be in the form of promotion to a different position at work or a pay raise. However, in whatever form, it acts as a catalyst that boosts the morale and confidence of teachers and encourages them to perform better in their teaching careers.

As Getange (2016) opined, it makes the teachers feel appreciated in their job.

Teachers' welfare is of utmost importance at work; when principals look out for their teachers' welfare in the areas of safety, well-being, happiness, health, and interest at work, they feel accepted and included in the school environment and, therefore are motivated to contribute their quota optimally. Welfare is closely tied to the psychological and emotional stability of every human being at work and helps in maintaining a contented workforce within organizations (Balamurugan, Kumar, Balamuruga, Glossom and Akash, 2022). Effective communication creates good rapport and enables people to work together in organizations and achieve their goals. It is an indispensable strategy and tool for principals in the educational system. This study recommended seminars, workshops, and conferences be organized for principals of secondary schools in the area council to acquire the necessary skills to implement motivational strategies that can improve teachers' job performance. While this study explored the effect of principal motivational strategies on teachers' recognition, welfare, and effective communication and was conducted in the Abuja municipal area council in Nigeria, the current study explored how the strategies of recognition influence their job performance. It was carried out in the Langata sub-county, Nairobi, Kenya.

In Kenya, some studies have also been carried out to support the assertion that principals' motivational strategies have a significant impact on the job performance of teachers. Okwatsa's (2021) research conducted in Mombasa County explored the impact of principals' motivational strategies on teachers' job performance within public secondary schools. The strategies of support reward system, professional development and recognition of teachers' efforts were researched and found to have a positive impact on teachers' job performance. Fostering a supportive environment led by the principal, with a good reward system is a source of encouragement to teachers to perform well in their jobs. When teachers feel supported and are rewarded for the work done, they feel happy and are motivated to do more. Professional development enhances teachers' effectiveness, while recognition boosts their morale, and

also increases their interest, enabling them to do their best at work. These strategies undoubtedly are important strategies that can promote teachers' effectiveness in the school system and, therefore need to be implemented by the school principals. While the previous study focused on strategies like support reward systems, professional development, and recognition of teachers' efforts in Mombasa County, the present study examined the principals' strategies of recognition of teachers' hard work on job performance in the Langata sub-county, Nairobi, Kenya.

Kyumbi, (2021) also conducted research in Makueni County on principals' motivational strategies and their influence on teacher morale in secondary schools. The study was able to establish that motivational strategies such as proper communication systems, continuous teacher support, participative decision-making and well-planned implementation of the school vision have an immense influence on promoting and sustaining teacher morale in the county. Teacher morale is positively related to teacher performance, as teachers with high morale will be enthusiastic and efficient in carrying out assigned jobs. When teachers are involved in the decision-making process, it gives them a sense of belonging and being part of the system. Therefore, they will participate well in implementing the school's vision as it would have been communicated well. As Okumbe (2014) pointed out, a working environment where teachers' opinions are valued and adequately complimented by the leader raises teachers' job satisfaction and motivation whose by-products increase learning achievement. Being regarded as an important stakeholder with contributions to make towards the growth of the school system goes a long way in boosting teachers' morale and interest in achieving their personal goals as well as organizational goals. This is also closely tied to students' morale and academic achievement. However, Kyumbi's work only examined how the principals' motivational strategies influence teachers' morale in Makueni County. This study aimed to address a gap by examining how principals' strategies of recognition impact the overall job performance of teachers in Langata sub-county, Nairobi.

In Migwani Sub-County under Kitui County, another study was carried out by Samuel (2022) on the influence of principals' motivational strategies on teachers' job satisfaction. The study revealed that the principals' motivational strategies of recognition, staff professional development, incentives, and interpersonal relationships were crucial in influencing teachers' job satisfaction. Satisfaction at work leads employees to perform well in their job roles, and motivational strategies are important in achieving this. The principal as a leader has the responsibility of looking out for the interest of the teachers by creating different motivational strategies that can enhance teachers' performance in their jobs. The strategies must be tailored to the needs of each teacher, as what motivates one may not motivate the other. Samuel's (2022) work focused on how the strategies employed by school principals influence teachers' job satisfaction. In contrast, the present study focused on the principals' strategies of recognition on teachers' job performance in the Langata sub-county, Nairobi.

These research findings underscore the tangible impact of specific motivational strategies employed by principals, indicating the importance of these strategies in nurturing an environment conducive to heightened teacher performance. However, despite the global acknowledgment of the impact of motivational strategies on teacher performance, limited research has been conducted within the Kenyan context, specifically on principals' motivational strategies and their influence on teachers' job performance (Alfano, Gaeta and Pinto, 2021). Langata Sub-County has been noted to be performing poorly in academics, which has been linked to teachers' poor job performance, as indicated in the

Quality Assessment Report (2022). Addressing this gap is essential for comprehending how principals' strategies of recognition shape the job performance of teachers in public secondary schools within the sub-county. Therefore, this study investigated the principals' strategies of recognition of teachers' hard work on job performance in public secondary schools in Langata Sub-County, Nairobi-Kenya.

1.2 The Study Objective

This study was guided by the following objective:

To assess the principal's strategy of recognition of teachers' hard work on job performance in Langata Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study may be significant to different educational stakeholders. These may include but not limited to teachers, who are the direct beneficiaries of the study. They may gain a better understanding of how the principals' strategies of teacher recognition may enhance their job performance, satisfaction and motivation, leading to better and more effective classroom teaching, their well-being and consequently quality education. School principals may also gain valuable insights into discovering the different strategies of teacher recognition that can be employed in schools to enhance the performance of teachers working under them. Implementing such strategies may lead to teachers' job satisfaction, excellent performance and better educational outcomes for students. Students as well, may get teachers' attention to address academic challenges when teachers are recognized of their hard work in school. Parents and guardians may get good results from their Wards because teachers are recognized and motivated to do their work. Recognition may help teachers to be committed and satisfied with the work they do, thereby impacting positively on the learning outcomes and academic achievements of students. Parents and guardians may also be confident and happy about the quality of education received by their children and develop good relationship with the management and the teachers. The findings of this study may also be significant to the government and educational authorities, who are the custodians of quality education like the Ministry of Education (MoE), Teachers' Service Commission (TLC), etc. It may help improve decision-making regarding policies and directives concerning teacher support and motivation, which in turn, can result in improved academic outcomes. The study may also be significant to the researcher as more knowledge and insights will be gained during the work. Furthermore, other educational researchers may utilize the findings of this study as a source of reference and research gap, they can build on the findings of this study to explore more on the areas of dynamics and interplay between leadership and motivation of teachers in school.

1.4 Scope and Delimitations of the Study

The study was conducted in the public secondary schools within Langata Sub-County, in Nairobi County, Kenya. The target population was the principals, teachers, and Form Four students. While several motivational strategies can be employed by the principals in schools, due to time constraints, the study only focused on investigating principals' strategies of recognition of teachers' hard work and job performance in public secondary schools. The research utilized questionnaires to gather data from teachers and students, along with interview guides to collect information from school principals. It also focused on public secondary schools, excluding private institutions.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a visual representation of a theoretical model that depicts the inter-relationships among study variables, illustrating the links between independent and dependent variables (Waldt, 2020). The independent variable in this study is the principals’ strategies of recognition of teachers’ hard work (e.g., appreciation, rewards, promotion, etc), while teachers’ job performance is the dependent variable which can be measured in terms of student academic achievement, teachers’ appraisal/evaluation, teachers’ job satisfaction and retention, teachers’ commitment and the overall educational outcomes. The intervening variables of the study are government policies, school climate and culture, teachers’ qualifications and experience and teachers’ self-efficacy as shown in Figure 1.

Independent variables

Dependent variables

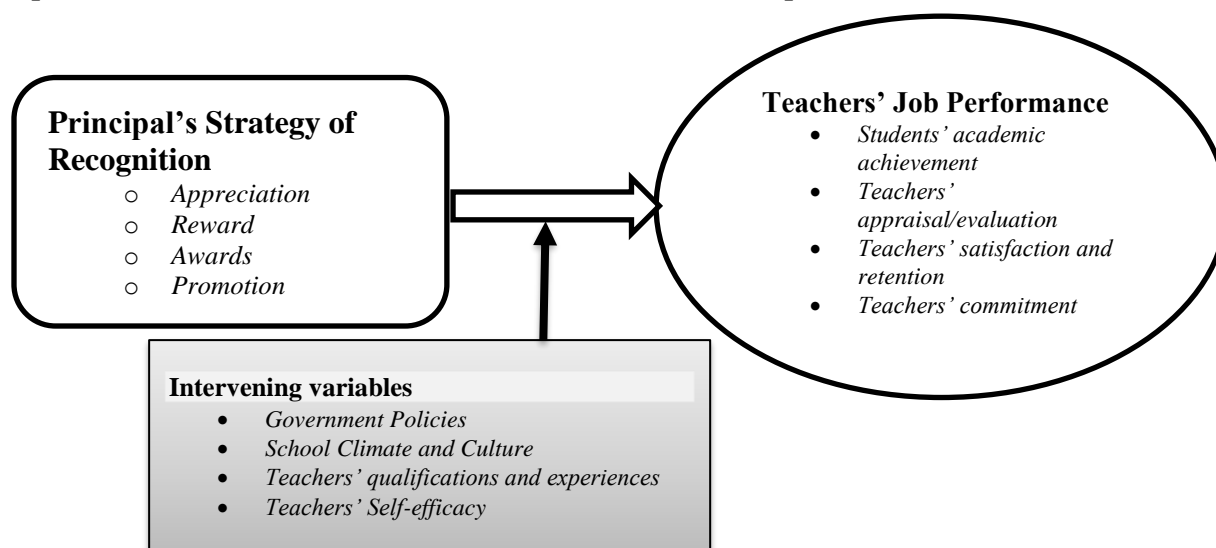


Figure 1: The Conceptual framework

Source: Researcher, 2024

1.6 Literature Review

In this section, the theoretical framework and empirical review are presented.

1.6.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Herzberg’s Motivation-Hygiene Theory (HMHT). This theory was proposed by Fredrick Hertzberg (an American psychologist) in 1959, who was regarded as one of the great original thinkers in management and motivational theory. The theory set out to understand the effect of attitude on the motivation of employees by surveying several employees to determine the factors that made them feel good or bad about their jobs (Herzberg et al, 1959). In conclusion, Hertzberg postulates that two different factors can cause satisfaction or dissatisfaction of employees in the workplace. For this reason, this theory is also called the two-factor theory, which is known as motivation factors and hygiene factors.

According to Herzberg and his companions, the combination of these two factors can lead to various outcomes in the workplace. Motivational factors are regarded as motivators and they are intrinsic or

internal factors that represent the emotional needs of individuals. These factors include recognition, autonomy, meaningful work, achievement, empowerment and growth potential. The hygiene factors are extrinsic, i.e., they are external factors that satisfy the basic needs of an individual. These include salary, working conditions, company policies, job security, professional reputation, perks and benefits. The key point in Herzberg's motivational theory is that the presence of motivational factors is responsible for employee satisfaction, but the lack of hygiene factors is responsible for job dissatisfaction. The extra point, however, in this theory, is that it provides an integration of the individual employee's intrinsic and extrinsic factors that managers need to be aware of in motivating their workers toward job performance and satisfaction. Although this theory suggests that the motivation and hygiene factors are two separate entities or elements, managers and leaders within the organization need to identify and address these factors and work towards striking a balance to drive workplace motivation and morale among the employees to achieve organizational goals.

However, critics have it that Herzberg's Motivational Theory lacks robust empirical evidence to support its claims, as the original research was conducted on a relatively small scale and subsequent studies have produced mixed results (Rynes, Gerhart & Parks, 2005). Secondly, Bassett-Jones and Lloyd (2005) also argued that the Herzberg dual-factor theory does not account for situational variables, individual differences and the dynamic nature of motivation and satisfaction. Furthermore, the theory tends to focus on internal factors within the workplace, while neglecting external factors such as economic conditions, family issues and personal life events that can significantly impact job satisfaction. (Jones, 2011). The argument is that the theory is too narrow and simplistic and does not consider the influence of external factors on job satisfaction and motivation. Despite the weaknesses of Herzberg's theory, many organizations still find it relevant and useful today. Leaders in different organizations, including school settings still utilize the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of motivation to encourage their employees to achieve their goals through them, although the application may vary in different settings and today's dynamic world. However, to mitigate the weaknesses of this theory in this research work, two other theories are added – Vroom's expectancy theory and Self-Determination theory.

This theory is appropriate for this study because the school principal's strategy of recognition can be categorized as motivators that are to be provided for teachers to enjoy their work and be productive. In this research work, the principal's strategy of recognition of teachers' hard work through appreciation, reward, and promotion opportunities becomes the motivator or intrinsic factors that improve teachers' job performance in schools. This suggests that the Herzberg Motivational Theory is therefore considered to be relevant to assess the principal's strategy of recognition of teachers' hard work on teachers' job performance in Langata Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.6.2 Empirical Review

Recognition is a strategy that uses various types of rewards to motivate employees and promote positive behavior within an organization. Recognition can be of different types, which can be public, private, monetary or promotional. Its main purpose is to celebrate the unique strengths, contributions and accomplishments of individual teachers in a way that encourages, boosts their morale and brings out the best in them to perform better. Therefore, for an excellent and dedicated classroom teacher, recognition is a good and rewarding experience. Ryan and Deci (2020), in their reviewed study on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from a self-determination theory (SDT) perspective in Australia,

stated that behaviorists looked at motivation as a result of rewards and incentives. The study noted that rewards are awarded to a person as a form of recognition for effort or achievement and incentives can be used to inspire conduct or performance. The incentives are like self-drives that push the employees on job performance while the reward on the other hand is what the employee will receive after a job is performed. It can be deduced then that recognition for hard work and dedication is critically important as it fosters motivation, validation, innovation and continued engagement among teachers who strive to improve their practice and impact (Juravich, 2021). The study was carried out in Australia and employed the use of secondary data by examining research work from SDT that demonstrates how both intrinsic motivation and well-internalized and therefore autonomous forms of extrinsic motivation can predict positive results in different educational settings and cultural environments. The current study employed the collection of primary data from the principals, teachers, and students from the public secondary school in Langata sub-county, Nairobi, Kenya. The focus was on the influence of principals' strategy of recognition and teachers' job performance.

Cole (2019) assessed the impact of teachers' compensation on students' performance at Inner City School in Jamaica. The study employed a qualitative case study and data was collected through an interview guide, observational schedule and cultural matrix report of the school. The respondents were 10 participants selected from among the principals, vice principals, teachers, administrative staff, ancillary staff and parents. The study found that teachers who were compensated well stayed long in their careers and their students' performance was excellent. This means that the teachers felt appreciated and recognized for their efforts in the classroom and it reflected in their job performance. Mutua (2016), in support of the above, noted that school managers who had a well-balanced reward and recognition program for teachers resulted in high student output.

Baqir, Waseem, Hussain, and Islam (2020) examined the impact of reward, recognition and perceived supervisor support on employee engagement and job performance in Pakistan. Employing a correlation quantitative design, data was collected through questionnaires from 108 employees of Muslim Commercial Bank and the National Bank of Pakistan in Multan. The study findings showed that recognition and rewards are powerful modes of encouraging employees towards good job performance. The study concluded that the better the reward and recognition, the higher the levels of motivation and satisfaction, and consequently, the greater the levels of performance and productivity. The study's population was drawn from employees in the banking sector in Pakistan. In contrast, this study was conducted within the education sector, involving principals, teachers and students from public secondary schools in Langata sub-county, Nairobi city, Kenya. While the study employed only quantitative research methodology with the use of questionnaires to answer the research questions, the present study employed a mixed-method approach to answer the research questions.

El Masri and Suliman (2019) investigated talent management, employee recognition, and performance within research institutions in Qatar. The study employed a quantitative methodology and through a survey questionnaire, online data was collected from 180 full-time employees who were randomly selected and surveyed. The findings of the study noted that when an organization has a good reward system, it embraces loyalty and team spirit and people feel appreciated. For fair recognition of the performance of employees within an organization, the study recommended that there is a need to create a recognition policy and the organization's major goal in the reward system should be to maintain

employees' motivation. In conclusion, the study emphasized the importance of managing employee recognition in shaping work performance, as an individual's need for recognition, esteem and social status continues to be a higher-order need irrespective of time and context. The study in Qatar employed quantitative research methodology and the population consisted of employees from diverse backgrounds from various positions and educational levels in selected educational research institutes operating in Qatar. However, this study utilized a mixed-method approach, targeting the principal, teachers and students from public secondary schools in Langata sub-county, Nairobi city, Kenya.

Forson, Ofosu-Dwamena, Opoku, and Adjavon (2021) did a study on employee motivation and job performance: a study of basic school teachers in Ghana. The study employed a survey design under quantitative research methodology and data was collected from a sampled population of 254 teachers in the basic schools in Effutu municipality in Ghana. The result of this study revealed that compensation package, job design, environment and performance management system are positively significant factors in explaining teacher's motivation in the municipality. The study further emphasized that the recognition of teachers in both public and private schools by the principal on their performance makes them feel valued. If promotions were done based on teachers' job performance, it would align with their expectations. Recognition and appreciation, which are intangible or psychological rewards, play a crucial role in motivating teachers to enhance their job performance. The study was conducted in basic schools in the Effutu municipality in Ghana, using a quantitative research methodology. In contrast, the current study was conducted in public secondary schools in Langata sub-county, Nairobi, Kenya, and utilized a mixed-method approach. Additionally, whereas the previous study relied on primary data gathered from teachers only, the current study gathered primary data from principals, teachers, and students to enrich the research.

In Tanzania, Kanuti, Siamoo and Koda (2023) examined the effective implementation of heads of schools' recognition leadership strategy on improving teachers' level of commitment in community-based secondary schools in Kilimanjaro region. The study included all 225 secondary schools in the region and utilized a correlational cross-sectional survey design within the quantitative research methodology. The sample consisted of 120 teachers and 240 students, totaling 360 participants. Data was gathered through questionnaires administered to teachers and students. Analysis revealed that, on average, teachers rated the head of the school's recognition strategy at 4.1 (82%), indicating agreement that it motivated them to work harder, leading to improved academic performance among students. The study's findings revealed a notable positive correlation between the school leader's recognition strategy and teachers' commitment levels, ultimately influencing their job performance in secondary schools within the Kilimanjaro region of Tanzania.

The study recommended that heads of schools should employ a recognition leadership strategy to improve teachers' levels of commitment and teachers should also spend more of their time assisting students' learning. This study utilized a quantitative research approach and was conducted in community-based secondary schools. In comparison, the current study employed a mixed-method approach to enrich its findings and was conducted in public secondary schools within a sub-county. Additionally, while the previous study relied on primary data from teachers and students only and was confined to the Kilimanjaro region of Tanzania, the current study gathered primary data from school heads, teachers and students from public secondary schools within the Langata sub-county, Kenya.

Orina, Kiumi and Githae (2021) researched recognition as a determinant of teacher motivation in public secondary schools in Kwale County, Kenya. The study employed an ex-post facto research methodology and collected data from 255 teachers randomly chosen from public secondary schools in the County through a self-administered questionnaire. The findings of the study concluded that recognition factors are a reliable predictor of teacher motivation in the county, and therefore, recommended that there is a need to come up with a wide range of teacher recognition strategies, including material and non-material appreciation of teachers who excel in their duties. The study employed an ex-post facto research methodology, gathering data from teachers in public secondary schools in Kwale County. In contrast, the current study used a mixed-method approach, collecting primary data from principals, teachers and students in public secondary schools in Langata sub-county, Nairobi city, Kenya.

Similarly, in Mombasa County of Kenya, Okwatsa (2021) carried out research work on principals' motivational strategies and their implications on teachers' job performance in public secondary schools. The study employed a cross-sectional research design, with a population of 228 respondents, composed of principals and teachers from the public secondary schools in the county. The results of the study indicated that consistent recognition of teachers' efforts and performance positively influences their job performance. This suggests that when teachers receive recognition, they feel confident and assured in their job performance, leading them to strive towards achieving their goals. While this study utilized a quantitative research methodology with a cross-sectional design, focusing solely on Mombasa County in Kenya, the current study used a mixed-method research design, incorporating questionnaires and interview guides to collect data, and was conducted in public secondary schools in Langata Sub-County, Kenya.

Abdulrahman and Hui (2018), argued that recognition is an enriching experience for excellent classroom teachers and their students. Recognition for teachers builds off of some of the well-known extrinsic and intrinsic motivational theories. Kingi et al., (2020) further reiterated that when teachers are recognized as well as being given constructive feedback it helps them improve on their job performance and also creates a sense of security and trust with the principal. This acknowledgment and feedback given on teachers' accomplishments also makes the teachers' self-esteem and confidence rise. According to Freedman (1978), effective use of rewards and recognition in an organization fosters a productive environment, motivating employees to energetically complete tasks and achieve goals. It becomes imperative then that recognition of teachers' hard work is a strategy that the principals of schools must pay attention to so as to meet the needs of the learners and achieve educational goals.

1.7 Research Methodology

This study adopted a convergent parallel mixed method approach in the study. This design involved collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single-phase approach. The approach also helps the researcher to collect data from various respondents namely: principals, teachers and students. These assist in getting a wider view and deeper understanding of the research problem.

Location of the Study: The research study was carried out in Langata Sub-County, Nairobi County, in Kenya. Langata Sub-County was one of the 17 administrative units of Nairobi City County (NCC), with an estimated population of 176,314 people living in 52,656 households, occupying an area of

196.80 km². It was bounded to the North by Dagoretti sub-county, Kibra sub-county, Starehe sub-county, Embakasi sub-county, and Machakos County, and to the South by Kajiado County. It was about 10 km to the South of the Central Business District. Langata Sub-County had five Wards: Karen, Mugomoini, Nairobi-West, South C, and Nyayo High-Rise (Ochungo, Ouma, Obiero & Odero, 2019). Langata Sub-County had three public secondary schools, and all these schools were utilized for the study. The justification for choosing the selected sub-county was that the academic performance of students in public secondary schools had deteriorated continuously for the last few years (Casir et al., 2019). Teachers had also shown less concern about poor academic performance. In this study, the target population was three public secondary schools within Langata Sub-County, Nairobi, Kenya. The study targeted 3 principals, 120 teachers, and 275 Form Four students from the three secondary schools within the Sub-County. The study used the census sampling method to select all three (3) principals of the three schools for the data collection for this study. There are 120 teachers in 3 public secondary schools in Langata Sub-County. Therefore, the study used a proportionate stratified sampling to select 35 male teachers and 45 female teachers, making a total sample size of 80 teachers. There are also 275 students in 3 public secondary schools in Langata Sub-County, therefore, the study used proportionate random sampling and simple random sampling to select 163 students for the data collection for the study.

Data Collection Instruments and Data Analysis Procedures: The researcher used a questionnaire and an interview guide for the data collection. The questionnaires were used to collect the quantitative data from the teachers and Form Four students. The interview guide was used to collect the qualitative data from the principals. Quantitative data was analyzed using statistical methods with the help of SPSS software, while qualitative data was analyzed by identifying key themes, coding, and interpreting patterns. Quantitative findings were displayed using charts, graphs, and tables, while qualitative results were presented in a written format based on themes.

1.8 Findings and discussion

Response Rate of the Participants: The response rate in this study provides interesting patterns across different groups of respondents. The response rate by the principals stands at 100%, indicating that the three principals targeted by the survey responded with their views, thus guaranteeing full representation from this critical leadership level. This full response rate is an indicator of the high engagement and commitment that principals can demonstrate, and their contributions are firmly bound up in the study's findings. Table 1 presents a summary of the response rates of the different participants in the study.

Table 1: The Response Rate of the Participants

Category	Target Population	Initial Projection	Final No. Interviewed/Questionnaires Returned	Response Rate (%)
Principals	3	3	3	100%
Teachers	120	80	65	81.25%
Students	275	163	160	98.15%

Source: *Field data, 2024*

The response rate among teachers was 81.25% of the projected 80 teachers; 65 participated in this survey. This showed that on the part of the teachers, there was great participation as the response rate was reasonably high, implying that the responses from teachers were fairly represented in the research, although some teachers did not respond. The response rate among the students was 98.15%. Against an initial projection of 163 students, 160 responded. This assured high participation underlined the keen interest of the students in contributing toward the study so that their responses would be adequately represented and provide a reliable basis for the analysis. This high response rate reflects good engagement from the whole sample population, showing that the survey reached and effectively engaged a large portion of the participants it was meant for. In-depth responses from the principals, effective engagement from the teachers, and a high participation rate from the students all combined to result in a well-rounded set of data. However, the response rate from teachers still suggested a possible area for further investigation regarding any factor leading to less-than-full participation, to ensure that their contributions were fully represented in subsequent studies.

Principal’s Strategy of Recognition of Teachers’ Hard Work on Job Performance

The objective of the study was to assess how the principal’s strategy of recognition of teachers’ hard work influences the teachers’ job performance in Langata Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya. The study used an interview guide for the school principals while teachers and students were requested to choose the response that best represented their opinions on a five-point Likert scale. The scale of rating was: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The findings are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Principal’s Strategy of Recognition of Teachers’ Hard Work on Job Performance

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	UD (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Teachers = 65					
The Principal recognizes teachers’ efforts when they perform well in their jobs.	17.9	41.0	10.3	28.2	2.6
The recognition given by the principal is adequate, timely, and related to teacher’s jobs.	17.9	41.0	10.3	28.2	2.6

The principal's recognition of hard work motivates the teacher to perform well at the assigned job.	17.9	41.0	35.9	20.5	7.7
Regular recognition influences a positive working environment.	61.5	25.6	7.7	5.1	0
Do you think students benefit when teachers are recognized for their hard work?	30.9	26.3	15.3	11.5	15.6
Students = 160					
Does your principal often recognize the hard work of your teachers?	21.4	42.7	17.2	6.1	11.8
Do you believe teachers feel happier and more motivated when the principal recognizes their hard work?	40.8	37.8	11.5	4.6	5.0
Do you think students benefit when teachers are recognized for their hard work?	30.9	26.3	15.3	11.5	15.6

Source: Field data 2024

As seen in Table 2, the data collected from teachers and students concerning the principal's recognition of their hard work, and the results indicated varied perceptions of the participants across several key areas. A total of 41.0% of teachers agreed that the principal acknowledges teachers' efforts if they do well in their respective jobs while 17.9% strongly agreed, meaning the majority of the teachers feel that their efforts are recognized. On the other hand, 28.2% disagreed and 2.6% strongly disagreed, which probably indicated a bias in how the recognition practices are perceived. The undecided responses of 10.3% also show that some degree of uncertainty is present among the teachers on the practices of recognition by the principal.

Results in Table 2 also show that students support the practice of recognition of teachers done by the principal. More specifically, 21.4% of students strongly believed that the principal often recognizes the hard work carried out by teachers, while 42.7% agreed with this statement. This showed that a fairly large number of students felt recognition was indeed practiced within the school culture, but probably some were not familiar with the frequency of such initiative from the principal judging from the 17.9% who disagreed and 17.2% who were undecided. These findings suggest that these practices need further scope for enhancement to be identified more clearly and consistently by the students. The interview conducted with the school principals also confirmed different approaches to recognizing teachers' hard work, which ranged from informal praise to formal awards. One principal mentioned:

"I have a monthly recognition program where teachers who excel are publicly acknowledged in staff meetings. Their names are called in front of their colleagues, and the areas where they have excelled. The teachers looked forward to this, and I have noticed it boosted their morale, and everybody worked hard toward being recognized" (Interview P1, 11th July 2024)

Another principal highlighted a more personalized approach:

“I prefer informal recognition. A quick thank you or a note of appreciation can go a long way. I don’t wait until my teachers have done great work before recognizing them, I believe the little ways of simple thank you show them their contributions are noted at every step of the work, and that they matter in the educational environment. Awards are retained till the end of the session” (Interview P4, 10th July 2024).

On the same, another principal said:

“I use a mix of formal awards and informal appreciation to keep the morale high. This depends on the work or activities that have been carried out by the teachers. The management looks at what is appropriate to the measure of the work and what the school can afford at the moment to appreciate the teachers” (Interview P3, 15th July 2024).

This diversity in recognition strategies underscores the principals’ understanding of the importance of acknowledging teachers’ efforts in varied ways. This finding aligns with the research by Amaefule and Ossai (2023), which emphasizes that when teachers are recognized in whatever form, it acts as a catalyst that boosts their morale and confidence and encourages them to perform better in their teaching careers. Getange (2016) also opined that recognition makes teachers feel appreciated in their job.

Also, the results indicated the analysis of the various forms of recognition that teachers received from the principal also showed that monetary rewards were among those highly mentioned, including cash rewards, vouchers, and tokens. One of the teachers expressed that monetary gifts like cash and rewards like medals make them feel great, and showing financial appreciation is a major drive. Furthermore, recognition through verbal praise in the assemblies or staff meetings was also considered important by the teachers, as another teacher also expressed that public acknowledgment in front of colleagues or students made them feel appreciated, and that mentioning names in the assemblies or staff meetings makes the teacher continue working smart. Promotions and awards at prize-giving ceremonies were also mentioned as forms of recognition showing not only appreciation for past performance but also motivating the teachers to continue or even surpass earlier efforts. On the negative side of experiences, a few of the teachers said that they experienced little or no recognition by the principal.

Results also show how students perceived their teachers being appreciated by the principal; and how frequently teachers were commended in front of everyone at school assemblies or parades. They commented that monetary rewards and prizes on different occasions, including prize-giving days were frequent ways in which the principal expressed appreciation to the teachers. Some of the students went on to cite less formal expressions of appreciation, such as special meals provided for the teachers. This implies that such occasions were memorable to students and also helped in shaping their perception of the school environment. However, some of the students said they had never seen any appreciation of their teachers or were not sure if any recognition occurred. This indicated there might not be any visible recognition practices from their perspective. The findings thus indicated that while most students valued the initiatives taken by the principal to acknowledge teachers for their efforts, the practice of acknowledgment needed to be more consistent and visible.

Regarding the sufficiency, timeliness, and relevance of the recognition by the principal, 17.9% of the teachers strongly agreed and 41.0% agreed. This would give a positive indication of the teachers’ perception concerning how effective the recognition received has been. However, a high percentage of

28.2% disagreed and 2.6% strongly disagreed, showing that not all teachers find the recognition adequate and duly aligned with performance on the job. The high percentage of undecided responses, 10.3%, also shows that some teachers may be indecisive regarding whether or not the recognition practices are effective. The trend of the influence of recognition by the principals in motivating teachers to perform well in their job was a lot more positive, going by 17.9% of teachers strongly agreeing and 41.0% agreeing to this. This may mean that recognition seems to be considered a motivational factor by the majority of the teachers. However, 20.5% of teachers disagreed, with 7.7% strongly disagreeing, which would suggest that for a portion of these teachers, the recognition they receive does not serve as a motivating factor in performing well on assigned jobs. The relatively high level of undecided responses of 35.9% would further suggest that this recognition does not consistently impact their motivational level, which may probably mean non-alignment with their job.

Regarding this aspect of the effect that recognition has on teachers' motivation, 40.8% of the students strongly agreed while 37.8% agreed that teachers are happy and motivated when their hard work is recognized. This reflected a generally positive perception among students concerning the motivational effects of recognition on teachers. However, 11.5% of the students were undecided, while 5.0% strongly disagreed on the effect that recognition has on teachers, and hence probably the motivational advantages of recognition are not perceived across the board with this sample population of students. On the contrary, 30.9% strongly agreed and 26.3% agreed that they benefited from having teachers recognized for hard work. This supported the belief that recognition not only impacted teacher motivation but also positively affected student outcomes and experiences. This is in agreement with Cole's (2019) study, stating that teachers who were compensated well stayed long in their careers and their students' performance was excellent. This showed that the teachers felt appreciated and recognized for their efforts and it thus reflected in their job performance. However, there was a cumulative total of 27.1% among the students who were undecided or disagreed, suggesting that some may not realize or appreciate the benefits of recognition. This indicates areas of breakdowns in communication or practices of recognition.

The effect of regular recognition in creating a positive working environment for the teachers enjoyed strong support, as 61.5% strongly agreed and 25.6% agreed. This shows consistency among teachers as to the effect of regular recognition in bringing much value to a positive work environment. As such, a small percentage of 5.1% disagreed, while no teachers strongly disagreed; this indicates wide agreement about the role of regular recognition in enhancing the atmosphere where they work. This showed that teachers generally have a positive perception of the principal's recognition practices, as they acknowledge that the principal recognizes their efforts and that regular recognition contributes to a positive work atmosphere.

Based on the study results, both teachers and students felt that there is a need for teacher recognition to encourage teachers to do their jobs better. However, there was a disconnect with regard to visible recognition: whereas some teachers said they did not get any or little recognition, a portion of students in the same class also observed a lack of visible appreciation. That is to say that when recognition is given, it may not have been communicated effectively or often enough to be recognized both by teachers and their students. What is more, teachers seemed to attach much value to monetary and formal recognition, while for students, public recognition and symbolic gestures, such as being treated to a special meal or publicly recognized in a school-wide assembly were more important. This discreteness

in perception points to the necessity of the forms of recognition to not only be matched with teacher expectations but also be visible within the school community.

1.9 Conclusion

The study concluded that to some extent, the school principals implored measures for recognition of teachers' hard work to enhance effective job performance and motivation. However, some of the teachers believed there was a disconnect concerning teachers' recognition. Some teachers stated that they did not get any or little recognition. Students in the same class also observed a lack of visible appreciation. Additionally, in some schools, it was revealed that most school principals tend to favor few teachers and often prefer monetary rewards. At the same time, students place higher importance on symbolic and public acknowledgments. This disparity suggests that recognition practices should be tailored not only to meet teacher expectations or favour but also to be more visible within the school community, fostering positive teacher job performance. Therefore, there is a need for more effective and visible recognition for teachers to enhance their job performance and motivation in schools.

1.10 Recommendations

The study recommends that school principals should focus more on improving teacher performance and student learning outcomes by focusing on recognition strategies to enhance the overall educational environment. This will motivate teachers and boost job satisfaction, while structured programs can maintain high-performance levels. Regular updates and feedback sessions between principals and teachers are essential for maintaining harmony with school goals and reducing job-related stress. Furthermore, school principals should also create a supportive environment by integrating recognition that is free from injustice to improve teacher performance and student learning outcomes.

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