Perceived Discrimination on Workplace Relations Between Junior Secondary School Teachers and Headteachers in Kiambu County Kenya

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Abstract: *Conflict between Junior Secondary School (JSS) teachers and head teachers, driven by perceived discrimination in workload, decision-making, and recognition undermines teamwork, morale, and efficiency, harming school climate and potentially affecting student's outcomes. Thus, this study aimed to analyze the influence of perceived discrimination on workplace relations between JSS teachers and head teachers in Kiambu County Kenya. The study was anchored and guided by equity theory. This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Kiambu County has approximately 576 public primary schools, which currently host JSS sections. The target population comprised of 576 head teachers and approximately 4800 JSS teachers in public schools in Kiambu County, Kenya. To determine the appropriate sample size the study applied Yamane formula (1967). The total sample size was 372 respondents, including 40 head teachers and 332 JSS teachers. To ensure proper representation, stratified random sampling was used to categorize schools based on sub-counties in Kiambu County. Then, simple random sampling was used to select school, individual teachers and head teachers. Structured questionnaires were used for data collection. A pilot study was conducted so as to ensure reliability and validity of the questionnaire Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The study results showed a significant positive and significant influence of perceived exclusion from decision-making (β_1=-0.371, p=0.024), differential work assignment (β_2 =-0.302, p=0.038), perceived intimidation and threats (β_3=-0.414, p=0.001) and decision-making (β_3=0.824, p=0.000) on on workplace relations between junior secondary school teachers and head teachers in Kiambu county Kenya. While perceived professional devaluation has a negative and statistically insignificant (β_4=-0.130, p=0.147>0.05) influence on workplace relations between junior secondary school teachers and head teachers in Kiambu county Kenya. The study concluded that perceived discrimination significantly undermines workplace relationships between JSS teachers and head teachers in Kiambu County, Kenya. Recommendations include inclusive decision-making, fair workload distribution, training and development, communication, investigation, reviewing school management structure, laws and registration.*

Key words: Discrimination, Workplace Relations, Junior Secondary Schools, Teachers, Headteachers

1.1 Background of the Study

Workplace discrimination is a pervasive issue affecting organizational dynamics, employee well-being, and overall productivity. Discrimination occurs when employees are treated unfairly based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, religion, disability, or nationality, rather than on their skills and job performance (Triana et al., 2019). Discrimination in the workplace manifests in various forms, including

overt exclusion, wage disparities, career stagnation, and implicit biases that hinder career progression (Pager & Shepherd, 2015). Discrimination can be categorized into direct (explicit) and indirect (systemic) forms, both of which influence workplace culture and employee interactions (Janssens & Zanoni, 2021). Discrimination refers to the unjust or prejudicial treatment of individuals based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, religion, or disability. While, perceived discrimination is defined as an individual's subjective experience of being unfairly treated, has been linked to workplace dissatisfaction, low morale, and strained interpersonal relations among employees (Kim & Park, 2017). This perception is critical, as it can significantly influence an individual's psychological, emotional well-being as well as workplace relations.

Workplace relations, on the other hand, refer to the social and professional interactions among employees and between employees and management. Workplace relation is crucial for fostering a collaborative and productive work environment (Salin & Hoel, 2020). Healthy workplace relations are characterized by mutual respect, open communication, and collaboration, contributing to a positive organizational culture and enhanced productivity. Conversely, perceived discrimination can erode trust, foster resentment, and create divisions among staff, thereby deteriorating workplace relations (Kochan et al., 2019).

The impact of perceived discrimination on workplace relations is a global concern. In the United States, workplace discrimination remains a critical issue despite legal frameworks such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regulations. Studies indicate that racial and gender discrimination are still prevalent, with African Americans and women reporting higher levels of perceived discrimination in hiring, promotions, and salary negotiations (Avery et al., 2016). The consequences of perceived discrimination in the U.S. workplace include increased stress levels, reduced job satisfaction, and limited opportunities for career advancement, which in turn negatively impact workplace relations (Carter et al., 2019; Triana, Jayasinghe, & Pieper 2015).

In Europe, workplace discrimination varies by region and industry. Research highlights that immigrant workers, ethnic minorities, and women often face biases in employment opportunities, wage structures, and professional growth (Borell et al., 2020). The European Union (EU) has implemented directives to combat workplace discrimination, yet studies show that perceived discrimination continues to hinder workplace cohesion and team dynamics, particularly in multicultural organizations (Zanoni & Janssens, 2015; Gray, 2017). A study in Sweden found that perceived discrimination among immigrant employees led to decreased trust in colleagues and employers, ultimately affecting teamwork and workplace collaboration (Ortlieb et al., 2018).

Asian workplaces are characterized by hierarchical structures and collectivist cultures, yet discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, and caste remains an issue (Budhwar et al., 2019). In countries such as India and China, studies indicate that women and lower-caste individuals face significant workplace biases, leading to decreased career mobility and professional alienation (Rhee et al., 2017). The impact of perceived discrimination in Asian workplaces includes strained relationships between employees of different social backgrounds, reluctance to engage in open communication, and higher workplace stress levels (Chung et al., 2021).

In Africa, workplace discrimination is influenced by historical, socio-political, and economic factors. Discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, and disability remains prevalent in many African countries

(Moyo & Musandu-Nyamayaro, 2020). In South Africa, despite affirmative action policies, racial discrimination continues to affect workplace dynamics, with Black employees often perceiving exclusion in decision-making processes (Zulu & Kibirige, 2018). Similarly, in Kenya and Nigeria, studies reveal that gender discrimination affects women's professional growth, limiting their leadership opportunities and causing workplace tensions (Ogunyemi et al., 2019).

Junior Secondary School (JSS) teachers in Kenya are clashing with head teachers, alleging discrimination in their workplaces. The JSS teachers claim they are subjected to unfair treatment, including lower pay, heavier workloads, and lack of recognition compared to their counterparts in primary and secondary schools. Many JSS teachers argue that head teachers undermine their authority and fail to provide adequate support, worsening their working conditions. The friction stems from JSS teachers, many of whom are university graduates, being placed under the administrative leadership of primary school heads, a structure they argue undermines their professional autonomy and hampers effective curriculum delivery. This conflict has sparked widespread discontent, with teachers calling for urgent government intervention to address their grievances and ensure fair treatment in the education sector. Nevertheless, there is little or no empirical evidence on the perceived discrimination on workplace relations between JSS teachers and head teachers. This study sought to analyze the influence of perceived discrimination on workplace relations between JSS teachers and head teachers in Kiambu County, Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the Problem
In an ideal educational environment, harmonious relationships between teachers and head teachers are essential for fostering effective teaching and learning (Goddard et al., 2015). Such collaboration ensures cohesive policy implementation, mutual professional support, and a positive atmosphere conducive to student success. However, recent reports in Kenya indicate escalating tensions between JSS teachers and head teachers, primarily due to perceived discrimination and confrontations. These issues have reportedly intensified since the introduction of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) and the subsequent deployment of JSS teachers to primary schools, leading to feelings of marginalization among the teachers. The bottom of the problem lies in the perceived discriminatory practices by head teachers towards JSS teachers, manifesting in conflicts and strained workplace relations. JSS teachers have voiced concerns over being treated as subordinate staff, alleging exclusion from key decision-making processes and unfair treatment in workload distribution, and access to resources and professional development opportunities. This discord not only undermines the morale and professional efficacy of JSS teachers but also disrupts the overall educational environment. These tensions also undermine teamwork and bring inefficiencies, potentially impacting the quality of education delivered to students. Despite the critical nature of this issue, there is a paucity of empirical research exploring the specific dynamics of perceived discrimination in this context. This study aimed to fill this gap by investigating the influence of perceived discrimination on workplace relations between JSS teachers and head teachers in Kiambu County, thereby providing insights that could inform policy interventions and promote a more inclusive and collaborative school culture.

1.3 Research Objective
To analyze the influence of perceived discrimination on workplace relations between JSS teachers and head teachers in Kiambu County Kenya.

1.4 Literature Review

In this section, theoretical and empirical review on perceived discrimination on workplace relations between junior secondary school teachers and headteachers are presented.

1.4.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on equity theory. Equity Theory, developed by Adams (1965), posits that employees seek fairness in the workplace by comparing their input-output ratios to those of their peers. The theory suggests that perceived inequity; whether through discrimination or favoritism; can result in emotional distress and strained interpersonal relationships. When individuals perceive an imbalance, such as receiving fewer rewards for similar efforts, they experience distress, which can lead to decreased motivation and strained relationships. The of equity theory is that it provides a clear framework for understanding employee motivation and relationship dynamics, offering insights into how perceptions of fairness influence teamwork and collaboration. While the weakness of the theory it overemphasizes on individual perceptions, neglecting systemic or structural factors which may lead to inequality. Nevertheless, equity theory is highly relevant to studying the influence of perceived discrimination on workplace relations between JSS teachers and head teachers in Kiambu County Kenya. It explains how perceived inequities, stemming from exclusion, differential assignments, intimidation, professional devaluation, or status-based bias can harm workplace relationships. Employees who perceive unfair treatment are likely to experience dissatisfaction, reducing trust and collaboration within teams. Ensuring transparent and fair practices is essential to maintain equity and foster positive workplace relationships.

1.4.2 Empirical Review

The empirical review focused on perceived discrimination perceived exclusion from decision-making, differential work assignment, perceived intimidation and threats, and perceived professional devaluation.

Exclusion from Decision-Making and Workplace Relationships

Exclusion from decision-making in the workplace refers to the deliberate or unintentional omission of certain employees from participating in processes where choices affecting their work or the organization are made. This exclusion can manifest in various forms, such as not inviting individuals to meetings, disregarding their input, withholding pertinent information, withholding critical information, avoiding eye contact, or giving the "silent treatment," leading to feelings of isolation and marginalization among affected employees (Williams & Zadro, 2001). Such practices can have profound implications for both the excluded employees and the organization as a whole. Being excluded from decision-making processes can lead to employees perceive themselves as ignored or overlooked by their peers or supervisors When employees feel marginalized, they are less likely to contribute proactively, leading to decreased team cohesion and productivity ((Wu et al., 2016).

A study by Jones et al. (2016) explored the effects of exclusion from decision-making on employee morale and collaboration. The researchers found that employees who perceived themselves as excluded were less likely to engage in collaborative efforts and more likely to exhibit withdrawal behaviors. This disengagement not only affected individual performance but also hindered team cohesion and overall productivity.

Smith and Nkomo (2018) examined the impact of exclusionary practices on minority employees in corporate settings. Their findings indicated that exclusion from key decision-making processes led to a

sense of isolation among minority staff, resulting in diminished trust in leadership and increased inter-group tensions. The study highlighted the necessity for inclusive decision-making practices to foster a harmonious workplace environment.

Differential Work Assignment and Workplace Relationships

Differential work assignments refer to the unequal distribution of tasks and responsibilities among employees, often influenced by biased perceptions rather than objective criteria (Ng & Feldman, 2015). This practice can lead to perceptions of favoritism or discrimination, affecting workplace dynamics and employee morale. For instance, when supervisors assign tasks based on personal preferences or stereotypes, it can result in certain employees consistently receiving more favorable or challenging assignments, while others are overlooked or burdened with less desirable tasks (Bhave & Glomb, 2016).. Such disparities not only impact individual job satisfaction but also influence how employees interact with each other and perceive organizational justice. When employees perceive inequitable treatment in task distribution, it can lead to strained coworker communication and diminished trust among team members (Sias and Jablin, 1995).

Research by Chen and Hamilton (2019) investigated the consequences of differential work assignments on employee relationships. The study revealed that employees subjected to less challenging tasks due to discriminatory biases experienced decreased job satisfaction and a sense of underutilization. This misallocation of tasks not only stifled professional growth but also bred resentment among colleagues, disrupting team dynamics.

García et al. (2020) assessed the long-term effects of biased work assignments on career progression. The researchers found that employees who consistently received less significant assignments were overlooked for promotions, leading to feelings of injustice and strained relationships with supervisors and peers. The study emphasized the importance of equitable task distribution to maintain a fair and motivating work environment.

Webster, Adams, and Thoroughgood (2024) explored the impact of gender biases on work assignments and subsequent supervisor behavior. Their research revealed that supervisors often perceive female employees as having greater family-to-work conflict, leading to reduced cognitive trust and increased ostracism. This bias results in women receiving fewer challenging assignments, adversely affecting their professional relationships and career progression.

Intimidation and Threats and Workplace Relationships

Intimidation and threats in the workplace encompass behaviors where individuals use coercion, harassment, or aggressive actions to influence or control their colleagues. Such behaviors can manifest as verbal abuse, physical aggression, or psychological manipulation, creating an environment of fear and insecurity (Salin, D. (2021; (Hodgins, MacCurtain & Mannix-McNamara 2020). The impact of intimidation and threats on workplace relationships is profound. Such negative behaviors erode trust among employees, leading to increased stress, decreased job satisfaction, and higher turnover rates. A hostile work environment can hinder open communication and collaboration, essential components of a productive workplace. Research indicates that individuals subjected to workplace bullying or threats may experience significant psychological distress, including anxiety and depression, which adversely affects their performance and overall well-being (Gillen et al., 2017).

Lee and Koo (2017) conducted a study on the effects of workplace intimidation on employee interactions. Their research demonstrated that employees who experienced threats or bullying were more likely to withdraw from social interactions, leading to isolation and decreased team collaboration. The hostile atmosphere not only affected the targeted individuals but also created a culture of fear, undermining overall organizational morale.
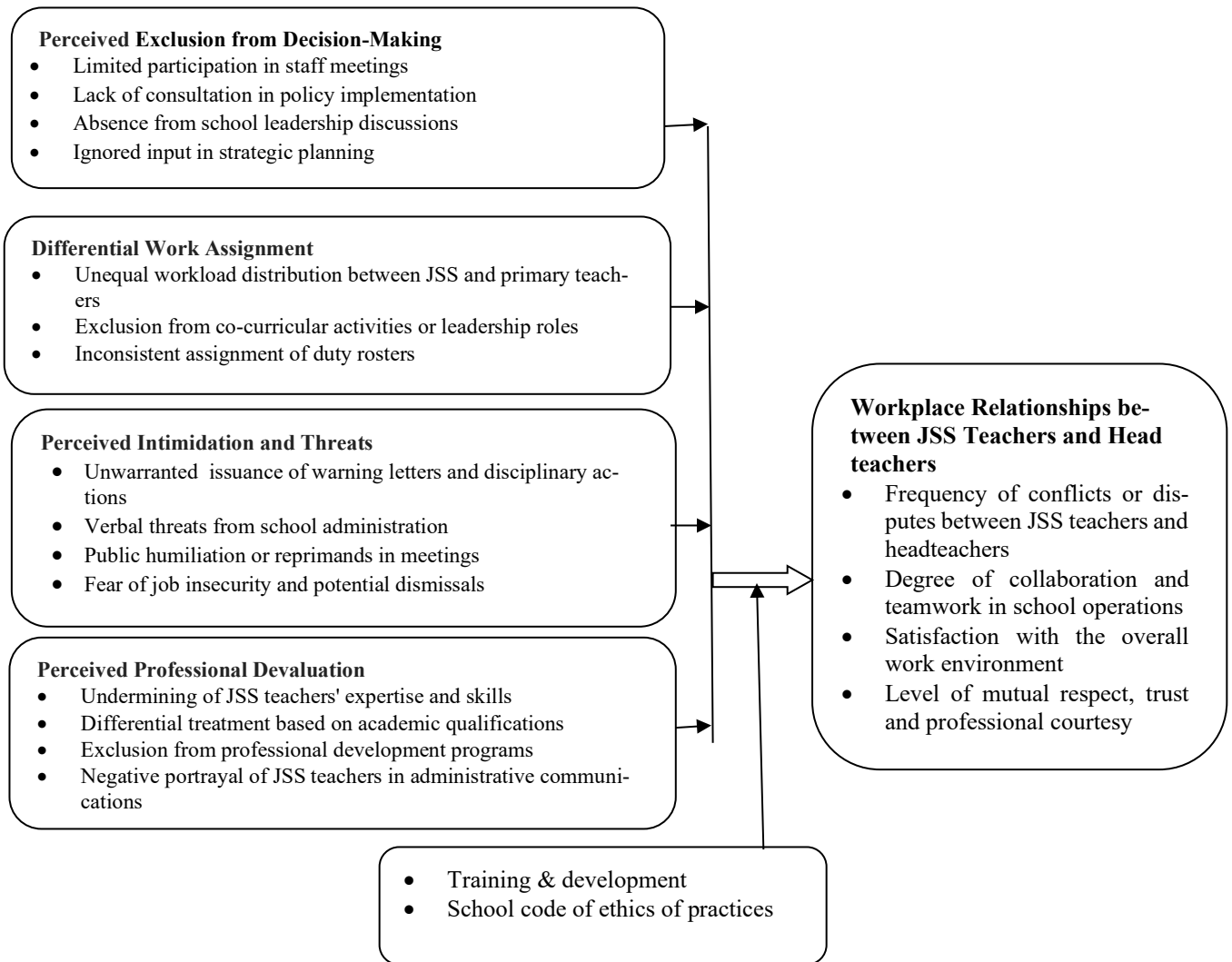
In another study, Ahmed and Smith (2021) explored the impact of intimidation on trust within teams. The findings indicated that perceived threats led to a breakdown in trust among team members, as employees became wary of expressing ideas or collaborating closely. This erosion of trust hindered effective communication and collaboration, essential components of successful team performance. Brace-girdle et al. (2023) examined the socialization of perceived discrimination within ethnic minority groups. The research found that ingroup contact can lead to increased perceptions of discrimination, potentially due to shared experiences of intimidation and threats in the workplace. This heightened perception can strengthen ingroup bonds but may also exacerbate tensions with outgroup members, affecting overall workplace relationships.

Professional Devaluation and Workplace Relationships

Professional devaluation refers to the experience of individuals perceiving a diminished sense of worth or value within their workplace (Dutton, Debebe, & Wrzesniewski, 2012). This phenomenon can manifest through various interactions and behaviors that undermine an employee's self-esteem and professional identity (Meier, & Spector, 2013). Such devaluation can stem from negative behaviors like false accusations, manipulation, or exclusion, leading to strained workplace relationships and a hostile environment (Tuikka, 2021). Employees who feel undervalued are likely to experience decreased job satisfaction, reduced organizational commitment, and an increased intention to leave their positions. Moreover, the presence of negative relationships can erode team cohesion and overall workplace morale (Meier & Spector, 2013).

A study by Williams and Lewis (2018) examined the effects of professional devaluation on workplace relationships. The researchers found that employees who perceived their professional capabilities as undervalued due to discriminatory attitudes experienced decreased motivation and commitment. This devaluation led to strained relationships with supervisors and peers, as the affected employees felt disrespected and unrecognized for their contributions.

1.5 The Conceptual Framework

Perceived Exclusion from Decision-Making
- Limited participation in staff meetings
- Lack of consultation in policy implementation
- Absence from school leadership discussions
- Ignored input in strategic planning

Differential Work Assignment
- Unequal workload distribution between JSS and primary teachers
- Exclusion from co-curricular activities or leadership roles
- Inconsistent assignment of duty rosters

Perceived Intimidation and Threats
- Unwarranted issuance of warning letters and disciplinary actions
- Verbal threats from school administration
- Public humiliation or reprimands in meetings
- Fear of job insecurity and potential dismissals

Perceived Professional Devaluation
- Undermining of JSS teachers' expertise and skills
- Differential treatment based on academic qualifications
- Exclusion from professional development programs
- Negative portrayal of JSS teachers in administrative communications

Workplace Relationships between JSS Teachers and Head teachers
- Frequency of conflicts or disputes between JSS teachers and headteachers
- Degree of collaboration and teamwork in school operations
- Satisfaction with the overall work environment
- Level of mutual respect, trust and professional courtesy

- Training & development
- School code of ethics of practices

Independent Variables   **Moderating Variables**   **Dependent Variable**

Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework*
Source: *Own Conceptualization, (2025)*

1.6 Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Kiambu County has approximately 576 public primary schools, which currently host Junior Secondary School (JSS) sections. The target population comprised 576 head teachers and approximately 4800 JSS teachers in public schools in Kiambu County, Kenya. To determine the appropriate sample size the study applied Yamane formula (1967). The total sample size was 372 respondents, comprised of 40 head teachers and 332 JSS teachers. To ensure representativeness, stratified random sampling was used to categorize schools based on sub-counties in Kiambu County. Then, simple random sampling was used to select school, individual teachers and head teachers.

Structured questionnaires were used for data collection, as they allow for standardized responses and ease of statistical analysis. Two separate questionnaires were designed for JSS teachers and head teachers. A pilot study was conducted in two randomly selected JSS schools involving 10 teachers and 2 head teachers. The objective was to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Due to convenience and cost-effectiveness, data was collected digitally through Google Forms, where a link to the questionnaire will be sent via email and WhatsApp to the sampled teachers and head teachers. Collected data was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and descriptive statistics mean, standard deviation, and percentages to summarize responses and regression analysis was used to assess the influence of perceived discrimination on workplace relations.

The regression model (I) was applied.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \varepsilon\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots \text{ Model I}$$

Where;

Y= Dependent variable (Workplace Relationships between JSS Teachers and Head teachers)

β_0 = Regression constant or Y intercept

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ = Coefficients of independent variables (Perceived Exclusion from Decision-Making, Differential Work Assignment, Perceived Intimidation and Threats, Perceived Professional Devaluation) to be estimated

X_1= Perceived Exclusion from Decision-Making

X_2= Differential Work Assignment

X_3= Perceived Intimidation and Threats

X_4= Perceived Professional Devaluation

ε = Stochastic error

Findings were presented using tables, charts, and graphs for clarity. The study adhered to ethical research principles, including informed consent and confidentiality

1.6 Study Results

The study sought to find out the opinion of teachers in relation to the influence of perceived discrimination on workplace relations between JSS teachers and head teachers in Kiambu County Kenya. In all the closed ended questions teachers gave their opinion based on a 5-point liker scale: strongly agree strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree.

Perceived Exclusion from Decision-Making

The JSS teachers gave their opinion the following statements on the influence of perceived exclusion from decision-making on the workplace relationships between JSS teachers and head teachers in Kiambu County Kenya.

Table 1: Perceived Exclusion from Decision-Making

	Mean	Std. Dev
I feel that JSS teachers are not consulted in key school decisions	4.1026	.90627
Head teachers often make decisions that affect my work without consulting me	4.2118	.92126
I am often excluded from meetings where important school policies are discussed	3.6887	.93345
I believe that my input in decision-making is not valued by the school administration	4.3002	1.02180
I feel that my opinions on school matters are ignored or overlooked	4.5804	.80239
I believe that decision-making processes in the school favor certain staff members over others	4.6045	.86225
I feel that my suggestions on academic and administrative issues are disregarded	4.1636	.91921

Source: *Field data, 2025*

The results in Table 1 show that most JSS teachers agree or strongly agree with statements indicating exclusion from decision-making processes. Notably, the highest mean scores include "I believe that decision-making processes in the school favor certain staff members over others" (M=4.60) and "I feel that my opinions on school matters are ignored or overlooked" (M=4.58), both indicating strong agreement. The overall means for all items fall within the agree to strongly agree range (3.68–4.60), signaling a clear perception among teachers that they are not included in critical school decisions. On the contrary, majority of the head teachers 70.37% claimed JSS teachers are adequately involved in school decision-making processes, with some blaming JSS teachers for lacking institutional loyalty and understanding of established school protocols. This perceived exclusion likely contributes to strained professional relationships, undermines a sense of belonging, and fosters resentment, thus affecting teamwork and the workplace harmony.

Differential Work Assignment
The JSS teachers gave their opinion the following statements on the influence of perceived differential work assignment on the workplace relationships between JSS teachers and head teachers in Kiambu County Kenya.

Table 2: Differential Work Assignment

	Mean	Std. Dev
I feel that JSS teachers receive more workload compared to other teachers	3.8025	.91347
I am assigned responsibilities that are not aligned with my professional training	2.0412	.92146
I perceive that work assignments are allocated based on favoritism	3.7849	.93395
I believe that head teachers distribute work responsibilities unfairly among staff	4.0059	1.01040
I have been assigned duties that should be handled by other staff members	3.1807	.81269
I feel that my workload is unmanageable compared to my colleagues	2.9076	.89145
I have experienced unfair distribution of administrative tasks	3.8681	.95451

Source: *Field data, 2025*

Table 2 presents a mixed picture, though most items fall within the agree range (3.18–4.00). Teachers agree that work assignments are often unfairly distributed and based on favoritism. However, for items like "I am assigned responsibilities that are not aligned with my professional training" (M=2.04) and "I feel that my worklosad is unmanageable compared to my colleagues" (M=2.90), responses fall within

the neutral to disagree range, suggesting variability in how workload discrimination is perceived. Contrary to JSS opinion majority of heartaches 62.96% strongly agreed that workload and assignments in your school are fairly distributed among JSS teachers and other staff. Head teachers argued that workload assignments are based on operational needs and claimed that many JSS teachers avoid duties common to all staff. This indicates that while the volume or type of work may not be universally excessive, the perception of favoritism and unfairness in task allocation remains prevalent, which can fuel dissatisfaction and conflict. The variation in means implies inconsistency in how work assignments are managed across schools, possibly contributing to resentment and reducing cohesion in teacher-head teacher relations.

Perceived Intimidation and Threats

The JSS teachers gave their opinion the following statements on the influence of perceived intimidation and threats on the workplace relationships between JSS teachers and head teachers in Kiambu County Kenya.

Table 3: Perceived Intimidation and Threats

	Mean	Std. Dev
I feel that I am frequently threatened with job-related consequences	4.6022	.83617
I believe that disciplinary actions are used as a tool of intimidation	4.6411	.53126
I have experienced verbal harassment from the school leadership	4.1844	.81345
I fear retaliation if I voice my concerns about workplace issues	4.4054	.63180
I have witnessed other JSS teachers being unfairly intimidated	4.3804	.76239
I believe that workplace policies are not protecting JSS teachers from intimidation	4.5072	.64225
I don't feel safe in expressing my professional opinions without fear of threats	4.3682	.62921

Source: Field data, 2025

The responses in Table 3 show consistently strong agreement (M=4.18–4.64) with statements related to intimidation and threats. The highest means were recorded in items like "I believe that disciplinary actions are used as a tool of intimidation" (M=4.64) and "I feel that I am frequently threatened with job-related consequences" (M=4.60). However majority of the head teachers 92.59% had divergent views as they indicated they do not use harsh language or punitive measures to silence JSS teachers. They dismissed these claims, insisting disciplinary measures follow due process and that some JSS teachers misinterpret accountability for intimidation. The high averages across the board imply that intimidation is systemic and severely damages trust and open communication. This kind of toxic environment likely hampers teacher morale, leading to suppressed innovation, increased turnover intentions, and poor school performance.

Perceived Professional Devaluation

The JSS teachers gave their opinion the following statements on the influence of perceived professional devaluation on the workplace relationships between JSS teachers and head teachers in Kiambu County Kenya.

Table 4: Perceived Professional Devaluation

	Mean	Std. Dev
I feel that my professional contributions are not recognized by the administration	2.7020	1.11627
I believe that my expertise as a JSS teacher is undervalued	2.9415	1.34106
I feel that my professional growth opportunities are limited compared to other teachers	3.6842	1.07365
I believe that JSS teachers are not given the same level of respect as other teachers	3.7058	.91340
I have experienced discrimination in professional development opportunities	3.3803	1.2669
I have experienced discrimination based on my level of education	3.8071	.89045
I believe that head teachers show favoritism towards certain groups of teachers	4.1684	.90251

Source: Field data, 2025

The results in Table 4 show that perceptions of professional devaluation are also significant but vary across items. Most means lie within the neutral to agree range (2.70–4.16). Teachers particularly agree that favoritism exists (M=4.16) and that there's discrimination based on education level (M=3.80). However, statements regarding recognition and expertise scored lower (M=2.70–2.94), indicating a neutral stance. Majority of the head teachers 88.88 indicated that JSS teachers are treated equally as other teachers in terms of respect, recognition and professional development opportunities. Some head teachers argued that respect is mutual and accused some JSS teachers of harboring superiority complexes due to their degrees. These results imply that while not all teachers feel wholly devalued, many experience systemic inequalities that hinder their professional advancement, sense of worth and can also can erode long-term institutional trust and loyalty.

Workplace Relationships
The JSS teachers gave their opinion the following statements on the workplace relationships between JSS teachers and head teachers in Kiambu County Kenya.

Table 5: Workplace Relationships

	Mean	Std. Dev
I don't experience frequent conflicts with my head teacher	1.3830	.83644
I feel respected and appreciated by the head teacher	1.4546	.71142
Communication between JSS teachers and the head teacher is good	1.3381	.64398
I do feel comfortable approaching the head teacher for guidance or assistance	2.0761	1.08142
There is a trust between JSS teachers and the head teacher	1.4207	1.26267
Conflicts between JSS teachers and head teachers are handled professionally	1.4071	.97240
I have a good working relationship with my head teacher	1.3699	.73953

Source: Field data, 2025

Table 5 reveals a strongly negative assessment of workplace relationships between JSS teachers and head teachers in Kiambu County, Kenya. The mean scores across all items fall in the strongly disagree to disagree range (M=1.33–2.07). Teachers overwhelmingly feel there is a lack of respect, poor communication, absence of trust, and unresolved conflict with head teachers. The lowest score was on "Communication between JSS teachers and the head teacher is good" (M=1.33), indicating a profound breakdown in dialogue. Some minority head teachers 25.92% rejected this narrative, suggesting that most JSS

teachers are insubordinate and unwilling to integrate into the school's established norms. These results suggest that current workplace relationships are dysfunctional and deeply strained, a likely consequence of the other forms of perceived discrimination discussed.

Regression Analysis

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.890[a]	.792	.375	.383257

a. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Exclusion from Decision-Making, Differential Work Assignment, Perceived Intimidation and Threats, Perceived Professional Devaluation.

The R^2 value of 0.792 suggests that around 79.2% of the variation in the Workplace Relationships between JSS Teachers and Head teachers in Kiambu county Kenya is attributable to the perceived exclusion from decision-making, differential work assignment, perceived intimidation and threats, perceived professional devaluation variables.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.404	4	3.351	22.795	.000[b]
	Residual	6.027	41	.147		
	Total	19.431	45			

a. Dependent Variable: Workplace Relationships between JSS Teachers and Head teachers
b. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Exclusion from Decision-Making, Differential Work Assignment, Perceived Intimidation and Threats, Perceived Professional Devaluation.

The ANOVA results indicate that the regression model is statistically significant, this is so as it had a low F-statistic (F = 22.795) and the low p-value (0. 000<0.05). This implies that there is significant relationship between perceived discrimination on workplace relations between junior secondary school teachers and head teachers in Kiambu county Kenya.

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.795	4.136		.676	.569
	Perceived Exclusion from Decision-Making	-.371	.291	.391	.724	.024
	Differential Work Assignment	-.302	.247	.120	.232	.038
	Perceived Intimidation and Threats	-.414	.857	.577	.754	.001

Perceived Professional Devaluation	-.130	.510	.058	.076	.147

a. Dependent Variable: Workplace Relationships between JSS Teachers and Head teachers

The regression results indicate that perceived exclusion from decision-making has a negative and statistically significant (β1=-0.371, p=0.024<0.05) influence on workplace relations between junior secondary school teachers and head teachers in Kiambu county Kenya. The results also indicate that differential work assignment has a negative and statistically significant (β2 =-0.302, p=0.038<0.05) influence on workplace relations between junior secondary school teachers and head teachers in Kiambu county Kenya. The results further indicate that perceived intimidation and threats have a negative and statistically significant (β3=-0.414, p=0.001<0.05) influence on workplace relations between junior secondary school teachers and head teachers in Kiambu county Kenya. The results finally indicate that perceived professional devaluation has a negative and statistically insignificant (β4=-0.130, p=0.147>0.05) influence on workplace relations between junior secondary school teachers and head teachers in Kiambu county Kenya.

1.7 Conclusion
The study concludes that perceived discrimination significantly undermines workplace relationships between JSS teachers and head teachers in Kiambu County. Teachers feel systematically excluded from decision-making processes, unfairly burdened with tasks, intimidated through authoritarian practices, and professionally devalued. These negative experiences collectively contribute to hostile, mistrustful, and unproductive work environments, compromising collaboration and, ultimately, the quality of education.

1.8 Recommendations
a. Inclusive decision-making: Head teachers should involve JSS teachers in key school decisions through regular consultative meetings and feedback mechanisms. This will promote ownership and foster mutual respect.
b. Fair workload distribution: The Ministry of Education should establish clear workload allocation guidelines to ensure equity and transparency in task assignments among all teaching staff.
c. Address intimidation and promote safe reporting channels: The Ministry of Education implement strict anti-harassment policies and create anonymous reporting platforms to protect teachers from intimidation and retaliation.
d. Training and development: Headteachers and JSS Teachers should undertake joint capacity-building workshops on professional collaboration, conflict resolution, and inclusive leadership at least twice per year so as to build mutual understanding, dismantle stereotypes, and restore collegiality.
e. Foster positive relationships and communication: Schools should invest in team-building, conflict resolution training, and mentorship programs to rebuild trust and enhance communication between JSS teachers and head teachers.
f. Investigation: Teachers Service Commission (TSC) should as soon as possible investigate all reported cases of harassment, intimidation, and discrimination, so as restore trust, ensure accountability, create safe working environments and better working relationship between JSS teachers and head teachers.

g. School management structure: To the Ministry of Education should review the current management structure of JSS under primary schools and consider redeploying senior teachers or creating JSS-specific administrative units; so as to reduce conflict and align qualifications with responsibilities.

h. Laws and registration. To policy makers and legislators, they should draft legislation to create a separate command structure for JSS, so as ensure long-term structural solutions to systemic conflict.

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