

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRINCIPALS' LAISSEZ-FAIRE LEADERSHIP STYLE AND MOTIVATION OF SUPPORT STAFF IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA**

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### **Abstract:**

Staff motivation is a significant factor in enhancing organizational commitment and productivity. In a school system, two types of staff perform their duties in a complimentary manner, namely the teaching staff and the support staff. The principal is expected to play an administrative role, which includes motivational. However, the principals' motivation to support staff has been an issue of concern in the management of schools in Kenya. In the recent past, there has been a widespread support staff's turnover in secondary school in Nyamira County in spite of it is fairly developed and productive area. The specific objective of the study was to establish the relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style and motivation of support staff. Descriptive correlation and exploratory designs were used. The conceptual framework was based on the McGregor theory X and theory Y and supported by Herzberg's Motivation and Hygiene Factors theory. The study population consisted of 170 principals, 172 deputy principals and 170 Board of Managers chairpersons with 1020 support staff members, a total target population of 1532. Stratified, random and purposive sampling techniques were used to select 51 principals, 51 deputy principals, 51 BOM chairpersons and 306 support staff members, making a total sample of 459 respondents. The instruments for data collection were questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis. The study used descriptive statistics of frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviations, which were used concurrently with inferential statistics of chi-square, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and simple linear regression analysis. Qualitative data were analyzed by organizing the content into themes and sub-themes as they emerged, then tallied and reported as excerpts. Validity of the instruments was determined through examination of the items using JOOUST experts. A pilot study was carried out with 10 independent principals and 10 independent supportive staff to establish the reliability of the instruments. To compute for instrument's reliability the study employed Cronbach alpha coefficient analysis of which a minimum of 0.709 and 0.84 were obtained for each of the items whose reliability was tested. However, a statistically positive relationship was established between laissez-faire ( $r=.316$ ,  $n=306$ ,  $p<.05$ ) with motivation among the support staff. The study established that principals' laissez-faire leadership orientation explained 10% of the variation in motivation among support staff workers. The study recommends that Ministry of Education should design relevant and regular in-service courses for support staff members and principals to maximize motivation. Such training should emphasize on human resource management and interpersonal relations at work place and accountability of the workers on their responsibilities. The findings from the study will be important to the principals will be able to evaluate their leadership styles and the level of motivation of the support staff based on empirical findings.

**Keywords:** Public Secondary School, Staff Motivation, Support Staff and Laissez-Faire Leadership Style

## **1. Introduction**

Webb (2007) “Conducted a study on Presidents” Leadership Behaviors Associated with Followers” Job Satisfaction, Motivation toward extra effort and Presidential in USA. This researcher received the data through sample (MLQ) of 315 chief student affairs officers, chief academic, and financial were chosen from the town of 105 member organization in the Council for Christian Universities and colleges. 223 participants (70.8%) returned questionnaires. Results were receive with the help of descriptive statistics were utilized to describe the sample means and standard deviation.

Webb (2007) found that contingent reward has positive and significant relationship with motivation while management by exception active and passive have significant and negative relationship with motivation. Laissez-faire leadership has significant and negative relationship with motivation toward extra effort. However, Webb (2007) “Conducted a study on Presidents” Leadership Behaviors Associated with Followers” Job Satisfaction, Motivation toward extra effort and Presidential while the current study was conducted on the influence of principals’ leadership styles on motivation of support staff in public secondary schools. The present study sought to fill this gap in the literature.

In United States of America, Shaver (2007) examined the faculty- perceived leadership styles of directors of associate’s degree radiography programs and to determine if significant relationship existed between those styles and faculty perceptions of director effectiveness. The study also examined the relationships between the directors’ leadership styles and three radiography program outcomes: American Registry of Radiologic Technologist (ARRT) exam pass rate, program completion rate, and job placement rate. Further, the relationship between the directors’ leadership styles and demographic information was also examined.

The findings of this study indicated that transformational, transactional and laissez-faire factors are significant predictors of program director effectiveness, faculty satisfaction and the faculties willingness to exert extra effort and the American Registry of Radiologic Technologist (ARRT) Exam pass rate. None of the leadership factors significantly predicted program completion rate, job placement rate, or the eight and five-year JRCERT accreditation awards.

The study also found no significant correlation between directors' leadership styles and demographic variables. However, this study was conducted in a developed country and more so in a college settings. Therefore its findings cannot portray those from the general institutions including secondary schools. The present study was based on public secondary schools to find out whether these findings are also valid in developing country and in a secondary school setup. The present study sought to fill this gap in the literature.

Filomena (2012) carried out research on influence of head teachers' management styles on the primary school teachers' job satisfaction in Chuka Division, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. The key to effective management is the ability to get results from other people, through other people and in conjunction with other people. As a manager of the school community, the head teacher has the responsibility for helping staff members get satisfaction from their profession and more towards the fulfillment of their needs and objectives. There is need to explore how different management styles influence teachers job satisfaction because if they are not properly implemented, this may lead to dissatisfaction among teachers. This study sought to establish the influence of head teacher's management styles on teachers' job satisfaction among public primary schools in Chuka Division, Tharaka Nithi County. The purpose of the current study was to find out the relationship between principals' leadership styles and motivation of support staff

in public secondary schools in Nyamira County, Kenya. The present study sought to fill this gap in the literature.

The objectives of the study were; to determine the management styles used by head teachers in Chuka Division, to determine the level of job satisfaction among public primary school teachers in Chuka Division, to find out the head teachers responsibility in human resource management in Chuka Division and to assess attitude of teachers towards management styles of headteachers (Filomena, 2012). The study adopted descriptive survey design. The current study adopted descriptive correlation and exploratory design.

The target population for the study comprised 53 head teachers, 431 teachers and 53 School Management Committee (SMC) chairmen from the 53 public primary schools in the division forming a total population of 537 respondents. Both purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to come up with a sample size of 116 respondents. Stratified, simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used in the current study.

Questionnaires were used to collect data from head teachers and teachers and interview schedules were used to collect data from the SMC chairmen. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and findings presented in form of percentages, frequencies and tables. Results show that on average head teachers in Chuka Division mostly employed democratic and autocratic management styles. Laissez-faire style was least used. The study revealed that teachers were satisfied with their jobs an indication that high levels of the teachers' achievements, recognition and opportunity for growth had been met and the hygiene factors such as worker conditions, pay and interpersonal relationships had been met consequently heightening their job satisfaction (Filomena, 2012).

Head teachers were in good working relations with their teachers and that the teachers were happy with the management styles employed by the head teachers; evidence that teachers' attitude towards their head teachers' management styles was positive. The study recommends that expanding and improving career and professional development is, therefore, crucially important considering the available research was limited to Chuka Division which is a small area raising concern in generalizing the findings. A more rigorous study can therefore be carried to cover the whole country. The present study sought to fill this gap in the literature.

## **2 Objective of the Study**

This study focused on achieving the following objective: To establish relationship between of principals' laissez-faire leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools.

## **Research Hypothesis**

The research was guided by the following hypothesis:  $H_{01}$ -There is no statistical significant relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools.  $H_{a1}$ -There is statistical significant relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools.

## **3 Research Methodology**

This study adopted descriptive correlation survey and exploratory research designs to explore whether there was correlation between the principals' leadership styles and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools in Nyamira County. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2005), a descriptive correlation survey research design determines and reports the way things are. Descriptive correlation survey design was employed because it guaranteed breadth of

information and accurate descriptive analysis of characteristics of a sample, which was used to make inferences about population (Orodho, 2004). This design is useful when a researcher wants to collect data on phenomena that cannot be observed directly. Its advantage is that, it allows collection of large amounts of data from a sizeable population in a highly effective, easily and in an economical way, often using questionnaires. Exploratory design helped in clarifying about this phenomenon on the relationship between principals' leadership styles and motivation of support staff that would have not been clearly studied in this specific context. Quantitative and qualitative approaches (mixed methods) guided data collection procedures for this study. Tools including questionnaires, interview guides and document analysis were used to collect relevant data on relationship between principals' leadership styles and motivation of support staff.

The study was carried out in Nyamira County. The Latitude and Longitude of Nyamira County is 0°56'S34°93'E respectively. Nyamira County is located in the former Nyanza Province, and borders the counties of Bomet to the East, Narok to the South, Kisii to the West, Homa Bay to the South West and Kericho to the North East. It covers an area of 899.3 km<sup>2</sup>. The population of Nyamira County is 598,252 people, with the male comprising 48%, and female 52%. The population density is 665 people per km<sup>2</sup> (County Government of Nyamira, 2015). The Government of Nyamira County has four constituencies, namely West Mugirango, North Mugirango, Borabu and Kitutu Masaba and five sub-counties, namely Nyamira South, Nyamira North, Borabu, Manga and Masaba North (County Government of Nyamira, 2012), prepared a map showing the location of Nyamira.

Nyamira County was chosen for the study because of the following main reasons, namely; the existence of many schools and a large number of staff employed in schools which made it possible to have respondents who could give the required information for the study. Similarly,

the various economic activities in the area provide an alternative source of employment, hence a competitor and a fall back alternative to formal employment in the schools. This makes motivation an important variable in attracting staff to work in secondary schools.

There is also a widespread support staff turnover in secondary schools in Nyamira County despite the fact that county is fairly developed and productive area. Support staff's motivation has persistently been dismal. Hence the county was convenient for the study. The sub-counties in Nyamira County were easily accessible because of the good road network which cuts across the sub-counties and given that no similar study has been conducted in the county. No seminar or workshop ever held to address support staff's motivation. The study location became more suitable.

This study had a target population of 1532 which comprised of 170 Principals, 172 Deputy Principals, 170 Boards of Management chairpersons and 1020 support staff members. Units of analysis were 170 public secondary schools Nyamira County, five sub-counties namely Nyamira North, Nyamira South, Masaba North, Manga and Borabu. The target population is summarized as shown in Table 3.1

**Table 3. 1: Target Population**

<b>Sub-County</b>	<b>Number of schools</b>	<b>Principals</b>	<b>Deputy Principals</b>	<b>BOM Chair</b>	<b>Support Staff</b>	<b>Total</b>
Nyamira North	43	43	43	43	258	387
Nyamira South	44	44	45	44	264	397
Masaba North	32	32	32	32	192	288

Manga	28	28	29	28	168	253
Borabu	23	23	23	23	138	207
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>1020</b>	<b>N=1532</b>

Source: Nyamira County Education Office (2016)

Mugenda & Mugenda (2005) suggests that for correlational or experimental research, 30 cases per group or more are required; and for descriptive and survey research, ten percent of the accessible population. This study therefore employed a sampling fraction of 30% of the target population (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2005) the sample size is represented in Table 3.2

**Table 3. 2: Sampling Frame**

<b>Sub-county</b>	<b>Sample size Principals</b>	<b>Deputy principals</b>	<b>BOM Chairpersons</b>	<b>Support staff</b>	<b>Total</b>
Nyamira North	13	13	13	77	116
Nyamira South	13	13	13	79	118
Masaba North	10	10	10	58	88
Manga	8	8	8	50	74
Borabu	7	7	7	42	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>n=51</b>	<b>n=51</b>	<b>n=51</b>	<b>n=306</b>	<b>459</b>

From table 3.2, this study had a target population of 1532 which comprised of 170 Principals, 172 Deputy Principals, 170 Boards of Management chairpersons and a support staff of 1020. Using the sampling fraction of 30%, the sample size comprised of 51 Principals, 51 Deputy Principals, 51 BOM Chairpersons, and a support staff of 306, making a total sample size of 459.



The sample elements were selected through stratified sampling, simple random sampling and purposive sampling.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the analysis of test of hypothesis. The study used one null hypothesis related to support staff level of motivation and principals' leadership styles. To do this, Chi-Square and a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was computed to test each hypothesis, with scores on leadership style as the independent variable and support staff level of motivation as dependent variable. The scores of the variables were computed from frequency of responses from the support staff questionnaire and converted into continuous scaled data by computing mean responses per respondents, where high scale ratings implied high perceived motivation and high usage of the leadership style and vice versa. The p-value was set at .05, the null hypothesis was rejected when the p-value was less than .05 but it was accepted when the p-value obtained was greater than .05.

***H<sub>01</sub>-There is no significant relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools.***

The study was interested in establishing the principals' Laissez-faire leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools. To achieve this, the principals were required to indicate the laissez-faire leadership style in a contingency table and analysed using chi-square test. Their responses are summarized in Tables 4.36 and 4.37

**Table 4.36: The relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership styles and motivation of support staff (data from principals)**

Count	VLM	LM	AM	HM	VHM	Total
Disagree	0	1	2	0		3

Neutral	0	0	1	4	1	6
Agree	0	2	12	22	3	39
Strongly Agree	0	0	0	3	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>51</b>

Source: Field Data

As the first step used in the study to arrive at chi-square test which was used to test the set hypothesis was Table 4.36 which was contingency table showing cross tabulation between principal’s laissez-faire leadership style and motivation of support staff. The study found that majority (22) of the principals agreed that the support staff were highly motivated, 12 agreed that the staff were averagely motivated, 3 principals were strongly agreed on the fact that the staff were highly motivated compared to 1 principal who was both disagreed and also neutral that the staff were low motivated and averagely motivated respectively.

**Table 4.37: Chi-square test on the relationship between principals’ laissez-faire leadership styles and motivation of support staff (data from principals)**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	176.764 <sup>a</sup>	64	.132
Likelihood Ratio	67.968	64	.344
Linear-by-Linear Association	.126	1	.722
N of Valid Cases	51		

a 81 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.

Source: Field Data

The  $\chi^2$  results of 176.764, df 64,  $p < 0.05$  indicated that the null hypothesis was rejected and therefore implying statically significant relationship between principals’ Laissez-faire leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary and the alternate hypothesis ( $H_{a3}$ ) was accepted.

The study was also interested in establishing the principals' laissez-faire leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools. To achieve this, the support staff members were required to indicate the laissez-faire leadership style in a contingency table and analysed by chi-square test. Their responses are summarized in Tables 4.38 and 4.39.

**Table 4.38: The relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership styles and motivation of support staff (data from support staff)**

COUNT	VLM	LM	AM	HM	VHM	Total
Disagree	0	6	12	0	0	18
Neutral	0	0	6	24	6	36
Agree	0	12	72	132	18	234
Strongly Agree	0	0	0	18	0	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>306</b>

Source: Field Data

As the first step used in the study to arrive at chi-square test which was used to test the set hypothesis was Table 4.38 which was contingency table showing cross tabulation between principal's laissez-faire leadership style and motivation of support staff. The study found that majority (132) agreed that the support staff were highly motivated, 12 disagreed that the staff were averagely motivated, 18 strongly agreed on the fact that the staff were highly motivated compared to 6 both disagreed and also neutral that the staff were low motivated and averagely motivated respectively.

**Table 4.39: Chi-square test on the relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership styles and motivation of support staff (data from support staff)**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	85.17a	64	0.218
Likelihood Ratio	72.4	64	0.432

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Linear-by-Linear Association	0.219	1	0.811
N of Valid Cases	306		

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a 81 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.

Source: Field Data

The  $\chi^2$  results of 85.17a, df 64,  $p < 0.05$  indicated that the null hypothesis was rejected and therefore implying statistically significant relationship between principals' Laissez-faire leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary and the alternate hypothesis ( $H_{a3}$ ) was accepted.

In addition, to test the hypothesis, an inferential Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis was conducted, with scores on principals' level of laissez-faire leadership style orientation used as the independent variable and support staff level of motivation as dependent variable. Table 4.40 shows the SPSS output on correlation analysis results on the relationship between principals' level of laissez-faire leadership style orientation and motivation of support staff.

**Table 4.40: Relationship between Principals' Level of Laissez-Faire Leadership Style Orientation and Motivation of Support Staff**

			Laissez- Leadership Style	Faire Support Motivation	Staff
Laissez- Leadership Style	Faire	Pearson Correlation	1	.316**	
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
		N	306	306	
Support Motivation	Staff	Pearson Correlation	.316**	1	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
		N	306	306	

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

The finding of the study indicate that there was statistically significant, though weak, positive correlation ( $r=.316$ ,  $n=306$ ,  $p<.05$ ) between principals’ level of laissez-faire leadership style orientation and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools, with high principals’ level of laissez-faire leadership style associated to a high motivation level among the support staffs in secondary schools and vice-versa. Given that the relationship was statistically significant, the hypothesis that, “*there is no statistical significant relationship between the principals’ level of laissez-faire leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools.*” was rejected. As a result, it was concluded that high principals’ level of laissez-faire leadership style motivates support staff members.

Further, to estimate the level of influence of principals’ level of laissez-faire leadership style on support staff motivation, a coefficient of determination was computed using a simple linear regression analysis and the results were as shown in Table 4.41

**Table 4.41: Model Summary on Regression Analysis of Influence Principals’ Level of Laissez-Faire Leadership Style on Motivation**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.316 <sup>a</sup>	.100	.097	.41775	1.886

a. Predictors: (Constant), Laissez-Faire Leadership Style

b. Dependent Variable: Support Staff Motivation

From Table 4.41, it is evident that the model reveals that principals’ laissez-faire leadership orientation explained 10% ( $R^2 = .100$ ) of the variation in motivation among support staff workers in the secondary schools in Nyamira County. This is a considerably sizeable influence on the dependent variable accounted by only one variable. However, to establish whether principals’

laissez-faire leadership orientation was a significant predictor of motivation among the support staff workers, ANOVA was computed as shown in Table 4.42

**Table 4.42: ANOVA –Influence of Principals’ Laissez-Faire Leadership Orientation**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.897	1	5.897	33.792	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	53.052	304	.175		
	Total	58.949	305			

a. Dependent Variable: Support Staff Motivation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Laissez-Faire Leadership Style

From Table 4.42, it is shown that principals’ level of laissez-faire leadership style orientation was a significant predictor of motivation among the support staff workers, as reflected by a significant F-value (1, 304) = 33.791,  $p < .05$  in secondary schools. Further, this reveals that principals’ laissez-faire leadership orientation significantly influence motivation among support staff.

Further, linear regression was generated to find the actual relationship between principals’ democratic leadership orientation and motivation of support staff workers, as shown in Table 4.43.

**Table 4.43: Coefficients of Linear Regression: Principals’ Laissez-Faire Leadership Orientations**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.635	.192		8.516	.000

Leisure's Faire Leadership Style	.381	.066	.316	5.813	.000
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a. Dependent Variable: Support Staff Motivation

$$Y = B_0 + B_1X + \Sigma_0$$

$$Y = 1.635 + 0.381X_1 + \Sigma_0$$

Where Y = Adjustment

$$B_0 + B_1 = \text{Constant}$$

X = Level of Principals' Laissez-Faire Leadership

It is evident from Table 4.43 that if the level of laissez-faire leadership style was increased by one standard deviation, then perceived scores in level of motivation of support staff workers would rise by .316 standard deviation units. Similarly, when principals' laissez-faire leadership orientation was stepped up by one unit, support staff motivation would improve by .381 units, which is a significant amount of change from one independent variable.

These findings were corroborated by the findings of interview schedules. For examples, interview with the BOM chairpersons who participated in the study, principals do give their support staff authority to make decisions and determine course of action. As one BOM Chairperson was however quick to maintain that:

*Laissez-faire style of leadership should only be applied on mature and experienced employees like the school bursars, matron and cateress (BOMC 11)*

Deputy Principals noted that Laissez-faire style was applied because individual workers have to think for themselves and their initiative would lead to higher production in the schools. As one Deputy Principal maintained;

*I believe that these are adults who know the importance of their job to their families. If they decide to be irresponsible, then the school rules and regulations will catch up with them. I believe they are motivated to work with this leadership style when no leader is putting pressure in them to work (D/P 8).*

The current study concurs with the finding of Filomena (2012) focused on influence of head teachers' management styles on the primary school teachers' job satisfaction in Chuka Division, Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. Results show that on average head teachers in Chuka Division mostly employed democratic and autocratic management styles. Laissez faire style was least used. The study revealed that teachers were satisfied with their jobs an indication that high levels of the teachers' achievements, recognition and opportunity for growth had been met and the hygiene factors such as worker conditions, pay and interpersonal relationships had been met consequently heightening their job satisfaction. Head teachers were in good working relations with their teachers and that the teachers were happy with the management styles employed by the head teachers; evidence that teachers' attitude towards their head teachers' management styles was positive.

### **5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

The finding of the study established a statistically significant, though weak, positive correlation ( $r=.316$ ,  $n=306$ ,  $p<.05$ ) between principals' level of laissez-faire leadership style orientation and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools, with high principals' level of laissez-faire leadership style associated to a high motivation level and vice-versa. Principals' Laissez-Faire leadership orientation explained 10% ( $R^2 = .100$ ) of the variation in motivation among support staff workers and it was a significant  $F(1, 304) = 33.791$ ,  $p<.05$ ) predictor of motivation among the support staff workers. The results of the study show that if the level of laissez-faire leadership style was increased by one standard deviation, then perceived scores in level of motivation of support staff workers would rise by .316 standard deviation units.



### **5.1 Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style and support staff motivation, the study came up with the following conclusion; Support Staff members possessing all the necessary tools for job accomplishment as an element of laissez-faire leadership style by the principals contributed much more towards support staff motivation in public secondary schools in Nyamira County.

### **5.2 Recommendations**

Based on the findings and the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made with the view of improving the relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership styles and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools:

- 1) Ministry of Education should design relevant in-service courses regular in-service and other appraisal courses to enhance quality leadership should be provided to the principals to see the value of mixed leadership styles applied to managing staff in schools.
- 2) This study recommends that the BOM to understand that motivation of staff is an important attribute in organizational management and productivity.
- 3) Support staff members should be allowed to evaluate and recommend the leadership styles of the principals.

### **5.3 Suggestions for Further Research**

The study did not exhaust all issues pertaining to the relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style and motivation of support staff in public secondary schools in Nyamira County, Kenya. Other issues emanated from the study that require further investigation are as follows:

- Relationship between parental levels of awareness and motivation of support staff.
- Relationship between school characteristics and motivation of support staff.

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