

Impact of the School Working Environment on Teacher Job Satisfaction in Public Secondary Schools in Loima

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ABSTRACT: *Teacher job satisfaction is an important issue that warrants closer examination. Overall, teachers have a critical function in students' progress in terms of enhancing the teaching profession. However, research points to teachers experiencing low job satisfaction globally. The school environment is often cited as a crucial factor influencing teacher satisfaction. This paper aims at establishing the impact of the school working environment on teacher job satisfaction among secondary schools in Loima, an ASAL region that presents unique challenges related to this issue. A descriptive survey design was utilized, combining qualitative and quantitative data collected from responses of 130 teachers from public boarding secondary schools in Loima. Data was collected using interviews and questionnaires. Qualitative data were analyzed using themes, guided by the objectives of the study. The study found that the school working environment considerably affects teachers' decisions to remain in a particular station. Schools that provide adequate teaching/learning materials, along with suitable accommodation for teachers, tend to attract more educators compared to those that do not offer such support. Furthermore, limited studies focus on teacher job satisfaction in challenging environments, particularly in the Loima region. Thus, further research is recommended to examine specific factors affecting teacher job satisfaction in hard-to-stay areas*

Keywords: *school working environment, teacher job satisfaction, teaching and learning materials. ASAL region*

I. Introduction

Globally, teacher job satisfaction is a significant concern among education stakeholders. This is because of the crucial function it plays in determining the quality of service delivered in the teaching profession. An emotional state resulting from employees' feelings about job achievement is referred to as job satisfaction (Srimarut & Mekhum, 2020). Researchers have revealed that teachers' job satisfaction is tied to the school's working environment (Monyamane & Monyamane, 2019). As such, for an education system to be effective, there must be efforts directed towards ensuring that teachers are working in a conducive environment. As a result, teachers will be effective and productive not only to society but to the nation at large.

Despite the crucial role teachers play in educational institutions, data from 19 nations and economies show that an aggregate of 6.5% of teachers duly qualified in pre-school to upper secondary school quit the profession

between 2022 and 2023. There are significant differences, from less than 3% in Ireland, Israel, France, and Greece to above 10% in Lithuania, Denmark, and Estonia. Rates of attrition in pre-school education (7.3%) are a little higher. However, they are similar in secondary education (5.9%) and primary (5.8%) (OECD, 2025). On average, the rate of teachers quitting the profession through resignation is at 51%. Perturbingly, five out of the seventy nations with data on superiority (Austria, Estonia, Israel, Poland, and the Slovak Republic), the rate of those quitting, yet they have not taught for more than five years, is slightly at 30% (OECD, 2025). This indicates the need not only to employ teachers but also to create a supportive environment to retain them. Teacher can stay longer in the profession and institutions when they are comfortable in their workplace. A professionally trained and satisfied teacher is likely to have a friendly attitude, greater enthusiasm, demonstrate stronger job commitment, adopt a higher value pattern, and be less inclined to withdraw from the profession. Teachers experiencing job satisfaction tend to contribute significantly to students' educational progress. Conversely, it has been observed that dissatisfied teachers often become vexed, ineffective, inexperienced, gloomy, uncooperative, absent, aggressive, and unstable in their views. Such teachers frequently make students' lives difficult, bringing distress to the institution and society (Sankar & Vasudha, 2015). Therefore, it is essential to give proper attention to teachers' job satisfaction in society.

Teachers face various challenges in the school work environment. These include insufficient teaching and learning materials, crowded classrooms, and limited office space (Kiptum, 2018). Besides these issues, teachers in the ASALs deal with unique difficulties such as poverty, droughts, famine, conflicts, poor transportation, harsh climate conditions, and traditional cultural practices (FAO and ECA, 2018; Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR), 2016; Obonyo, 2013). Additionally, Turkana County experiences a severe teacher shortage, according to the (TSC County Report, 2015). Even with the 30% hardship allowance that teachers in the ASALs are entitled to, along with travel allowances meant for all teachers, many are still hesitant to work in these tough regions (Hawene LK, 2022).

Consequently, students in the ASALs are likely to receive low-quality education at both primary and secondary levels. Therefore, examining the specific school working environment that teachers in the ASALs work in is important for improving teacher job satisfaction. For this reason, this paper focuses on the school working environment and how it impacts teacher job satisfaction among boarding public secondary schools in Loima Sub-County, Turkana County, which is part of the ASALs in Kenya.

II. Statement of the Problem

Loima sub-county, being part of the ASALs, is characterized by high teacher turnover and acute teacher shortage of about 10% per year (SlimeBlock, 2016). This is despite the increased enrollment of students that teachers are expected to handle every year. Consequently, translating into low levels of productivity, inability to adapt to change, teacher transfers and attrition, lack of commitment to duty, absenteeism, and non-attendance in schools. This has therefore necessitated this study, which aims to look into the school working environment and its impact on the job satisfaction of teachers in public boarding secondary schools in Loima Sub-County.

III. Methodology

A descriptive survey design that blends qualitative and quantitative data was used. The design involves obtaining accurate information on the current situation and drawing possible conclusions from the information captured (Orodho, 2016). The design enabled the researcher to, first, get an impression of what was happening in the target population concerning teacher job satisfaction. Second, the researcher utilized the design to depict the situation as it was regarding the teacher workplace and teacher job satisfaction in Loima sub-county. This approach was used to examine the complexities of teachers' perceptions in their workplace.

A quantitative approach was used for this study, and it was considered to be the most appropriate method to examine how job satisfaction of secondary school is affected by the school working environment of teachers in

the Loima region. The decision to use this approach emanated from the use of questionnaires, which permitted the researcher to use many teacher respondents during data collection, so that generalizing the collected data would be achievable. This was also in conjunction with Leedy (1993), who emphasizes that a quantitative approach focuses on reliable and objective data as it employs very structured procedures that are made to validate determined objectives.

The study targeted fifteen public secondary schools from which ten were sampled as follows: one National, three Extra Counties, three counties, and three Sub-Counties. These schools are distributed as follows: two from Kotaruk/Lobei, three from Turkwel, three from Loima, and two from Lorengipi. The study used one hundred and twenty (120) trained teachers in these schools. The Principals, County Staffing Officer (CSO), the Deputy County Director (DCD), and the KUPPET official were purposively selected to take part in the study. Nyange recommends the use of larger samples in order to foster the accuracy of research results. The sample size was, therefore, 86.6% of the population, which gave a sample of 130 teacher respondents from the 10 public secondary schools.

IV. Review of Related Literature

Teacher Job satisfaction and the school working environment

Job satisfaction is essential to both employees as well as to the employers, because it enhances productivity and improves work performance. If secondary school teachers are dissatisfied, this usually affects the academic performance of learners negatively, consequently damaging the learning institutions and society at large.

Satisfaction may arise from favorable conditions such as promotion opportunities, collegial relationships, compensation, professional responsibilities, and recognition, while dissatisfaction results when these aspects are viewed in a negative way (Wyrwa, 2020; Shiferaw & Ph, 2025). Teachers experiencing higher levels of satisfaction have positive attitudes and are unlikely to leave their station (Gessesse & Premanandam, 2023). Studies conducted by Astuti et al. 2022 and Putri, Amanda, and Adrian 2024 found that the work environment has a substantial impact on teacher loyalty, where a supportive work environment encourages teachers to stay longer in school and even in the profession. Therefore, educational institutions must scheme policies and plans that enhance teacher commitment and job satisfaction (Guo et al., 2025; Taimin & Kim, 2025).

An international survey has released an alarming inclination. UNESCO reports that only 8.6% of teachers were satisfied in their workplace, while more than half contemplated leaving the teaching job (Muga, 2022). Nearly half of teachers in secondary school reported dissatisfaction in the United States, while one-quarter intended to leave within a year because of the poor working environment (Muguzi, 2022). Additionally, countries like the US and UK have increased teacher frustration and stress, which seemed to be attached to stress on teacher accountability as well as performance, merged with increased teacher workload (Perryman, J., Ball, S., Maguire, M., & Braun, A., 2011; Ingersoll, 2025). In developing countries, emerging issues related to teacher work environment and job satisfaction include: increased teaching workload, non-teaching workloads, heightened accountability, pressure from marketization trends, and challenges in collegial relationships and leadership support. These factors contribute to increased teacher stress and frustration, potentially leading to low teacher job satisfaction and higher turnover rates.

In the African context, low teacher job satisfaction has been reported in many countries (Kiptum, 2018). A study by Lamaro, G., & Okello, P. (2024) found that the dissatisfaction of teachers was due to the absence of teachers' houses in schools and their low salaries. Teachers in Nigeria were also experiencing low job satisfaction because of the inadequacy of necessary work tools, inadequate administrative support, and lack of opportunities for decision-making (Ekwevugbe, A. O., & Efetobor, S., 2025). The Tanzania country report of 2017 points out the demotivation of male and female teachers as a vital benefactor to the poor learning outcomes in schools (Kiptum, 2018). Teacher job dissatisfaction has resulted in demonstrations by Kenyan teachers, which have not yet been solved. This is likely to have impacted teachers, resulting in absenteeism of teachers in their workplace. (Wachira & Gathungu, 2013).

Summary of the literature review gap

Globally, teacher job satisfaction remains a critical issue that possess challenge in the education system, particularly in developing countries, ASALs, and hard-to-stay areas like Loima. The literature established that there is little concentration on the teacher's well-being and their environment. Most teachers' dissatisfaction is a consequence of the pathetic environment in which they operate. These environments are characterized by inadequate teaching and learning resources, few Classrooms which are overcrowded, inadequate books in the libraries, and inadequate equipment in the laboratories.

V. Findings

Teacher demographic information

Teacher demographic data was considered vital as it has a link to the variables that contribute to the teacher's length of stay in a particular station. The demographic information obtained was gender and duration of stay in a station. The aim was to study how the factors in the school working environment have affected teachers' job satisfaction, resulting in teachers staying longer or shorter periods in their stations and in the profession. Overall, majority of teachers teaching in Loima region are male, 72(60%), whereas females are 48 (40%).

Duration of stay

This study attempted to ascertain teachers' length of stay in a station. Data regarding the length of stay of teachers in a station was significant since it envisaged satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Whereas satisfaction means that the teacher has stayed longer in the station because the school environment is conducive, and vice versa.

The researcher encountered difficulties in accessing these schools because of poor terrain and the scattered nature of the schools. The researcher was forced to use more time in data collection and a research assistant to administer questionnaires. These led to the number of respondents as summarized below;

Teacher duration in years

Number of years in the teaching profession	Number of years in the station	Number of respondents	%
0-5	< 5	42	35%
6-10	<10	33	27.5%
16-20	<20	26	21.6%
Over 20	>20	19	15.8%

Source; researcher

From table 5.1 above, the findings show that most respondents, 35% (42), have teaching experience of 0 to 5 years and have stayed less than 5 years in their current station. Additionally, 27.5% (33) of respondents have teaching experience between 6 and 10 years. Teachers who had the teaching experience of between 16 and 20 years were 21.6% (26). Notably, only 15.8% (19) of the respondents had taught for over 20 years. The figures suggests that more experienced teachers seem to stay longer in a station than those with less experience in the profession.

More experienced teachers had stayed longer in their current station than the teachers who had five years' experience in teaching. Teacher experience may have influenced their satisfaction as they seemed not to be bothered by the aspects of their working environment, which they cannot change. For instance, teacher houses were either not available, or they were inadequate; some were put up in villages, while some lived as many as five to six in one 'mabati' (tin house) structure within the school.

These findings are in agreement with Ng'asike's (2004) and Ndegwa's (2005) study, which revealed that more experienced teachers seem to be more contented with work than those who are inexperienced. Similarly, this study concurs with (Zhongshan, 2007) study in China, which indicates a link between teacher experiences and their job satisfaction, where more experienced teachers enjoy higher satisfaction.

Teacher satisfaction rates and School working environment

This paper established the impact of the school working environment in Loima, Turkana County. Various items were presented to teachers to give their responses. The responses were to look into the school working environment and its impact on the satisfaction of teachers. This was based on a 5-Pointer Scale of (1) highly Satisfied (2) Satisfied (3) moderately satisfied, (4) Not Satisfied, (5) highly unsatisfied. The responses were collected, analyzed, and presented as follows.

	N	%
Highly unsatisfied	47	39.2%
Not satisfied	25	20.8%
Moderately Satisfied	17	14.2%
Satisfied	17	14.2%
Highly Satisfied	14	11.7%

(source; researcher)

The findings from Table 5.2 above reveal that the most respondents, 47 (39.2%), were not satisfied with the conditions of the working environment, while 25 (20.8%) indicated that they were fairly satisfied. Moderately satisfied teachers and those who were satisfied were about 17(14.2%). A total of 11.7% (14) out of the total indicates a teacher's higher satisfaction with their working space. Informants from the Focus Group Discussions seem to confirm that the indigenous people of the land are satisfied with some aspects because they have interacted with the same environment since birth. The aspect of low salaries discouraged many in the teaching profession, including the natives. Teachers justified their dissatisfaction with various reasons, like inadequate accommodation, particularly for the female teachers who have children, inadequate teaching equipment, and low salaries. An informant further lamented about the high number of learners per class, resulting in difficulties in controlling classes. The informant had this to say concerning the teacher-pupil ratio...

... I teach ten classes, and in all these classes, I have at least seventy learners; handling such a big class is tricky, especially when assignment is given on a daily basis. (female informant)

When the teacher-pupil ratio is not balanced, teachers tend to strain. This kills their morale for working with learners and even the teacher-learner relationship. Eventually, a teacher will experience job dissatisfaction, which might lead to either looking for a better and more comfortable place to go or low productivity.

Remuneration versus Workload was another reason for teachers not being satisfied. Even though questions asked were attached to the working environment, about 92% (110) of respondents who took part in the session lamented about low payment. When payment is unequal to the work done, then it's being underpaid. When teachers feel, their work is not equated to their pay, then they conclude they are underpaid, regardless of their position. Teachers perceive they are doing exceptional work, yet payment received does not match the work done. An informant had this to say:

... even though I work for more than six hours daily from Monday to Friday, I am paid is very little. This amount is unable to cater to all my needs. I don't have any business; this is the only work I do (male informant).

The above assertion indicates that when teachers are not satisfied, they tend to be absent from school most times; they can also be in school, but they are not attending lessons. On learning the reasons for teacher not being satisfied, teachers being absent kept recurring. A male informant, aged 30 years, who was perturbed about the issue of teachers being absent, said

...Female teachers in particular, and some of his male teachers, are notorious absentees not just in the school but also in attending their classes.

According to his perception, these teachers exhibit such behaviors because they are not happy with the workplace conditions. This concurs with (Abeles, 2009) observation that the period when employees are not available to perform their duty is absenteeism. Therefore, teachers may be within the school yet fail to teach. Further, they could be in school but be in an unfit condition to effectively teach learners. Absenteeism seems to be a universal phenomenon affecting developing countries as well as the developed ones, though the developing countries are affected the most, as confirmed by (Hubbell, 2008; Komoni, 2015) The school principals also lamented that it was hard to work with some teachers in their stations, as they attended lessons only when top administration was within the school.

Female informant said that;

...she is informed that some of her teachers ask where she is so that they can miss classes. She noted this trait while going through the lesson attendance list of different terms, particularly the days she was not in school.

This confirmed that most teachers are forced to work, as the environment does not motivate them to work willingly. Although teachers have businesses, which could be linked to low salaries, this might also indicate that teachers are not satisfied. This study revealed that, besides their employment, many teachers are involved in personal businesses. A male informant said that;

...I know teachers who own boda-boda businesses, M-Pesa shops, bars, and public vehicles. (Male informant)

The above citation could be an indicator that teachers' salaries do not meet their needs. The very reason they are out there looking for additional money is as a top-up on their salary. Also, others choose to be found in different working spaces simply because their teaching space is not satisfying.

Summary of the findings

It is vital to note the role that job satisfaction plays in teaching learners, just as it does in other professions. A teacher that experience satisfaction in the workplace has a sociable mindset and works hard for the betterment of the school's results. This has been linked to teachers' effectiveness, non-attendance, turnover, and complacency in the workplace.

VI. Conclusions

The paper concluded that the aspects of the working environment had an impact on teacher job satisfaction. There was inadequate infrastructure in most of these schools. These materials include classrooms, books, buildings, play fields, a library, laboratories, and even teachers' houses, which were inadequate to support teacher programs effectively. Additionally, most of the available buildings were very old. The funding is not sufficient and cannot be equated with the number of students yearly. It would be of importance for schools to come up with strategies of increasing their infrastructural funding for the betterment of their teaching and learning environment.

Recommendations

- a. Schools in Loima subcounty should be given priority by the government when it comes to funding of school infrastructure in relation to the school population. This should be in collaboration with the school and the community at large. This is important because Loima is part of the ASALs
- b. The government, in collaboration with the MoE and the TSC, should look into increasing teachers' pay. Also, there should be an additional hardship allowance apart from the 30% allowance that teachers in the ASALs are entitled to.
- c. Teachers' interests should be put in consideration. When teachers choose where they are comfortable working, they will be productive. They will not hop from one school to another, as this has always resulted in teacher

shortages in other schools. Additionally, when the teacher's voice is heard in every education policy, teachers will work willingly.

d. Future researchers should do more research on specific factors affecting teacher job satisfaction in hard-to-stay areas

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