

Teachers' Perceptions of Socioeconomic Factors and Their Performance of Instructional Tasks in Kilifi County, Ganze Sub-County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to assess teachers' perceptions of the relationship between socioeconomic factors and their performance of instructional tasks in secondary schools in Ganze Sub-county, Kenya. Teacher effectiveness is central to the quality of secondary education, yet many Kenyan schools continue to post unsatisfactory learning outcomes. Socioeconomic circumstances such as teacher pay, parental engagement and community poverty may influence teachers' motivation and the time they devote to planning and delivering lessons. This study used a mixed-methods descriptive survey design to assess teachers' perceptions of the relationship between socioeconomic factors and their performance of instructional tasks in public secondary schools in Ganze Sub-county, Kenya. A stratified sample of 170 teachers and all 21 principals from the 21 public secondary schools in the sub-county completed closed-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were summarised with frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings show that low pay, community insecurity, poverty in students' families and parental disengagement were perceived as major impediments to effective lesson preparation and delivery. Conversely, chores at home and participation in church activities were perceived to have a limited effect. Therefore, policymakers should couple salary reforms with social interventions that reduce poverty and bolster parental education.

Key terms: Instructional tasks, socioeconomic, teachers' perceptions.

INTRODUCTION

The sub-county has consistently recorded a mean grade of D+ over the past years, which has negatively impacted the students' ability to join universities and pursue degree courses. The study was focused on the relationship between socioeconomic factors and teachers' performance of instructional tasks. Only one school out of 19 had a high mean grade, while the rest displayed dismal performance. It is crucial to identify and address the root causes of the poor performance to prevent further decline and ensure that teachers can perform their instructional tasks effectively. Failing to address the issue could have severe consequences not only for Ganze Sub-county but for the entire country.

Effective teaching hinges not only on professional competence but also on the socioeconomic environment in which teachers work. In sub-Saharan Africa, poor remuneration, poverty and limited parental involvement have been linked to low teacher morale and high attrition, compromising students' learning outcomes. Ganze Sub-county in Kilifi County has recorded below-average academic performance for several years, prompting questions about the factors undermining teachers' instructional work. The study examined teachers' perceptions of how selected socioeconomic factors impact the performance of instructional tasks by teachers in secondary schools. The main objective of the study is to assess teachers' perceptions of the relationship between socioeconomic factors and their performance of instructional tasks. The study was grounded in Instructional Leadership theory and sought to provide empirical evidence to inform policy and practice.

Socioeconomic conditions directly shape the resources and attitudes of learners and, by extension, the work of teachers. Studies of Italian teachers mentioned by Papa-Gusho and Biçaku-Çekrezi (2015) have shown that planning skills are influenced by factors such as family income, wealth and parents' education level; students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds struggle to access learning materials and technology, forcing teachers to provide extra support. Socioeconomic disadvantage can also impact students' attitudes toward education because children

from low-income families may lack role models who have pursued higher education and may question the value of schooling. To engage these learners, teachers must spend additional time developing culturally relevant lessons and convincing them of the relevance of what they are learning. In Kenya, socioeconomic pressures manifest through early marriages, domestic chores and pregnancies among girls (Kah, 2021) and (Muhingi et al., 2020). These factors disrupt teaching schedules and reduce teachers' capacity to maintain consistent instruction. The Ministry of Education and other stakeholders have recognised that addressing socioeconomic barriers is central to improving educational outcomes, yet there is little empirical evidence on how these factors impact the day-to-day instructional tasks of teachers. This study, therefore, responds to an urgent need to explore how contextual socioeconomic realities influence teachers' performance and to identify strategies for mitigating their effects in Ganze Sub-county.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many recent studies bring to focus the effect that home background, or community background, has on the academic performance of the school at all levels of education in the school system (Dumont et al., 2012), cited by (Núñez et al., 2019). The study sought to determine the impact of background on academic performance at every academic tier in the school system. Still, it did not assess the impact of community or home background on the performance of instructional tasks.

In China, a student's academic achievement in primary school determines whether or not the student will be allowed to pursue further education (Ma & Lee, 2021). To this end, it is crucial to look into the impact of a child's family background as early as possible. These are the routes by which families affect their children's academic achievement and impact the instructional activities performed by their teachers. First and foremost, parents compete with one another to offer their children high-quality educational options and improved possibilities for learning, leading to better academic performance (Xin, 2021). Secondly, their children's study habits and academic success may be influenced by their parents' parenting practices and

educational support (Wang et al., 2021). Furthermore, urban students' academic performance is more heavily influenced by their families' socioeconomic status (Hou & Liu, 2021). This research aims to discover how families' socioeconomic status relates to the performance of instructional tasks, which is reflected in students' academic performance in Ganze Sub-county, Kenya.

Culture is what people do and believe (Cohen et al., 2016). The culture of the society determines approaches to education and instruction. For example, in Asia, they believe the world in terms of related items, while in America, they believe in the world as very distinct items (Ibarra-Esquer et al., 2017). Since culture influences learning and teaching styles, this study will investigate the impact of culture on instructional task performance. Social organisations in schools are based on how specific tasks are organised and interrelated (Kools & Stoll, 2016). The social organisation focuses on the division of labour, the hierarchy of departments, and the career ladders that teachers go through in a given school to accomplish something (Erlandson et al., 2020). For the most part, school is at the top of the list where educational institutions become functional and actual (Connell et al., 2020). Rohlen (2021) argues that schools are an indispensable component of any society's overall social system.

Regarding operational, structural, and procedural dimensions, all types of innovations and as the world and society evolve, so does the impact on education and schools (Jayabalan et al., 2021). As a result, schools cannot be recognised as separate from society's social structure and global innovations and changes (Schramm, 2021). Social organisation is vital in ensuring division of labour, but how does this impact the performance of instructional tasks? Does social organisation positively or negatively impact the performance of instructional tasks?

Parent/ guardian involvement ensures a steady relationship with teachers that significantly impacts student performance (Cole, 2020). Schools must form a partnership with parents and develop shared responsibility for their students' achievement in the

educational system to comply with integrated support for their pupils. As a result, parental participation increases parents' efforts to help their children (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). The findings of Cole, Đurišić, and Bunijevac reveal that parental involvement improves student performance, but they do not demonstrate how parental or guardian involvement impacts the performance of instructional tasks by teachers.

Parents' low level of education affects students' academic achievement and school outcomes (Duan et al., 2018). Parents' level of education can either ensure good or poor completion of assignments given as homework to students, and how they are done matters. A positive parent involvement develops students' relationships with teachers and enhances teacher productivity (Glenn II, 2021). It demonstrates that parents' educational levels influence their children's school performance, but it does not demonstrate the relationship between parents' educational levels and teachers' performance of instructional tasks.

Gender inequality is an issue that significantly affects schools (van Hek et al., 2019). Girls are provided with fewer participation opportunities than their male counterparts. It then results in gender inequality (Kapur, 2019). Girls' high demand for opportunities shows what needs to be done to fix gender inequality in terms of opportunities. Still, it does not show the impact gender inequality has on the performance of instructional tasks.

Apart from the fact that insecurity impedes student learning, it also interferes with the teacher's ability to instil knowledge due to the fear of security. Schools end up shutting down, which prevents the government and non-governmental organisations from opening new schools (Hursh, 2015). Creating new schools is difficult when you're worried about your safety. However, what impact does insecurity have on the way teachers perform in the classroom?

People living in poverty are just as diverse as those from other socioeconomic backgrounds (Gorski, 2016). When addressing student needs, teachers must

consider the challenges that poverty imposes on their daily lives and how they affect teaching and academic attainment (Ellison et al., 2021). Poverty has an adverse impact on many elements of teachers' lives, including their health and well-being, access to physical and material resources, and mobility, all of which impair their ability to teach (Ellison et al., 2021). This study sought to find the impact poverty has on the performance of instructional tasks.

Across diverse contexts, research indicates that the socio-economic environment shapes teachers' professional opportunities and classroom practices. Studies from Italy and Colombia report that teacher planning, professional development and access to learning resources are constrained by factors such as family income, parental education and community poverty. These investigations focused on broad developmental opportunities rather than the micro-level tasks of lesson preparation and delivery. Other scholarship has emphasised evidence-based instruction and teacher practices, yet such work often sidesteps socio-economic constraints and seldom provides empirical data linking poverty, parental involvement or cultural practices to instructional performance. Comparative research from Africa and North America further illustrates that insecurity, poverty and policies that relocate teachers to unfamiliar regions reduce job satisfaction and disrupt instruction. Collectively, this literature highlights the importance of context and suggests that mixed-methods, context-specific studies are needed to illuminate how socio-economic realities influence day-to-day teaching. The present study addresses this gap by triangulating survey data from teachers with interviews from principals in Ganze Sub-county, where persistent below-average performance on national examinations underscores the need for a nuanced analysis.

A key lens for interpreting these results is Instructional Leadership theory, which posits that school leaders influence teaching and learning by setting clear goals, supervising instruction and creating a supportive learning climate. According to models developed by scholars such as Hallinger and Murphy, effective principals communicate high expectations, monitor

student progress and provide professional development opportunities. In resource-constrained contexts like Ganze, instructional leadership includes advocating for resources and liaising with parents and community leaders to address socioeconomic barriers. The principals in this study emphasised the importance of parental education and involvement, mirroring the theory's emphasis on building a shared vision for learning. Teachers' emphasis on personal values and relationships with students further underscores the interpersonal dimension of instructional leadership: respect, fairness and empathy can motivate students to persist despite poverty and insecurity. Thus, strengthening instructional leadership practices may help mitigate the negative effects of socioeconomic factors on teachers' performance.

METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a mixed-methods descriptive survey design, which allowed the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data without manipulating variables. The study was conducted in Ganze Sub-county, Kilifi County, a semi-arid area inhabited by several ethnic groups and characterised by subsistence farming, fishing and casual employment. The target population comprised all 249 teachers and 21 principals of the 21 public secondary schools. All principals were included (census), while the teachers' sample was determined using Yamane's formula and increased by 10 per cent to account for non-responses, yielding a final sample of 170 teachers. Stratified and proportionate sampling determined the number of teachers selected from each school, and simple random sampling was used at the school level. The teachers' sample was 155 (91.2 % response rate) and the principals' interviews achieved a 95.2 per cent response rate. Data were collected using two instruments: a closed-ended teachers' questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide for principals. Ethical approval was obtained from Kabarak University Research Ethics Committee, and permits were acquired from the relevant authorities. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and consented voluntarily. Quantitative data were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). For the first objective, teachers' responses to each item were summarised using

frequencies and percentages. Responses were collapsed into a binary "agree" category (agree + strongly agree) to gauge perceived influence. Overall perception was classified as positive if a teacher agreed with the majority of the items, neutral if there was a tie, and negative if they disagreed with most items. Qualitative interview data from principals were transcribed and analysed thematically. Data collection occurred over a four-week period. The researchers visited each of the 21 schools and administered questionnaires to teachers in staffrooms under quiet conditions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic Factors that could Influence their Instructional Work

Teachers' capacity to carry out instructional activities in Ganze Sub-county was investigated in relation to socioeconomic factors. Low earnings have a detrimental impact on the morale and motivation of a large proportion of teachers, 87.6 per cent strongly agreed and agreed. Students' low performance is a direct result of the decreased quality of class planning and delivery caused by teachers' financial worries. Another aspect was students' cultural involvement; nearly half of the instructors, 43.9 per cent, strongly agreed and agreed they supported the fact that students' cultural activities get in the way of their academic time. Contact hours are reduced, and instructional consistency is disrupted.

The involvement of parents is equally important. The majority of educators, 60.4 per cent to be exact, strongly agreed and agreed that pupils' academic performance suffers when parents are not involved in their children's education. Also, a whopping 89.6 per cent of people took the survey strongly agreed and

agreed that community insecurity makes teaching harder because it makes people afraid to go to school. Teachers were also worried about parents' lack of education. The home-school link was weaker because these parents had trouble paying for their children's education, according to 62.3 per cent of respondents who strongly agreed and agreed. Those who were impacted by the need to juggle home duties with teaching reported a decrease in preparation time, even though only 28.4 per cent who strongly agreed and agreed felt that this had a direct impact on their work. Students from low-income homes frequently lack basic supplies, come to school hungry, or miss classes entirely, circumstances that significantly impact learning, according to 88.3 per cent of teachers who strongly agreed and agreed that poverty is a serious issue.

The results indicate that the percentage of teachers who agreed (strongly agreed and agreed combined) with the items ranged between 28.4 per cent and 89.6 per cent. Most of the respondents agreed that insecurity (89.6%) and poverty in students' homesteads (88.3%) impacted how they performed instructional tasks. Similarly, a majority (87.6%) of the respondents also agreed that low pay impacted the performance of instructional tasks. The results further show that a few respondents agreed that the performance of household chores (28.4%) and participating in church activities (29.8%) impacted how they performed instructional tasks. The percentage of teachers who agreed that involvement in cultural activities (43.9%) affected the performance of instructional tasks was also low. Generally, the findings show that the respondents associated most of the socioeconomic factors with the performance of instructional responsibilities.

Table 1: Socioeconomic Factors that could Influence their Instructional Work

Socioeconomic factor	Teachers agreeing that the factor impacts instructional tasks (%)
Low pay	87.6
Community insecurity	89.6
Poverty in students' families	88.3
Unhealthy student-teacher relationships	88.3
Teachers' values	66.5
Parents' education level	62.3
Participation in student affairs	63.2
Uncooperative parents	60.4
Language difference	53.2
Students' cultural activities	43.9
Church activities	29.8
Household chores	28.4

Discussion

These findings indicated that teachers were of the view that insecurity, poverty and low pay impacted the performance of instructional responsibilities. They support the findings of a study by Ngezack et al. (2024), which established that insecurity in Nigerian schools affected teachers' job performance. They attributed these findings to the fact that insecurity created a state of fear and made people feel threatened and afraid, making it impossible for them to concentrate on work. Ukpoju et al. (2025) also established that insecurity caused deaths, kidnappings, and displacement, thus undermining teachers' work performance. These results are in tandem with those of a study by Rahn (2022), which associated poverty with teachers' performance of professional responsibilities. The study noted that children living in poverty faced many challenges as they did not have access to basic learning materials. This forced teachers to modify their teaching methods in order to accommodate children living in poverty. The findings also concur with those of Ashrafa et al.

(2019), who found that attractive salary packages and allowances were among the correlates of work performance. Teachers who were paid well were satisfied with their jobs, more responsible and motivated and performed their professional responsibilities better.

Teachers' perceptions

Teachers' perceptions of the relationship between socioeconomic factors and performance of instructional tasks were determined through tallying. The responses of the teachers to the 12 items that were used to measure their perceptions were counted. If a respondent agreed with the majority of the items/their perception was categorised as positive, but was considered neutral if there was a tie between the agreed and disagreed. However, a teacher who disagreed with the majority of the items was considered to hold a negative perception. The perceptions of the sample were then summarised using percentages.

Table 2: Teachers' Perceptions on the Relationship between Socioeconomic Factors and Performance of Instructional Tasks (n = 155)

Perception	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	102	65.8
Neutral	16	10.3
Negative	37	23.9

The results in Table 2 reveal that the majority (65.8%) of the teachers perceived that socio-economic factors were related to the performance of instructional tasks. A few had negative (23.9%) and neutral (10.3%)

perceptions. These findings confirm that teachers' perceived socioeconomic factors are related to the performance of instructional tasks.

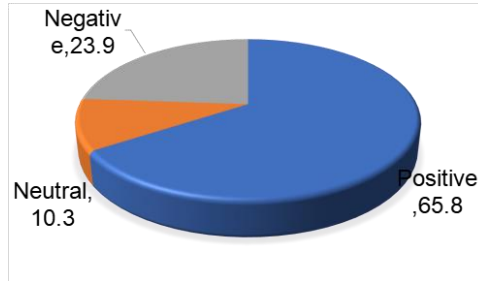


Figure 1: Principals' Views on the Relations between Socioeconomic Factors and Teachers' Performance of Instructional Tasks

The principals' perceptions on the relations between socioeconomic factors and teachers' performance of instructional tasks were also established using data generated by their interview schedule. All (100.0%) of them were of the opinion that socioeconomic factors

were related to teachers' performance of instructional tasks. The principals indicated the socioeconomic factors which they felt influenced teachers' performance of instructional tasks.

Table 3: Socioeconomic factors perceived by Principals to be related to teachers' performance of Instructional tasks (n = 20)

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Students' home background	9	45.0
Culture of students	13	65.0
Parents' involvement in their children's education	17	85.0
Insecurity	8	40.0
Parents' education level	15	75.0
Gender inequality among students	12	60.0
Poverty in students' families	19	95.0

Most of the principals were of the view that poverty in students' families (95.0%), parents' education level (85.0%) and involvement in their children's education (75.0%) were related to teachers' performance of professional tasks. The other factors perceived to be related to the performance of professional tasks were cultural practices (65%) and gender inequality among students (60.0%). Various reasons were advanced by

the principals why they felt socioeconomic factors were related to the performance of instructional tasks. The sentiment of interviewee 6 below explains why poverty was perceived to be a correlate of the performance of instructional tasks:

Many families are poor as they live in semi-arid regions where basic needs like food and water often take precedence over education. This affects students' school

attendance and how teachers plan for instruction and deliver content.

Interviewee 1 advanced the following reasons for associating parents' education level with performance of instructional tasks:

Educated parents understand the importance of education and typically provide better support for their children. This, in turn, makes it easier for teachers to focus on their work as instructors.

The sentiments expressed in the excerpt below were the justification given by interviewee 11 for linking parents' involvement in their children's education and performance of instructional tasks:

Parental involvement in their children's education motivates teachers, as it shows a shared commitment to the child's learning. This makes an instructor's work easier.

These results show that the principals, like the teachers, also felt that socioeconomic factors are related to teachers' performance of instructional tasks. Economic factors such as good pay motivate workers and enhance their job satisfaction and commitment, thus boosting their work performance. However, social issues such as insecurity and students' engagement in retrogressive cultural practices hinder teachers' performance of instructional tasks. Such issues create an environment of fear and tension, disrupts focus, teachers' preparation and lesson delivery, thus reducing their effectiveness.

Analysis of data provided by the teachers' questionnaires and principals' interview schedule revealed that they were of the view that socioeconomic factors are related to the performance of instructional tasks. These findings concur with those of a study in Indonesia by Kanya et al. (2021), which indicated that cultural practices of students were significant predictors of teachers' performance of instructional responsibilities. A study in Ethiopia by Tsegaye (2022) showed that the majority of teachers felt that the profession did not reward them adequately with regard to salaries, incentives and

fringe benefits like house allowance and health care, leading to feelings of dissatisfaction. The study concluded that these economic factors affected teachers' job satisfaction, morale, commitment and performance of instructional tasks.

These findings also support those of a study by Mururu (2022), which established that social factors like a conducive work environment, professional training and gender inequality significantly influenced teachers' job performance. These findings imply that improving socioeconomic conditions has the potential to enhance teachers' performance of instructional tasks. Education stakeholders should consider adopting strategies that boost teachers' and students' socioeconomic status, as this could go a long way in improving performance of instructional tasks and the realisation of set learning objectives in schools.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The study underscores that socioeconomic factors – particularly low pay, poverty, insecurity and parental disengagement – are perceived to significantly hinder teachers' performance of instructional tasks in Ganze Sub-county. It also reveals that personal values and relationships can either mitigate or exacerbate external pressures. Addressing these issues requires coordinated efforts by government, school leaders and communities to improve teachers' working conditions and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Recommendations: Policymakers should couple salary reforms with social interventions that reduce poverty and bolster parental education. In addition, school leaders must exercise instructional leadership by providing mentorship, fostering positive classroom relationships and advocating for resources. Finally, enhancing socioeconomic conditions will not only motivate teachers but also create a conducive environment for learning, ultimately improving educational outcomes and socioeconomic well-being in the region.

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