# The Influence of Teacher Transformational Leadership on Students' Academic Performance in Kirinyaga County Secondary Schools: A Qualitative Review

Jane Muriuki [1], Edward Nzinga, PhD [2], Jane Chiroma, PhD [3]

*[1,2,3](Department of Leadership, Pan Africa Christian University, Kenya)*

**Abstract:**

Academic performance at high school level is a crucial determinant of whether a student joins university or other tertiary colleges, thereby determining their future path and career progress. It is the scope of student-teacher achievement and the outcome of education goals in learning institutions. Yet despite various measures put in schools to enhance performance, many schools in Kenya continue to perform poorly academically. Prior empirical evidence suggests that transformational leadership can enhance school performance. However, the focus of past studies has almost exclusively been on the school principal while studies on how transformational leadership practices of a teacher relate to students' academic performance are sparse. This is problematic because the school teacher commands a comparatively larger share of interaction time with learners through classroom engagement. This scholarly neglect of the place of school teachers' transformational leadership practices in the students' academic performance equation can contribute to inadequate leadership policy interventions that target the classroom level. Utilizing qualitative methodology, the present study contributed to knowledge production by exploring transformational teacher practices in relation to students' academic performance within the context of Kirinyaga County schools. Thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with 8 teachers and 30 students yielded five salient themes: lack of a strong culture of role modelling in schools by teachers, creativity and innovation in the practice of teaching, individualized connectivity and communication, encouragement through simulation of real exam scenarios, and appreciation of student's efforts by the teacher. These themes represented the mechanism through which transformational leadership translate to students' academic performance of County schools in Kirinyaga. Conclusion was drawn that transformational leadership model is suitable for enhancing teaching staff's professionalism and quality teaching with positive implications on students' academic performance. Teacher transformational leadership training workshops are proposed to turn classrooms and schools into centers of academic excellence.
**Key Words:** Transformational Leadership, Academic Performance, Qualitative Review

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Date of Submission: 20-02-2022                                                                        Date of Acceptance: 05-03-2022
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## I. Introduction

Leadership in education has a vital role to play in ensuring the realization of the defined goals and objectives of education, while productivity is maximized through the effective utilization of available resources. Education is a transformative process in which the teacher plays a central role as reflected in the academic achievement of the learner. Transformational leadership has ubiquity as a theoretical lens through which this transformative process takes place. The concept of transformational leadership was advanced by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) who saw it as a useful framework for empowering and inspiring learners towards the achievement of higher academic outcomes. Transformative leadership is established through the utilization of different approaches, materializing in transformational leadership practices (TLP). Bass and Avolio (1994) say that transformational leadership helps to ensure constructive effects on both the individual and group level, along with positive individual and collective outcomes.

Teachers who adopt a transformational leadership style notice the needs and concerns of individual learners and influence their awareness of issues by giving them a new perspective, thus encouraging them to work much harder towards a desired goal (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Transformational teachers use expertise, vision, and knowledge to impart changes in the learner to the extent that it becomes a deeply embedded buy-in that last long after the their departure (Gelard et al., 2014).

In the 21st century, transformational teachers are perceived as symbols of high- performance due to their ability to offer learners the chance to develop, change, and transform their abilities (Kitur et al., 2020; Northouse, 2007; Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Gabbar et al. (2014) assert that transformational teachers nurture and foster growth in learners until they outperform the defined standards and goals and prepare them for future transformational roles. Findings in Pakistan's education sector reveal that transformational leadership is linked to to positive learner influence (Rehman & Waheed, 2012). Similarly, a quantitative study conducted by Chirchir et al. (2014) revealed that there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and students' engagement in Canada.

Chirchir et al. (2014) emphasizes that student involvement had psychological or physical implications measured by the level at which the learners perceived the school and the degree to which the learners participated in the school activities. Ayiro (2014) posits that the transformational leadership style projects characteristics such as an inspiring teacher who motivate learners beyond their self-interest; the teacher's ability to influence students and a strong sense of personal commitment to the desired objective; and self-confident and assertive leaders commonly perceived as unconventional.

In a study conducted in Australia, Silins and Mulford (2002) explored how schools' transformational leadership style influenced both the institutions and their development as learning organizations. They observed teachers' continuous and collaborative learning in higher-performing schools. The staff could put education to use in responding to the environmental and community needs. The findings of Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) show that transformational leadership practices in schools increase people's vision, boost their performance, and build personalities without limitations, consequently influencing followers both directly and indirectly.

Academic performance at high school level is a crucial determinant of whether a student joins university or other tertiary colleges, thereby determining their future path and career progress (Mugo et al., 2019). It is the scope of student- teacher achievement and the outcome of education goals in institutions (Yusuf & Adigun, 2010). Yet despite various measures put in schools to enhance performance, many schools in Kenya continue to perform poorly academically. The existing evidence suggests that transformational leadership can enhance school performance (Kitavi, 2017).

There exists a vast amount of empirical studies documenting the relationship TL and academic performance in schools in Kenya (Cheruse, 2021; Kilonzo et al., 2020; Kipngetich et al., 2017; Njeri, 2018; Musyoki et a., 2021; Kinyanjui & Orodho, 2014; Ibrahim et al., 2017). However, while there is consistent evidence from these studies that TL is positively linked to academic performance, the focus of the studies have almost exclusively been on the school principal. This is problematic because the school teacher commands a larger share of interaction with learners through classroom engagement than the school principle. This scholarly neglect of the place of school teachers' transformational leadership practices to students' academic performance can contribute to neglect of leadership policy interventions that target the classroom level.

One exception was a study done by Chemodo et al. (2014) who examined the effect of transformational leadership style on teacher efficiency in public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub County, Kenya and reported significant positive effects. However, studies on how transformational leadership practices of a teacher relate to students' academic performance are inadequate in Kenya. Furthermore, there is a predominant utilization of quantitative methodologies at the expense of qualitative approaches. The present study contribute to knowledge production by exploring transformational teacher practices in relation to students' academic performance within the context of Kirinyaga County schools.

## II. Literature Review

Theoretical literature dimensionalize transformational leadership into four facets: idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation (Bass 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006). The capacity to create a compelling vision and a common objective for the future, as well as instilling authority and confidence in his or her followers, are idealized leadership attributes (Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006). The authors observed that idealized leaders inspire and motivate their followers and talk optimistically about the future, thus influencing followers' achievements.

Kao et al. (2019) observes that transformational leaders use intellectual stimulation traits to encourage new ways of thinking and prompt different ways of solving problems in the followers' efforts to complete assignments. Similarly, teachers who exhibit individualized consideration spend most of their time coaching and teaching their followers, henceforth inculcating positive development (Kariuki et al., 2012).

Individualized consideration refers to the ability of a leader to coach, mentor, listen to, care for and attend to individual followers' concerns and needs (Tourish & Pinnington, 2002). The leaders' individualized consideration practices are displayed in their ability to identify different needs, abilities (talents), and aspirations (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Building on Bass (1985), Bolkan and Goodboy (2009) posit that transformational leadership practices create valuable and positive change in the individuals being led, transforming followers into leaders. Transformational leaders offer support, appreciate follower contributions, give empathy, and respect

each team's followers. Leaders also recognize that individual followers have personal goals and self-development objectives that fuel their intrinsic motivation towards completing tasks. Tourish and Pinnington (2002) affirm that TL generates a proper and encouraging atmosphere that is considerate of individual needs and differences (individualized influence), allowing student development and growth, and consequently better academic performance by learners.

The empirical literature on secondary school learners' academic performance demonstrates a link between the type and quality of leadership used by the stakeholders and the learner's academic achievement (Kitavi, 2019). Kitavi (2019) is of the opinion that the school leadership style influences learners' ability to acquire a culture of academic integrity.

Gupta and Gehlawat (2013) noted that learning institutions require a committed and effective leadership to ensure enhanced academic achievement. The authors stress that students may fail if teachers are not committed to offering quality and effective teaching. The empirical findings of Freeman and Fields (2020) point to teachers as key players who are vital in effective, positive transformation in student capital development. Teachers are obligated to enhance quality standards, which is only achievable through commitment and dedication and is reflected in students' academic performance in national examinations. According to Dockett et al. (2010), adequate preparation of students for quality higher education involves proper coordination of the available resources. Kearney states that giant academic schools are characterized by high levels of commitment in learning and teaching. This requires the cooperative effort of teachers and principals to improve students' academic performance.

Jannet and Modebelu (2013) findings indicate that high school teachers are expected to be disciplined, committed to duty, and groom well. They prompt students to decent behavior and receptiveness to moral values and high academic standards. The implication, therefore, is a direct connection between the academic achievement of students and teachers' commitment to their practice.

Transformational leadership has been found to encourage open communication with followers, which consecutively enhances student learning in the classroom (Gill et al., 2010). Owusu-Agyeman (2019) revealed that transformational leadership make schools flourish; individuals are confident that their voice matters, henceforth increasing learners' academic performance. Transformational leaders also endeavor to improve academic performance by fostering genuine collaboration between all stakeholders within the learning institutions. Transformational leadership promotes autonomy for all, thus empowering followers to become creative and innovative to solve problems confidently and with minimal supervision (Gill et al., 2010).

Spiel et al. (2014) looked at the content of private education programs for kids with ADHD. The goal of the study was to evaluate students' academic success and functional goals within the US Department of Education, highlighting both scope and context inadequacies. The study revealed that the individualized education program was essential for promoting academic achievement in learners with attention-deficit and hyperactivity disorder. It offered learner-specific approaches to academic performance. The current study aimed to explore individualized practices of a transformational teacher and the effect on students' academic performance in Kirinyaga County schools.

In Basin School, Jazan, Saudi Arabia, Ahmed (2015) investigated the effectiveness of implementing an individualized education plan (IEP) for students with learning difficulties. The data was collected from the 43 teachers who were chosen to participate in the study using a descriptive technique and five sets of questions. The investigation revealed that the IEP program improved academic performance by the learners compared to inclusive educational approaches. The research presented scope, contextual, and methodological gaps. The current study assessed a transformational individualized practice by teachers and its effects on the performance of learners in Kirinyaga County high schools. The researchers utilized data collection instruments, such as questionnaires and interviews. Dabone et al. (2015) investigated the role of guidance and counseling applied by teachers to foster academic performance in Ghanaian schools, focusing on one school in the Central Municipality of Ghana. The study used an experimental design, in which 20 students were picked for the experimental group and 20 others for the control. Data was collected through interview schedules and observations. According to the authors, guidance and counseling strategies inspired students to devote extra effort to their studies, which significantly influenced academic performance.

In Taung, South Africa, Quan-Baffour and Arko-Achemfuour (2014) studies, the role of school governing bodies in improving school performance in rural settings are explored. Participants were carefully recruited from three secondary schools in the region, and data was collected utilizing in-depth interviews, questionnaires, observation, and focus group discussions. The findings show that visionary leadership was essential for an effective outcome. Furthermore, the study focused on the role of school governing bodies in students' academic performance, thus generating a contextual gap, which the current study sought to address by exploring the effects of transformational teacher practices on students' academic performance in Kirinyaga County.

# III. Methodology

Qualitative methodology was used to achieve the objectives of the study. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 8 teachers and 30 students using semi-structured interview schedules. This was to allow participants room to give more information on the questions that they are comfortable with. Sample questions that guided interviews with teachers were: What does transformational leadership mean to you? What activities do you engage students in a classroom to ensure that all students are actively involved in your school? Do you face any challenges in your effort to ensure all students transit from one level to another in your school? What kind of assistance do you need to be an effective leader in classroom? What does transformational leadership mean to you? Do you think there is any relationship transformational leadership and students' academic performance? Are there skills that you require, to retain students in school, promote examination honesty, and successfully increase the student's grade scores? Similarly, sample questions to the students included: What does role model mean to you? What activities does your teacher give you in a classroom and outside classroom setting to ensure that all learners participate? What methods does your teacher use to teach learners with learning challenges? What ways does your teacher use to explain school goals, how to achieve school aims, and other moral values? The respondents engaged in answering the questions based on their life experience, which enabled the researcher to gain insight into the participant's situation and prompted a more in-depth response (Creswell, 2014).

The data was then analyzed using thematic techniques. According to Braun and Clarke (2006); thematic analysis relates to the identification, analysis and reporting of themes or patterns in the data. Unique codes were generated directly from the data using inductive codes. Coding is used to break down the qualitative data. It requires deciphering vast amounts of data by reducing the number of critical data, then distinguishing vast datasets, and ultimately establishing the importance of the information and compiling it into a logical chain of evidence (Orodho, 2016). Thematic analysis organizes data in a detailed manner and interprets a number of aspects of the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The descriptive codes were utilized in this study during the preliminary analysis phase, when the obtained data was first assessed. During this stage in the data analysis, words or phrases were used by the researcher to either describe or summarize section of the data. Then codes were then developed so that relevant and recurring themes that evolved could be developed to describe how teachers defined and understood transformational leadership. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide was implemented in this study as the foundation for conducting thematic analysis thus: familiarization with the data, creation of initial codes, theme search, theme review, theme definition and naming, and final report writing.

Data familiarization is concerned with focused reading and re-reading of the transcribed data while jotting down initial ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This entailed self-immersion in the data so as to commence identification of patterns and meaning. Transcripts were reviewed twice while note taking. Initial codes were then created in order to reduce the data by organizing the data into manageable chunks. The data was then evaluated and the codes were sorted in this phase so that potential themes could be identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It also served as a blueprint for theme creation and code placement. This was followed by refining the themes that were identified using a two-level analysis of the codes. The first level involved reading through the codes for each theme to determine if a coherent pattern was developing (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Nvivo 10 software was utilized as the software for analysis. Ethical protocols such as confidentiality, informed consent and anonymity were observed. Participants were anonymized by assigning them pseudonyms instead of real names so as to mask their identity (Heaton, 2021).

# IV. Results and Discussions

The research findings are summarized in Table 1. The table presents 5 latent themes and 4 categories resulting from the data. Also reported are the key words and emerging ideas that can facilitate an audit trail (Kleijin et al. 2018). The themes as per the table were: lack of a strong culture of role modelling in schools by teachers, creativity and innovation in the practice of teaching, individualized connectivity and communication, encouragement through simulation of real exam scenarios, and appreciation of student's efforts by the teacher.

*Table 1 Theme Table*

| Codes (Key words and emerging ideas) | Category | Latent themes |
|---|---|---|
| Teachers, parents, family members, leaders, celebrities; honest, trustworthy, understanding, caring, likable, admirable, helpful; sets an example of what she wants; marks exams within no time; finishes syllabus before due time; guides on the careers we should take; challenges one to become the best that one can be; accepts where he/she is wrong. | Idealized influence | Lack of a strong culture of role modelling in schools by teachers |
| Teaching interestingly; revising exams; giving remedial lessons to the | Inspirational | Creativity and |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| weak; using good examples in class, which we remember; using songs; using mother tongue at times; using videos on the subject; extra time teaching; some are uninteresting, so you hate subjects like some Science and Mathematics; showing how good results can make one successful in future; gives stories of people who were doing poorly but, on changing their attitude, they passed their form four exams; writing encouraging words in my exam papers when they mark; writing quotes on the exam papers and feeling good, but some write comments that make one feel bad, such as "you must wake up!" "Be serious." | motivation | innovation in the practice of teaching |
| Some call us by our names during lessons; some have nicknamed us with interesting names linked to our dream jobs when one answers; "You are on the right pathway;" some teachers don't know our names – they say "you and you;" some teachers know our different interests and even talents … like our class teacher, who ask about career, needs, remedial, challenging me to go beyond my doubts, my past success; encouraging students to help each other. | Individualized consideration | Individualized connectivity and communication |
| Asking questions and when one does not know answer, the teacher encourages them to just try; we do past KCSE exam questions and when we get them right, the teacher is very happy; showing students some examples and then giving similar questions for students to use in practice; they make us organize interclass competitions in subjects; there were even interschool competitions before COVID-19 came; always demanding for improvement in a good way; using positive words whenever there is even a small improvement; they give examples of former students who came with low KCPE marks but them worked hard and passed; involving us in discussing our personal problems; extra questions; by being allowed to do practical work alone in the laboratory; encouraging students to have courage to address whole school at parade; challenges/ competitions/ practical subjects/ videos, images-interclass. | Intellectual stimulation | Encouragement through simulation of real exam scenarios Appreciation of student's efforts by the teacher |

The data showed that most of the students did not have teachers as role models. It was observed that most students readily gave feedback without focusing on the school, strongly indicating a lack of a strong culture of role modeling experiences at school. This implies that there was low practice of idealized influence. Only a few student respondents readily mentioned teachers as their role models. Upon further probing on teachers' role modeling traits; the discussions brought out teachers' practices, such as being honest, trustworthy, understanding, caring and likable.

The students' perceptions and experiences were key to identifying which type of a teacher would become a role model from the perspective of teacher-student relational practices. It captured a leader-follower relational theme that enhanced the student's perception and experience of a teacher being a role model. Further, as brought out in the discussions, particular teaching practices were perceived as fundamental by the students for a teacher to be a role model. These included immediate feedback on exam results, as captured by Student 2: "*The Chemistry teacher marks our exam papers within no time ... and returns the papers much earlier than others.*" This view was shared by other student respondents who noted that some teachers take too long to mark and return scripts to them.

Student 1, mentioned the following teaching practice: *"The Mathematics teacher is very committed ... he finishes the syllabus before due time."* This behavior of the teacher indicates the critical position of a teacher's pedagogical role in delivering idealized influence on the students.

Idealized practices that resonate positively with the preferences and experience of students have a desirable outcome on their learning experiences. The theme of creativity and innovation in teaching shows a change from classical teaching methods. This is in tandem with the empirical observations of the emerging need for change in teaching. Efforts are made at all levels of the education sector to improve student learning outcomes (Senge, 2013). Creativity and innovation in teaching then become a critical aspect in delivering inspirational motivation.

Results showed that students expressed their negative experiences from a lack of IM, characterized by what some one student described as follows: "*some (teachers) write quotes on the exam papers and you feel good.... but some write comments that make one feel bad such as "you must wake up!"*"(Student 3). A teacher's behavior that elicits positive feelings towards oneself is critical in motivating a student to become more committed to repeating good performance. A teacher who uses hostile and hurtful comments will make students develop negative perceptions about themselves, with the subsequent effects on their self-esteem affecting the students' commitment to learning. This negatively affects academic performance (Monda, 2012).

An emerging theme of individualized connectivity and communication was apparent from the data, a TLP that student respondents quickly identified. For example, in one of the student respondents remarked thus: "*when one answers and is wrong, the mathematics teachers will tell you 'Try again ...' 'you are on the right pathway' .... Some teachers know our different interests and even talents. Like our class teacher*" (Student 4). Idealized management practices make it possible for school teachers to model personal and professional ethical practices that can be emulated by students. Because teachers are professional role models, they do what they want students to emulate to promote group efficacy, resulting in school-community partnership learning (Ngipuo, 2015). As Ngipuo (2015) postulates, idealized influence as a practice makes it possible for teachers to get trust, respect, and commitment of all students to achieve high academic performance.

It was observed during the interviews that all the participants were cooperative. They generally were enthusiastic about their experiences at their institutions. They perceived the senior leadership at the institutions positively, particularly the principals. Non-verbal cues that were observed during the interviews were very positive. In many cases, participants were emotional when discussing their gratitude for and satisfaction with the school. Even in instances where participants had perceptions of a particular educator that were less than positive, there were no instances noted of negative communication. The non-verbal cues showed indications of negative emotions such as dissatisfaction.

Majority of the respondents were pleased with the mode of operation. This was expressed in their frequent use of positive adjectives such as; truthful, good, positive regard, and generally a good working environment. The overriding theme is that the participants were given a chance to exercise their innovativeness and their input was put into consideration.

A number of participants showed their appreciation of the fact that they were allowed to learn from their mistakes without being reprimanded. Majority of respondents felt that the organization provided opportunity for them to express their feelings about policies and procedures.

Majority of the respondents' who were teachers felt that they had job satisfaction and their supervisors were interested in their career progression, and they were encouraged to seek additional school roles. Avolio and Bass (1999) states that idealized influence involves leader's ability to trust, respect followers to be committed to do their best and to be role models to their followers. Some respondent's teachers were happy that their supervisors encouraged them to be more committed in their work which made them to disseminate their duties in a better way. Some students expressed satisfaction with the teacher's ability to role model, coach, and mentor them to learn new things on their own, for example doing assignments or solve problems independently.

Most of the teacher participants stated that their supervisors (principal) had the ability to bring out the best in them. Other respondents felt that principals involved them in establishing programs and policies suitable for the followers and organizations performance. Some members reported that supervisors were interested in finding out better ways of doing things from the members, and that the supervisors were accommodative of divergent views.

Inspirational motivation teacher's ability to create a vision, use relevant objects and learning aids to make teaching and learning interesting and enable students to feel that what they were learning matters (Avolio & Bass, 1999). The responding teachers felt that the school's vision and mission were clear and simple for all to understand and that students were urged to recite it in order to commit it to memory and own if. They emphasized that the school mission statement was displayed conspicuously in different forums in the school.

Most teacher respondents expressed the fact that the school mission and vision were shared by all and all members were actively involved in their effort to accomplish institutional objectives in line with the school vision and mission. Actions, such as intellectual stimulation, are another aspect of transformational leadership. A leader's capacity to motivate people to come up with innovative ways of solving issues or completing projects is known as intellectual stimulation (Avolio & Bass, 1999). Intellectual stimulation refers to a leader's capacity to motivate followers to use their creativity to solve issues and complete tasks. Similarly, the teacher participants were pleased by the fact the supervisors provided them with an opportunity to exercise their innovativeness, in the process they were able to take risks without fear of being penalized. However, majority of the respondents felt that the school management was open to new ideas and opinions.

A number of responding teachers felt that their institutions did not provide opportunities for application of new ideas and views of the members. While a large number of respondents said that their supervisors allowed them to question policies and procedures, some of the participants had a different report that their supervisors did not accommodate divergent views of members.

## V. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study set out to address the scholarly neglect of the place of school teachers' transformational leadership practices in the students' academic performance equation by utilizing qualitative approaches to explore the mechanisms through which transformational teacher practices lead to students' academic performance. The study context was Kirinyaga County schools. The study has established three central ideas

linked to the student performance outcomes: developing a high-performance culture, creating and maintaining relationships, and; creating a shared belief system. Through different teacher practices and behaviors, teachers manifest and implement transformative leadership, which as a result influences the students' academic performance in Kirinyaga county schools.

The mechanism through which transformational leadership style contributed to academic performance was by building trust, motivating students, and ensuring facilitation and communication. Trust building is a key feature of idealized influence dimension of transformational leadership. There was however low practice of role-modelling in comparison to other features of transformational leadership. Increasing transformational leadership practices among teachers and the school leadership will result in enhanced student performance.

Intellectual motivation manifested in diverse ways such as engagement in question and answer sessions, interactive discussions, interclass and interschool competitions, positive challenge, celebrating academic and performance improvements. Teachers also demonstrated this dimension of transformational leadership by assigning students practical work and initiative creative avenues for the development of students' self-confidence.

Individualized connectivity and communication were salient themes. This manifested in showing interest in the students, recognizing their presence, and challenging them to overcome their fears. This implies that learners had experienced such teacher behavior in diverse areas of teacher-student interactions, suggesting that the teachers practiced individualized consideration. However, some teachers took too long to mark and return scripts to them. The transformational leadership traits of teachers indicate the critical pedagogical role of a teacher in having an idealized influence on the students. A teacher's behavior that elicits positive feelings is critical in motivating a student to become more committed to good academic performance.

Transformational leadership may make a difference in student performance outcomes within a school setting. The teachers' behavior affected student academic performance both indirectly and directly. Transformational leadership practices of teachers determine classroom conditions. There was a direct influence of transformational leadership on student engagement and student achievement.

The emphasis on the transformational leadership model as vital pedagogical approach may contribute to organizational performance. Consequently, this may call for further investigation of other teacher practices in other levels of education not only in county schools that may inform students' academic performance apart from the four I'S of transformational leadership. The styles may have components such as moral, participative, and professional dimensions of leadership not just transformational leadership practices as stipulated by (Currie & Lockett, 2007).

Due to students' academic success, teachers were more satisfied with their jobs and assignments. Transformational leaders may encourage their teams to be imaginative and creative by challenging assumptions, reframing obstacles, and tackling old situations in new ways. Intellectual stimulation encourages students to believe in their own potential. There were traits exhibited by teachers that made them perform better academically such as: asking questions and when one does not know the answer, the teacher encourages them to try; the teacher is delighted when they perform well in exams; showing students some examples and then giving similar questions for students to use in practice; using positive words whenever there is even a small improvement; they give examples of former students who came with low KCPE marks, but they worked hard and passed, and involving them in discussing their personal problems.

While all four transformational leadership components (Idealized Influence, Individual consideration, inspirational motivation, and Intellectual Stimulation) influenced KCSE performance positively significantly, they were not practiced enough to improve academic performance in the KCSE exams. This may explain why most county secondary schools in Kirinyaga performed poorly on standard examinations.

Effective school teachers are required in order for students' academic performance in schools to be elevated to higher levels. Secondary school teachers should adopt transformational leadership practices, which may be associated with students' and institutions' academic performance and its potential to transform county secondary schools into centers of educational excellence. The four transformational leadership approaches (idealized influence, individual consideration, inspiring motivation, and intellectual stimulation) hold a great promise for improved students 'performance (smooth transition and examination integrity).

This study has contributed to the understanding of the mechanism through which transformational leadership practices reflect on students' academic performance of county schools in Kirinyaga. Using qualitative approaches, the study has expounded on the manifestations of the four transformational leadership practices (intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, idealized influence and individualized consideration) that underpin students' academic performance in county schools.

This study highlights the importance of a transformational leadership model that emphasizes quality and inclusiveness in learning and teaching. The transformational leadership practices of a teacher were observed to be a path through which teachers had the most significant influence on students' academic performance in county schools in Kirinyaga, Kenya. As a result, the study recommends adoption of an inclusive and developmental pedagogical approach. Transformational leadership model is suitable for improvement of

teaching staff's professionalism and quality teaching that translate to students' academic performance. Therefore, transformational leadership training workshops are proposed to turn schools and classrooms into centers of academic excellence.

While this study has revealed the various nuances that underpin the relationship between teacher transformational leadership and academic performance, there are acknowledgeable gaps that create opportunities for further scholarly advancements. One study that can be carried out in future is the interaction between principal transformational leadership and teacher transformative practices and the implications on students' academic performance. Further, investigation of parental involvement factor and the role played by transformational leadership in the same may lead to the development of a full mediation-moderation path of transformational leadership to academic performance in the entire school ecosystem.

The present study was geographically limited to the experience in Kirinyaga County schools. Therefore, the study may be replicated in other counties to determine whether are underlying contextual differences that need to be taken into account. For example, would similar results be obtained in high cost secondary schools in the same way as low cost secondary schools? What about teacher transformational leadership in private schools versus public schools? Comparative studies that attempt to answer these questions are needed to put research findings into perspective.

## References

[1].    Ahmed, M. A. (2015). The role of self-esteem and optimism in job satisfaction among teachers of private universities in Bangladesh. *Asian Business Review, 1*(2), 114–120.
[2].    Avolio, B., Walumbwa, F., Weber, T. J., (2009). Leadership: Current theories, research, and future directions. *University of Nebraska.* https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1036&context=managementfacpub
[3].    Ayiro, L. P. (2014). Transformational leadership and school outcomes in Kenya: Does emotional intelligence matter? *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education, 1*(1). Retrieved from http://preserve.lehigh.edu/fire/vol1/iss1/4
[4].    Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New York: Free Press.
[5].    Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1994). Transformational leadership and organizational culture. *The International Journal of Public Administration, 17*(3–4), 541–554.
[6].    Bass, B. M., & Bass, R. (2008). *Handbook of leadership theory, research, and application*. New York: Free Press.
*[7].*    Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational leadership*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
[8].    Bolkan, S., & Goodboy, A. K. (2009). Transformational leadership in the classroom: Fostering student learning, student participation, and teacher credibility. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 36*(4), 296–306.
[9].    Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*, 77–101.
[10].   Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.
[11].   Chemobo, D. C., Kimani, C., Musiega, D. & Willy, A. M. (2014). The effect of transformational leadership style on teacher efficiency in public secondary schools in Kakamega Central Sub County, Kenya. *The International Journal of Business & Management, 2*(5), 14-23.
[12].   Cheruse, J. K. (2021). *Relationship between head teacher's transformational leadership competencies and learners' academic performance in primary schools in Kericho County, Kenya*. (Unpublished Thesis). University of Kabianga.
[13].   Chirchir, R. K., Kemboi, A., Kirui, W., & Ngeno, V. (2014). Leadership style and teachers commitment in public primary schools in Bomet County, Kenya. *Leadership, 5*(39), 175–183.
[14].   Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
[15].   Currie, G., & Lockett, A. (2007). A critique of transformational leadership: Moral, professional and contingent dimensions of leadership with public services organizations. *Human Relationships, 60*(2), 341–370.
[16].   Dabone, K. T., Graham, Y. A., Fabea, I. B., & Dabone, A. S. (2015). The perception and reasons of examination malpractice among students. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development, 4*(4), 145–148.
[17].   De Kleijn, R. & Van Leeuwen, A. (2018). Reflections and review on the audit procedure: Guidelines for more transparency. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 17*, 1–8.

[18]. Dockett, S., Perry, B., & Kearney, E. (2012). Family transitions as children start school. *Family Matters, 90*, 57–67.

[19]. Freeman, G. T., & Fields, D. (2020). School leadership in an urban context: Complicating notions of effective principal leadership, organizational setting, and teacher commitment to students. *International Journal of Leadership in Education,* 1–21.

[20]. Gabbar, H. A., Honarmand, N., & Abdelsalam, A. A. (2014). Transformational leadership and its impact on governance and development in African nations: Analytical approach. *Journal of Entrepreneurship & Organization Management, 3*(2), 1–12.

[21]. Gelard, P., Boroumand, Z., & Mohammadi, A. (2014). Relationship between transformational leadership and knowledge management. *International Journal of Information Science and Management (IJISM), 12*(2), 67–82.

[22]. Gill, A., Tibrewala, R., Poczter, A., Biger, N., Mand, H. S., Sharma, S. P., & Dhande, K. S. (2010). Effects of transformational leadership on student educational satisfaction and student stress. *The Open Education Journal, 3*, 1–10.

[23]. Gupta, M., & Gehlawat, M., (2013). A study of the correlates of organizational commitment among secondary school teachers. *Issues and Ideas in Education, 1*(1), 59–71. doi:10.15415/iie.2013.11005

[24]. Heaton, J. (2021). Pseudonyms are used throughout: A footnote, unpacked. *Sage Journals,* 28(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004211048379

[25]. Ibrahim, A., Wan Mokhtar, W. A., Ali, S. & Simin, M. H. A. (2017). Effect of transformational principal leadership style on teachers commitments and school achievement. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 7*(5), 495-504.

[26]. Jannet, A. O., & Modebelu, M. N. (2013). Academic staff challenges to effective utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching/learning of agricultural education. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, 2*(7), 77–77.

[27]. Kao, S. F., Tsai, C. Y., Schinke, R., & Watson, J. C. (2019). A cross-level moderating effect of team trust on the relationship between transformational leadership and cohesion. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 37*(24), 2844–2852.

[28]. Kariuki, M. Z., Majau, M. J., Mungiria, M. G., & Nkonge, R. G. (2012). Challenges faced by deputy head teachers' in secondary school administration and the strategies they use to tackle them in Imenti South District, Kenya. *International Journal of Educational Planning & Administration, 2*(1), 45–53.

[29]. Kilonzo, J. M., Kasivu, G. M., & Mulwa, D. M. (2020). Principals' transformative leadership practice of setting institutional direction as a determinant of students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Machakos County, Kenya. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 4*(7), 204-209.

[30]. Kinyanjui, G. N. & Orodho, J. A. (2014). Influence of headteachers' leadership styles on pupils' performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education Examination in Dagoreti District, Kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice, 5*(18), 64-70).

[31]. Kipngetich, S. N., Sammy, C., & Gordon, T. (2017). Head teachers' transformational leadership intervention strategies on class repetition in primary school education in Kenya. *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2*(5), 348-356.

[32]. Kitavi, E. N. (2019). *Influence schools of Njoro sub county, Nakuru County, Kenya of management of laboratory facilities on students' physics achievement in secondary* (Doctoral dissertation). Egerton University.

[33]. Kitur, K., Choge, J., & Tanui, E. (2020). Relationship between principals' transformational leadership style and secondary school students' academic performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Bomet County, Kenya. *Universal Journal of Educational Research, 8*(2), 402–409.

[34]. Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2006). Transformational school leadership for large-scale reform: Effects on students, teachers, and their classroom practices. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 17*(2), 201–227.

[35]. Monda, T. M. (2012). *Influence of teaching and learning materials on children performance in pre-schools in Borabu district, Nyamira County, Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Nairobi, Kenya.

[36]. Mugo, D. P., Ogeno, D. J., & Maina, M. M. (2019). The status of adult education programme in Yatta Sub-County of Machakos County Kenya. *International Journal of Academic Research, 1*(4), 15–35.

[37]. Musyoki, J. M., Okoth, U., Kalai, J., & Okumbe, J. (2021). Influence of principals' intellectual stimulation on students' performance at Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Public Secondary Schools, Kenya. *The Journal of Quality in Education, 11*(18), 29-148.

[38]. Ngipuo, B. (2015). *Influence of headteacher's instructional supervision practices on pupils' performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary (KCPE) in Kakuma Refugee Camp Schools, Kenya* (M.Ed. thesis). University of Nairobi, Kenya.

[39]. Njeri, N. M. (2018). *Relationship Between Headteachers' Leadership Styles and Academic Performance In Public Secondary Schools In Kilifi County*. (Unpublished Thesis). Pwani University.

[40]. Northouse, P. G. (2007). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

[41]. Odumeru, J. A., & Ogbonna, I. G. (2013). Transformational vs. transactional leadership theories: Evidence in literature. *International Review of Management and Business Research, 2*(2), 355–361.

[42]. Orodho, J. A. (2016). *Quantitative data management: A step by step guide to data analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows Computer Program*. Nairobi: Kanezja Happy Land Enterprises.

[43]. Owusu-Agyeman, Y. (2019). Transformational leadership and innovation in higher education: A participative process approach. *International Journal of Leadership in Education,* 1–23.

[44]. Quan-Baffour, K. P., & Arko-Achemfuor, A. (2014). Training school governing body members in three rural schools in Taung: Empowerment for good governance. *Studies of Tribes and Tribals, 12*(1), 171–178.

[45]. Rehman, R. R., & Waheed, A. (2012). Transformational leadership style as predictor of a decision-making styles: Moderating role of emotional intelligence. *Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences (PJCSS), 6*(2), 257–268.

[46]. Senge, P. M. (2013). *The fifth discipline. The art and practice of the learning organization*. London: Random House Publishers.

[47]. Silins, H., & Mulford, B. (2002). Leadership and school results. In *Second international handbook of educational leadership and administration* (pp. 561–612). Dordrecht: Springer.

[48]. Spiel, C. F., Evans, S. W., & Langberg, J. M. (2014). Evaluating the content of Individualized Education Programs and 504 Plans of young adolescents with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. *School Psychology Quarterly, 29*(4), 452–468.

[49]. Tourish, T., & Pinnington, A. (2002). Transformational leadership, corporate cultism and the spirituality paradigm: An unholy trinity in the workplace? *Human Relations, 55*(2), 147–172.

[50]. Yusuf, M. A., & Adigun, J. T. (2010). The influence of school sex, location and type on students' academic performance. *International Journal of Educational Sciences, 2*(2), 81–85.