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## **Teachers' Perception on Head Teacher's Leadership Style and School Academic Performance in Kilifi County, Kenya**

By

M. N. Ndung'u, W. S. Murage and N. J. Kisaka

### **Abstract**

The role of head teacher is to provide leadership that inspires and motivates teachers to achieve high academic performance of students. The purpose of this study was to establish the perception of teachers on head teacher's leadership style and school academic performance. The study was carried out in Kilifi County. The study was guided by the following objective; to establish the teachers' perception on head teachers' leadership style and school academic performance in Kilifi County. The study was guided by Theory X and Y which were proposed by Douglass Macgregor, an American social psychologist. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The target population comprised of teachers. The sample size included nine hundred and six teachers. The data was elicited by use of questionnaires. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the quantitative data after which findings were presented in frequency tables and pie charts. Qualitative data was analyzed through content analysis. The study revealed that teachers' perception on head teacher's leadership styles in public secondary schools in Kilifi County influence school academic performance. The study revealed that the head teachers of public secondary schools in Kilifi County mostly use democratic leadership traits in their management of schools. The study recommended that the head teachers should improve their leadership styles. Head teachers should practise more of democratic leadership since it enhances general performance of staff and students' academic performance. Head teachers and other school administrative stakeholders should learn to take their teachers' views into consideration since this affects the academic performance of the students.

**Key words:** Perception, Leadership style, Academic performance.

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### **Introduction**

Leadership is the ability to assimilate and translate ideas, rules, regulations and procedures to guide subjects in carrying out a mission within a defined mandate (Achieng, 2000). Good leadership provides necessary guidance, clarity of direction and rewards for effective performance of an organization. Okumbe (2001) pointed out that, in any organization human resources are the most important resources it has and therefore, the success of any organization depends entirely on how effectively its workers are managed.

The style of leadership used in any organization is very important because the success of the organization depends on how effectively its workers are managed (Tetty-Enyo, 1997). This means that continuous effort is needed to achieve integration where all the members are involved and work together with a sense of common purpose of achieving the organization's goals (Okumbe, 2001). The academic achievement of many educational institutions is influenced by the leadership styles of administration and management team (Tetty-Enyo, 1997).

In emphasizing the leadership styles, Fuller (2007) noted that management practices can vary enormously at times and that head teachers' employ a variety of means in supervising the staff and motivating teachers to improve their practices. In relation that successful head teachers use appropriate leadership styles in their administration process. They create and promote a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning. For instance they have good communication with teachers as well as delegate duties at school (UNESCO, 2006).

Omolayo (2009) identified different styles of leadership which can be used to describe head teachers. They include: autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire. An autocratic leader defines his/her goals and facilitates group movement toward them. This type of head teacher decides everything and tries to manipulate the teachers into approving his/her ideas on how the school should function. Therefore, an autocratic leader does not trust anybody. A democratic head teacher helps the members of his/her staff define their own goals and facilitates action towards these goals. Democratic leadership can improve group efficiency and improved production and also follows member participation in defining specific production goals. The Laissez-faire leader allows the employees to make the decisions. In addition, Omolayo explains that the laissez-faire leader tends to avoid power and authority. Ingram (2009) identified the transformational leadership style which focuses on team building, motivation and collaboration with employees at different levels of an organisation to accomplish change for the better.

Several incidents in Kenya have been reported in the media whereby head teachers of secondary schools have been chased from their stations of work by angry parents and students due to poor academic performance. For example, students from Nyaisa secondary school claimed that the school had been doing poorly in national examinations because its management had not addressed the problem of shortage of teachers (Kenya Times, May 19, 2009). In another incident, angry parents locked out a secondary school head teacher in one of the schools in Nyamira District for allegedly running down the institution. In another

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school in the same district on the same newspaper, parents locked the administration block and removed their children from classes, accusing the head teacher of absenteeism and posting poor performance since he was posted to that school.

In Tiriki West Division the head teacher's leadership style was identified as very important for the teaching staff to be motivated and enhance better job performance. Such staff motivation is through provision of better housing at subsidized rates, provision of meals such as breakfast, lunch and supper through the generous sponsorship of parents' teachers' association. Such motivation activities made teachers teach extra lessons and gave personal attention to the students. Teachers were also satisfied by being given gifts and presents which included household goods and certificates of merit (Kageha, 2007). In Kilifi County, fifteen teachers staged a demonstration at Kakoneni Girls Secondary school (Malindi, Kilifi County) protesting against the leadership style of their head teacher (The Star, September 23, 2011). They claimed the head teacher had refused to cooperate with teachers. Failure of the school to perform well in examinations also meant the head teacher had failed as well (Mworia (1993).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to establish the perception of teachers on head teacher's leadership style and school academic performance.

### **Objectives of the study**

The study was guided by the following objective: - To establish the perception of teachers on head teacher's leadership style and school academic performance.

### **Research Question**

What is the perception of teachers on head teacher's leadership style and school academic performance?

### **Methodology**

This was an exploratory study that used a descriptive survey. Purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) was used to select the schools depending on duration of existence from each category of schools. Eighteen out of a hundred and one sub-county schools, four out of seventeen county schools and the two national schools which had existed for at least seven years were chosen for the study since they had existed long enough to have a good track record of the academic performance in national examination. Eighty three sub county schools and thirteen county schools were not selected to participate in the study. However, there were only two national schools in Kilifi County and both of them were involved in the study. The schools from each category were further classified into three types, that is, girls only, boys only and mixed schools. In the category of sub-county schools, six schools were girls only, six boys' only schools and six mixed schools which were selected using simple random sampling. In the category of county schools simple random sampling was used to select two pure girls' schools, two pure boys' schools. In the category of national schools, one was a girls' school and another one was a boy's school. There were no mixed schools in the national and county schools' categories since they didn't exist in the in Kilifi County.

All the head teachers of sampled schools were selected to participate in the study. Teachers were selected purposively depending on the period they had stayed in that school. Four teachers who had stayed for at least four years in that particular school were given

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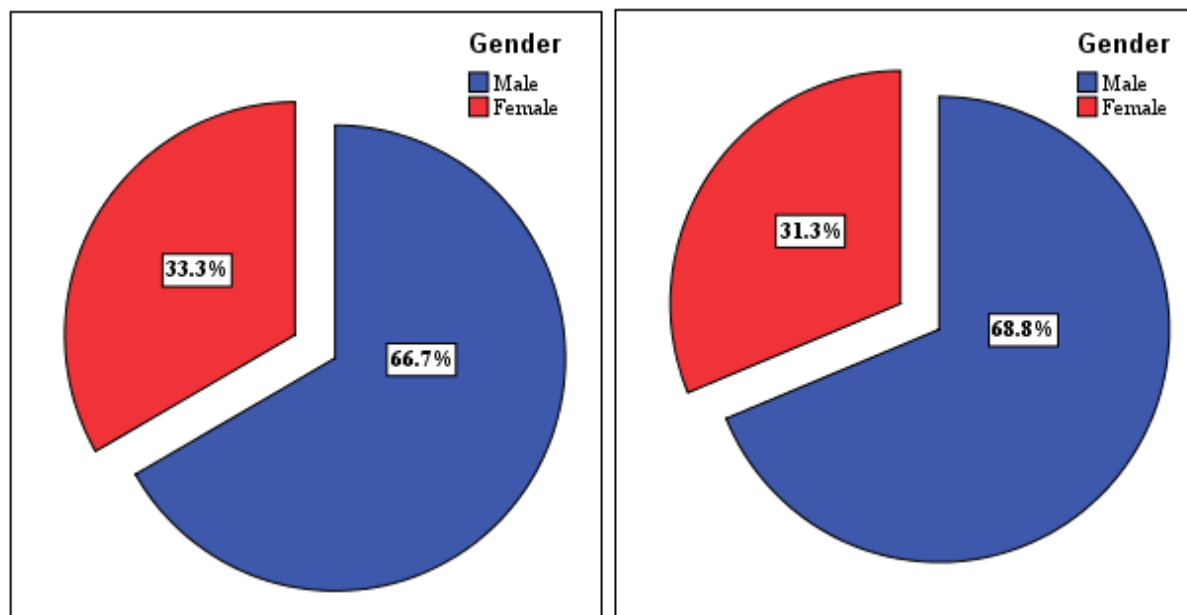
priority because they were aware of the leadership style used by the head teacher. In the sampled twenty-four schools, ninety-six teachers were selected. Therefore 96 teachers were selected using purposive sampling. A questionnaire was used in collecting data for this study. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the quantitative data after which findings were presented in frequency tables and graphs. Descriptive statistics enabled the researcher to meaningfully describe a distribution of scores or measurements using a few indices or statistics (Kothari, 2016). Qualitative data was analyzed through content analysis.

## Results

Teachers' demographic information showed that 31.3% were female and 68.8% were male. Majority of the teachers 76 % of 906 of them were B.Ed. holders, 17.7 % were diploma holders and only 6.3% had postgraduate qualification. The findings further reveal that only 14.6% of the teachers had less than one year of teaching experience suggesting that number of teachers had been employed recently by the government. (65.6 % of the teachers had more than 2-5 years of experience and 19.8% had 6-10 years' experience.

### Gender of the head teachers and teachers

The study sought to determine the gender of the respondents. The researcher included the gender of the respondents in order to establish the magnitude to which each of the sexes influences leadership and school academic performance. In order to establish the gender of the respondents, they were asked to indicate their gender and their responses are presented in figure 1a and 1b.



**Figure 1a: pie chart showing gender of head teachers, Figure 1b: pie chart showing gender of teacher.**

The results above also illustrate that majority of the head teachers were male (66.7%) while (33.3 %) were female. This shows gender imbalance in appointment to leadership positions suggesting that public secondary school leadership is male dominated in the County. Though the finding shows more male teachers, the overall result shows that there is a third rule balance for gender.

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### **Academic qualification of head teachers and teachers**

The findings below established the highest professional qualifications of the respondents. This illustrated in the Table 1 below:

**Table 1. Academic qualifications of the respondents**

Academic level	Head teacher		Teacher	
	F	Percent	F	Percent
Diploma			17	17.7
BA/BSc. With PGDE	3	12.5		
B.Ed.	19	79.2	73	76
Masters	2	8.3	6	6.3

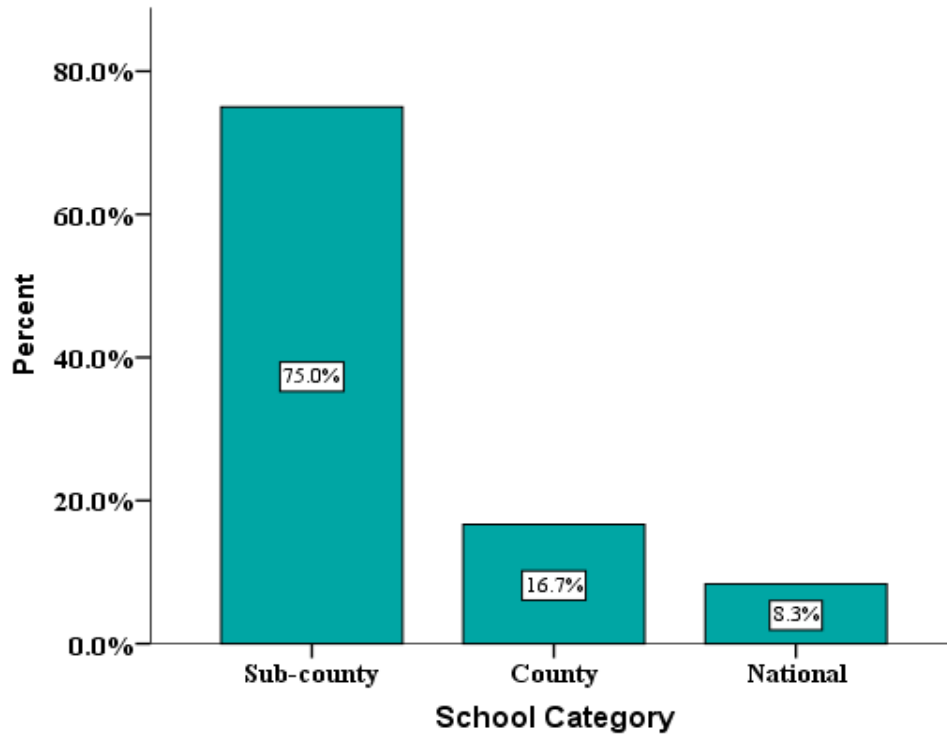
### **Source; Author, 2018**

Data analysis revealed varied qualifications for head teachers and teachers. Majority of the head teachers as presented above indicated that 79.2 % of 24 of them were B.Ed. holders, 12.5 % were university degree holders with PGDE and only 8.3% had postgraduate qualification. These results imply that majority of the head teachers had basic professional qualifications desirable for secondary school teaching and should be encouraged to further their studies to enrich their professionalism, competence and acquire new approaches and skills pertaining to new educational trends in the country. On the other hand, teachers in the county are also highly academically qualified and this is an indication that the respondents were well trained and educated as teachers and would therefore be expected to contribute to good academic performance since they were well equipped with the knowledge they need to perform their duties effectively and efficiently.

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### Category of Schools in the Study

The study found information from the head teachers about the type of schools in the County. Their responses are presented in figure 2 below.



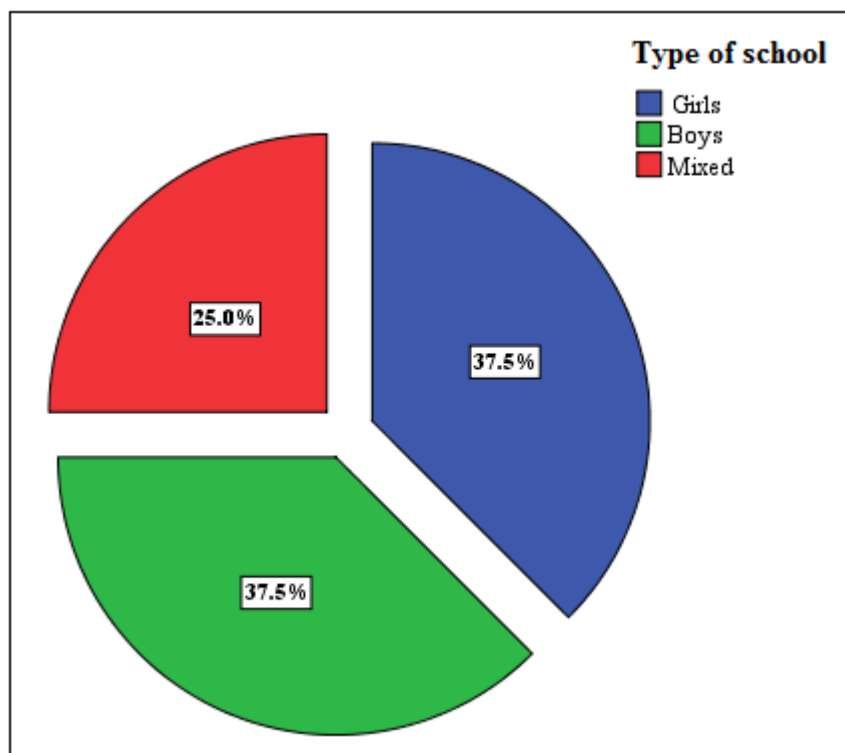
**Figure 2 Categories of schools**

Data analysis in figure 2 showed that (75.0%), (16.7%) and (8.3%) of the schools were Sub-county, County and National respectively. Thus, the results could imply that head teachers applied different leadership styles as per the category of schools and to some extent influence the academic performance especially Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE).

### Type of school

Concerning the type of school, the study established from the head teachers and teachers and findings are as indicated in figure 3 below.

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**Figure 3 Type of public secondary schools in the study**

The findings in figure 3 indicated that (37.5%), (37.5%) and (25.0%) of the schools involved in the study were boys, girls and mixed public secondary schools respectively. The findings therefore imply that majority of the schools in the County are same sex, that is, either boys or girls only, but there are also few mixed schools. This could have influence on the type of head teachers' leadership style and academic performance as reflected in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) performance.

**Years of experience of head teachers and teachers**

The data sought from head teachers and teachers concerning their years of serving in their current capacities. The results of the data analysis are presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Years of experience of head teachers and teachers**

Length of service in the school in years	Head teacher		Teachers	
	F	Percent	F	Percent
<1 year	-	-	14	14.6
2-5years	10	41.7	63	65.6
6-10 years	14	58.3	19	19.8

**Source: Author, 2018**

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The findings indicated in Table .2 showed head teachers who taught for 2-5 years were (41.7 %) while those who taught for between 6-10 years were (58.3 %). This is an indication that a significant number of head teachers had headed schools for a considerable period of time implying that they clearly understood issues pertaining to institutional leadership and in a position to articulate the issues affecting academic performance. The findings further reveal that only 14.6% of the teachers had less than one year of teaching experience suggesting that number of teachers had been employed recently by the government. Cumulatively (85.4 %) of the teachers had more than one year experience. This was an indication that majority of teachers had served for a considerable period of time and their vast knowledge could be relied upon in this study.

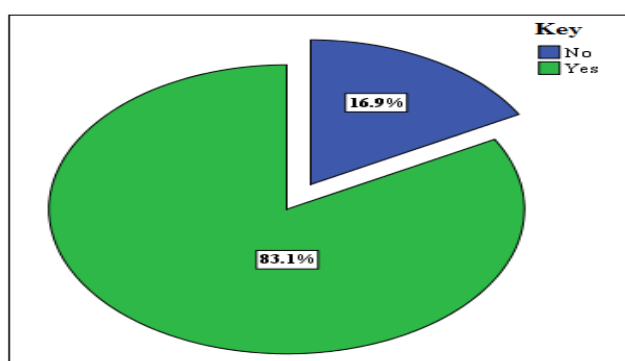
The study identified mainly two types of leadership styles. These were democratic and dictatorial. These findings can be illustrated from the responses of teachers as shown in **Table 3** below:**Table 3. Distribution of subjects on the leadership styles used in the schools according to teachers.**

	Frequency	Percent
Democratic	17	70.8
Dictatorship	7	29.2
Total	24	100.0

**Source:** Author, 2018

The results above shows the leadership styles that are employed by the head teachers. Majority of the head teachers (70.8%) use democratic while (29.2%) use autocratic. However, schools that were under head teachers who use democratic type of leadership posted a better performance than schools that were under head teachers who preferred dictatorship style of leadership.

The figure 4 below reveal that (83.1%) of the teachers said that there was a relationship between leadership styles and performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) while only (16.9%) of the teachers indicated that there was no relationship. This perception can be represented in the form of a pie chart of figure 4 below:



**Figure 4 Relationship between leadership styles and academic performance**

The findings concur with Kimacia (2007) who observes that there is a significant relationship between leadership styles and students' performance in national examinations and notes that head teachers who practice democratic leadership style had higher performance output than



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head teachers who practice autocratic leadership style. Huka (2003) contradicts these findings by noting that head teachers who are rated most democratic had the lowest mean score while autocratic head teachers had higher mean score. Research done by Kasimbu (2003) and Orodho (2004) also found that authoritative leadership style had significant effect on students achievement compared to democratic leadership. On the same note, the study sought to find out the contributing factor(s) from the teacher respondents by choosing the appropriate factor that contributed to the relationship and the results are as represented in **Table 4** ;

**Table 4. Responses from teachers on factors contributing to relationship between leadership styles and performance in KCSE**

<b>Factors teachers responded to</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Head teacher motivates teachers	27.90%
They create conducive environment	32.80%
They are role models	22.90%
They source equipment, teaching staff and other essential facilities	16.40%

**Source; Author, 2018**

The study found out that (32.8%) and (27.9%) of the teachers indicated that there being relationship between head teacher's leadership style and performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) was because head teachers create conducive environment and motivate teachers respectively. In addition, (22.9%) and (16.4%) of the teacher respondents indicated that it was because the head teachers act as role models and that they source equipment, teaching staff and other essential facilities.

The study therefore concluded that according to teachers, the head teacher's leadership styles in school administration practice influence performance outcomes in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) in public secondary schools in Kilifi County. This observation is also supported by Kasimbu's (2003) study which found out that there was a significant relationship between head teachers' leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction. Furthermore, Harris (2006) found that teachers, whose levels of job satisfaction are high, perform better in school and achieve high academic performance.

On problems head teachers encounter in their school management practice in relation to performance in KCSE, the head teachers were asked to indicate appropriate problems which are shown in Table 5 below: Their responses were analysed and findings tabulated as follows:

**Table 5: Managerial problems encountered by head teachers**

<b>Problem encounters as head teacher</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Inadequate facilities	18.30%
Inadequate staff	21.10%
Poor disbursements of F.D.S.F	14.70%
Uncooperative parents, guardians and teachers	14.70%
Absenteeism both students and teachers	15.60%

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Undisciplined students

15.60%

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**Source: Author, 2014**

The findings showed that mainly head teachers encounter the problem of inadequate staff (21.10%) and inadequate facilities (18.30%). Other problems included absenteeism by students and teachers (15.60%), undisciplined students (15.60%), Uncooperative parents, guardians and teachers (14.70%) and Poor disbursements of F.D.S.F (14.70). Therefore, based on these results, the study revealed that it is not only the head teachers' leadership styles that affect school academic performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) but also these revealed problems.

### **Solutions to problems encountered**

In order to find out solutions to the problems encountered by the head teachers, the latter were asked to suggest solutions. The following were the suggested solutions that could be put into place to mitigate these problems hence enhance performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). They include School funds to always be disbursed in time, government to provide adequate teachers and facilities, teacher's student ratio to be considered, parents to pay fee in good time to avoid sending students home for fees and government to take active part in building infrastructure in schools.

Thus inadequate facilities include classrooms, offices playfields and laboratories. There is need for good management by head teachers so that the school can attract donors and well-wishers, for example private individuals, religious groups and non-governmental organisations to help in providing school facilities. Good management would attract donors who would be assured of good utilization of facilities.

Inadequate staff can be attributed to poor management styles of the head teachers. For example autocratic leadership causes high turn-over of teachers who would move to other schools where their opinions and input would be heard and considered. Teachers prefer schools which value them and take their input seriously. The government through the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) should employ more and enough teachers.

Absenteeism of both teachers and students is also a managerial problem. Schools should be concerned about the school attendance of both teachers as well as students. The head teacher should know why a teacher or student does not attend school regularly. By so doing, the head teacher would then come up with effective ways of helping the teacher or student to avoid the bad habit.

Indiscipline of students (15.60%) need proper leadership to leave that habit. The democratic leader would then talk to the students and understand them. The steps taken by the management would then be the most suitable. This would include guidance and counselling. If suspensions are done, this would happen at the most appropriate time.

Uncooperative parents, guardians and teachers need to be sensitized about the importance of assisting head teachers in the management of schools. Parents, guardians and teachers should not overlook a student who is seen involved undisciplined cases. Such students should be reported to the school administration. Parents, guardians and teachers should also administer the appropriate punishment.

### **Summary of Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings**

The findings of the data analysis revealed that (83.1%) of the teachers indicated that there was relationship between leadership styles and performance in KCSE while only (16.9%) of the

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teachers indicated that there was no relationship. The study discovered that the contributing factor(s) were among others the head teachers create conducive environment and motivate teachers (32.8%) and (27.9%) respectively. Another factor was that the head teachers act as role models and that they source equipment, teaching staff and other essential facilities (22.9%) and (16.4%).

The findings revealed that majority of the head teachers mobilize and utilize the potential resources and creativity of members for accomplishing group goals. Also, the head teachers always let staff members know what is expected of them. Further data from the teachers supported these head teachers' data analysis findings. The teachers' findings revealed that the head teachers get staff approval on important matters before implementing them. It is worth noting that the study revealed that to some extent head teachers mixed democratic with autocratic style in the management of schools. In addition, it was observed that the head teachers occasionally look out for the personal welfare of members and does personal forum for staff members. Thus democratic leadership was more used by head teachers than other leadership styles. This in line with 70.8 percent of teachers who said that democratic leadership was used while 29.2 said that autocratic or doctorial leadership was used in secondary schools by head teachers.

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, the researcher found out that head teachers in public secondary schools in Kilifi County use democratic leadership styles in their management of schools. However, few do employ autocratic leadership styles alongside democratic in school management. This could have negative effect on the academic outcomes especially in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) and general efficiency of staff management. The findings supported the theory X and Y since the head teachers' use different leadership styles in order to ensure that the teachers carry out their work efficiently with an intention of improving academic performance. Majority of head teachers used democratic leadership which is in line with theory Y according to Douglass Macgregor (1960). Few used autocratic leadership which is in line with theory X Douglass Macgregor (1960).

Concerning the relationship between head teachers' leadership styles and academic performance, the study concluded that the head teacher's leadership styles in public secondary schools in Kilifi County influence school academic performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). This observation is also supported by Harris (2006) who found out those teachers whose levels of job satisfaction are high, perform better in school and achieve high academic performance.

Last but not least on the teachers' perception towards head teachers' leadership styles, the present study concluded that teachers' perception of their head teachers' leadership styles is that to large extent they occasionally made their attitudes clearly known to their staff implying that they kept school management issues to themselves, hence reflecting dictatorial kind of mentality when managing public secondary schools in Kilifi County. Also, teachers perceived that head teachers always emphasise meeting of deadlines, they also see to it that the work of the staff is coordinated. However, teachers also perceived that few head teachers worked without schedules.

### **Recommendations of the study**

The present study has established the leadership styles head teachers practice in the administration of public secondary schools in Kilifi County. In addition, it has also

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established that there is a relationship between the head teachers' leadership style and academic performance of students especially in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE).

1. Therefore, based on this establishment, the present study recommends that the head teachers should improve their leadership styles. They can do this by attending in-service workshops in order to acquire refresher skills, knowledge concerning school management.
2. Head teachers should practise more of democratic leadership since they enhance general performance of staff and students' academic performance.
3. Head teachers and other school administrative stakeholders should learn to take their teachers' perception of the school leadership style seriously since it may impact on the academic performance of the students.

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