

A Comparative Analysis of Remuneration Levels and Job Satisfaction Rates among Public and Private Day Primary School Teachers in Mbeere North, Kenya

Wilfred Kathuri Njeru, Dr. Lucy K. Njagi, and Dr. Anne N. Ngeretha

Department of Business Administration, Chuka University

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.1015EC00043>

Received: 28 April 2026; Accepted: 04 May 2026; Published: 23 May 2026

ABSTRACT

The sustainability of educational quality is fundamentally contingent upon the psychological well-being and professional contentment of the teaching workforce. This study sought to establish the relationship between remuneration and job satisfaction among public and private day primary school teachers in Mbeere North Sub-county, Embu County, Kenya. Grounded in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Adam's Equity Theory, the research adopted a descriptive survey design. A sample of 126 respondents was analyzed, representing an 89% response rate. Analysis was executed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation via SPSS version 26. The empirical findings revealed a stark contrast between school categories: in public schools, the relationship between remuneration and job satisfaction was weak and statistically insignificant ($r = -0.109$, $p > 0.05$), whereas in private schools, a strong and statistically significant positive relationship was observed ($r = 0.599$, $p < 0.05$). The study concludes that while remuneration is a critical motivator in private institutions, it does not significantly drive satisfaction in public schools under current structures. It is recommended that stakeholders re-evaluate compensation frameworks to align with contemporary economic indicators.

Keywords: Remuneration, Job Satisfaction, Public Schools, Private Schools, Mbeere North.

INTRODUCTION

Employees play a major role in the success or failure of an organization or company (Susanto et al., 2023). Odisa (2022) declares that among the various inputs required in an organization for the production of goods and services, the human input is a critical one. According to Morgan (1997) and Hagenimana et al. (2018), employees are a valuable resource that may contribute in several ways to a company's activities provided that the company gives them an appropriate chance. Moran (2013) states that a motivated employee is enthusiastic and eager to work as well as accomplish tasks. Furthermore, a well-managed business organization views employees as primary providers and promoters of its productivity gains (Atia et al., 2017). Employees in an organization are the greatest asset in a dynamic and competitive business environment (Robbins and Coulter, 2005). It follows that investment in employees is critical for attaining organizational performance and goals as well as realizing employee job satisfaction.

Employee motivators are the factors which encourage employees to perform their jobs and consequently realize individual job satisfaction. These motivators are a mixture of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. Herzberg (1923; 1966) categorized motivational factors into extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. The theory shows that determiners of job satisfaction are different from dissatisfactors. According to the theory, factors which increase job satisfaction are motivators, while factors whose absence leads to dissatisfaction are known as hygiene factors. For educators, remuneration often bridges these two categories, serving as a primary extrinsic motivator that impacts their professional outlook (Abdifatah et al., 2015).

In Kenya, the education sector faces significant challenges regarding teacher motivation. Despite various attempts to improve teacher welfare, professional dissatisfaction remains a prevalent challenge (Matiang'i et al., 2024). In the specific context of Mbeere North Sub-county, teachers operate in a semi-arid region characterized

by unique socio-economic challenges. The geographic hardships exacerbate the physical and mental demands of the teaching profession (Gesimba, 2020). For these educators, remuneration serves as a primary buffer against the harsh environmental and economic realities of the region (Mbaya, 2011). However, current compensation models may not be keeping pace with the rising cost of living, leading to a potential erosion of morale (Bawa, 2017).

Public school teachers are governed by centralized policies with standardized pay scales, while private school teachers operate under varied institutional frameworks that may offer more direct links between performance and rewards (Alyaha & Mbogo, 2017). This study addresses a critical research gap by empirically testing the correlation between remuneration and job satisfaction in the distinctive environment of Mbeere North. By examining both public and private sectors, the research provides a holistic view of how financial motivators function as either hygiene factors or true motivators (Herzberg, 2015). Ultimately, the study offers a roadmap for policy reform aimed at enhancing teacher retention and professional fulfillment (Ekabu, 2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualizing Remuneration and Job Satisfaction

Remuneration is the reward provided to an employee for their labor and the contribution they make to the organization (Heary and Noon, 2001). It can be in the form of wages, salaries, bonuses, and other financial incentives. Remuneration is often used as a tool to attract and retain talented employees in an organization (Heary and Noon, 2001). Employees who feel that they are being rewarded fairly for their contributions are likely to be satisfied with their jobs (Bhavya and Satyavathi, 2017).

Research has shown that there is a positive relationship between remuneration and job satisfaction. Mustapha (2013) established that financial rewards had a significant and positive influence on job satisfaction among academic staff in Malaysian universities. In Somaliland, Abdifatah et al. (2015) found a strong and positive relationship between extrinsic rewards and employee satisfaction. Similarly, in Nigeria, Anekwe et al. (2020) established that career development and rewards significantly influenced the performance of bank employees. However, it is also noted that while pay is important, other factors like career development and working conditions are equally crucial (Bett, 2015; Ayodo, 2022).

Empirical Review of Remuneration in Education

Several studies have specifically examined teacher remuneration. Kainga (2021) established that there is a significant and positive relationship between reward management and job satisfaction among teachers in Igembe North Sub-county. This suggests that when teachers perceive the reward system as fair and adequate, their satisfaction levels increase. Conversely, Muguongo et al. (2015) found that while compensation is important, its effect on teacher satisfaction in Tharaka Nithi County was moderate, suggesting that other non-financial factors also play a role.

The dichotomy between public and private schools is also evident in literature. While public school teachers may enjoy greater job security, they often face rigid pay scales that do not reward individual effort (Alyaha & Mbogo, 2017). In contrast, private schools may offer performance-based rewards that more directly influence teacher motivation (Mwandagha, 2023). This study contributes to this body of knowledge by comparing these two sectors in the semi-arid context of Mbeere North, where environmental hardships make remuneration a particularly critical issue (Gesimba, 2020).

Theoretical Framework: Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

The study is grounded in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Herzberg distinguishes between "motivating factors," which lead to satisfaction, and "hygiene factors," which merely prevent dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 2015). In this framework, remuneration is traditionally classified as a hygiene factor. According to this theory, while a high salary may not make a teacher love their job, its absence or inadequacy will cause profound dissatisfaction (Alrawahi et al., 2020). This provides a lens through which we can understand the contrast between public and

private sectors; if pay is perceived as a mere necessity rather than a reward, it ceases to motivate (Malik & Naeem, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a descriptive survey research design (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). This design allowed for the collection of quantitative data that could be statistically manipulated to identify patterns (Kothari, 2004). The target population was all primary school teachers in Mbeere North Sub-county. Stratified random sampling was employed, dividing the population into public and private school strata.

From these strata, a sample of 142 teachers was selected. A total of 126 respondents (68 public and 58 private school teachers) completed the survey, resulting in an 89% response rate, which is considered exceptional for data analysis (Dubey & Kothari, 2022). Data collection was facilitated through a structured questionnaire featuring a five-point Likert scale (Kishore et al., 2021). The instrument underwent validity and reliability testing; content validity was ensured through expert review, while reliability was confirmed through a pilot study yielding a Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of 0.78 (Ahmed & Ishtiaq, 2021). Analysis was done using SPSS version 26, utilizing descriptive statistics and Pearson’s Correlation (Mishra et al., 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 provides a consolidated view of the demographic variables across both public and private schools.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Public (Freq)	Public (%)	Private (Freq)	Private (%)	Total (Freq)	Total (%)
Gender	Male	22	32%	21	36%	43	34%
	Female	46	68%	37	64%	83	66%
Qualification	Certificate P1	34	50%	28	48%	62	49%
	Diploma	28	41%	21	36%	49	39%
	Graduate	6	9%	9	16%	15	12%
Work Experience	Below 5 Years	15	22%	16	28%	31	25%
	5-10 Years	22	32%	24	41%	46	36%
	Above 10 Years	31	46%	18	31%	49	39%

As shown in Table 1, findings revealed that in public schools, the majority of teachers were female (68%). Overall, 66 percent of the respondents were female. Public schools had a more experienced teaching workforce (46% above 10 years) compared to private schools (31%).

Descriptive Analysis for Remuneration

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Remuneration

Descriptive Statistics	Public (Mean)	Public (S.D)	Private (Mean)	Private (S.D)
Basic pay is satisfying	1.672	0.805	3.035	1.169
Annual leave allowance is adequate	1.716	0.867	3.103	1.347
Medical cover is satisfactory	1.552	0.857	2.690	1.287
Commuter allowance fulfilling	1.851	1.004	3.690	1.245
Job evaluation is regularly done	2.508	1.106	4.035	1.042
Job recognition is fairly done	2.149	1.132	3.983	0.946
Composite Mean	1.908	0.962	3.423	1.173

Inferential Analysis

Table 3 Correlation Between Remuneration and Job Satisfaction

School Category	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	N	Result Interpretation
Public Schools	-0.109	0.377	68	Weak, Neg, Insignificant
Private Schools	0.599**	0.000	58	Strong, Pos, Significant

DISCUSSION

The inferential results present a compelling dichotomy between the public and private educational sectors in Mbeere North. In public schools, the correlation coefficient ($r = -0.109$, $p > 0.05$) indicates that remuneration lacks a significant relationship with job satisfaction. This finding suggests a "saturation point" in the public sector where, despite the receipt of standardized salaries, the real value of remuneration has diminished to the point of being negligible as a satisfaction driver. This aligns with Cascio (2018), who argues that in inflationary environments, nominal wage increases often fail to translate into real purchasing power. For public school teachers, the current remuneration levels appear to fall so far below their economic expectations that salary is no longer viewed as a reward, but merely as an inadequate survival tool.

In contrast, private schools exhibited a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.599$, $p < 0.05$). This significant result provides strong empirical support for Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory. In the private sector, where descriptive results showed higher satisfaction with job evaluation ($M=4.035$) and recognition ($M=3.983$), remuneration functions effectively as a hygiene factor that, when perceived as fair, directly enhances satisfaction. This suggests that private schools in Mbeere North have more successfully linked pay to performance or recognition, thereby satisfying the "equity" requirements of Adam's Equity Theory (1963).

The statistically insignificant negative relationship in public schools further suggests that for these educators, the "inputs" (increased workload due to FPE, environmental challenges of Mbeere North, and high work experience) are profoundly misaligned with the "outputs" (remuneration). According to Adam's Equity Theory, this creates severe "equity tension." When this tension is chronic, teachers may psychologically decouple their pay from their job satisfaction, seeking fulfillment from other factors (like colleague relationships) because the financial system is perceived as fundamentally broken. This "dissatisfaction gap" confirms that in the public sector, remuneration is currently failing in its primary role as a stabilizing hygiene factor.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study suggests that the "satisfaction-remuneration" link is deeply moderated by institutional context. In private schools, remuneration functions as a significant driver of satisfaction, likely due to a closer alignment between appraisal and rewards. However, in public schools, the relationship has become decoupled; standardized pay scales do not account for the high environmental "inputs" required in a region like Mbeere North.

It is recommended that the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) implement Hardship Incentives that reflect the true economic cost of living in Mbeere North. Both public and private institutions must improve the transparency of their reward systems to address equity concerns. Finally, there is a need to index teacher allowances to inflation to ensure that real wages do not continue to decline, thereby stabilizing the workforce.

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