

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP IN EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN MACHAKOS COUNTY

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Abstract

The interest in school leadership is based on the belief it can significantly influence directly or indirectly, the teaching and quality of learning in schools, and as a result student achievement. This study investigated the effect of financial management practices on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Machakos Sub-County, Machakos County, Kenya. The study was based on the prudential theory. A descriptive research design was used for this study. The target population for this study were 48 principals and 400 teachers totalling 448 respondents from which a sample of 15 principals and 120 teachers were chosen using simple random sampling. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents. Validity was established through expert judgment. The research used Cronbach's alpha formula to test reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.9641 was realized indicating the consistency of research instruments. Data collected were coded and analysed with the help of the Stata analysis package. Descriptive statistics in the form of mean and standard deviation were used to display the data. Inferential statistics specifically regression analysis was used to show the relationship and strength of the relationships among study variables respectively. The study found that financial management practices had a positive and statistically significant effect on students' academic performance. Based on the findings, the study recommends that there is a need for the principal to have good administrative financial skills, ensure the bazaar office provides full accounting reports on time, allow students to continue learning even though they have fee arrears, and ensure all the accounts records are well kept.

Keywords: Financial Management Practices, Students' Academic Performance, Public Secondary Schools

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background information

Education is, without a doubt, one of the most powerful tools for liberating students' minds. Education and inborn wisdom can change a person into a valued asset in a country's economic development. To obtain higher academic success, it is playing in improving the academic outcomes of learners. The interest in school leadership is based on the belief it can significantly influence whether directly or indirectly, the teaching and learning quality in schools, and as a result student achievement. Numerous educational reforms in the past years have purposed to raise the academic achievement standards among students. In Australia for instance, these reforms have placed school leadership in a position of having great interest in global education.

School leadership recognizes the principal as the primary holder of responsibilities regarding establishing school goals, supervision, and training that encourages academic performance (Betonio, Tecson, Vizcara, Codilla, & Urbiztondo, 2020). This view seems to focus on only the role of administrators as instructional leaders. Agasisti, Falzetti, and Soncin (2020) identified five main areas of administrative practices implemented by Italian school principals namely operations, monitoring, target setting, people, and leadership and based on an educational production function established that the indicators about managerial practices have positive coefficients, but low statistical significance on students' outcomes. Operations refer to process standardization, use of best practices and decisions about school curriculum; monitoring indicates the principals' supervision of school activities and performance and the management of anomalies in school processes; target setting refers to the principal's ability to set clear goals for the school and managing resources to reach them; people indicates whether the principle ensures the teachers' continuous professional development and can retain best teachers in the school; while leadership measures the principals' leadership skills and their ability to clearly define roles and responsibilities within the school (Agasisti et al., 2020).

Within Africa, in Nigeria, Eniang-Esien (2021) revealed principals' financial management practices namely financial planning skills, budgeting skills, accounting skills and auditing skills that there is a significant influence on the quality of public secondary education. Researchers concluded that effective principals could improve student achievement by understanding the technical aspects of education and knowing how and when to adjust their administrative practices.

The Kenya Government has made heavy financial investments in the education sector, which is enhancing access and quality of education. Hence, it is important to comprehend how school management of financial resources relates to academic performance (Ngigi & Tanui, 2019). The key areas that spearhead the proper functioning of secondary schools rely on teaching staff skills, curriculum mastery and implementation, sound financial management skills, and student welfare (Mutiso & Itegi, 2020). The proper deployment of schools' curricula depends on the efficiency of the school principals. Principals are directly responsible for the formulation of the school curriculum policy. They should, therefore, have a perfect understanding of the curriculum and be in a position to lead the execution process.

The inculcation of academic knowledge, skills, abilities, and proficiency among individuals is enhanced through learning and academic performance (Kapur, 2018). In secondary schools, numerous factors contribute to an essential part of improving students' academic performance. Academic performance determines the future goals and objectives of students (Gbollie & Keamu, 2017). What subject they will specialize in colleges and universities, which educational institutions they will enrolled in, what career opportunities they take up, and so forth? Improvement and efficiency of schools are significant in the heightened competition that subjects the performance of educational standards to public scrutiny through well-known international tests and indexes. Therefore, school principals must be instructional administrators, as the key to good schools' academic performance is their role.

The commitment of the school managers towards ensuring success is also determined through internal school assessment as determined by the number of examinations that students undertake in a certain period. The number of examinations sat for instance in a particular term is an important way of evaluating the learners' performance. Internally determining student assessment is an administrative function of the school principals. The number of internal assessments could help the students improve their academic performance. A significant volume of academic research demonstrates the role of principals in school effectiveness (Kapur, 2018; Mutiso & Itegi, 2020). The academicians agree that after classroom instruction, principal leadership is the second most potent school-based factor affecting student performance, representing one-quarter of all school students' academic performance.

The school principals' leadership styles must be exclusive to ensure effectiveness and an improved learning environment (Arar & Nasra, 2020). On this basis, principals' administrative skills can lead to the academic performance improvement of the students. The school principals should forgo their self-ambitions and work as stewards for better academic results. He should work closely with his teaching staff, students, and parents to ensure that all stakeholders' interests are met. Historically, effective managers only needed sound administrative and political skills. However, principals must now possess various leadership skills to meet 21st century demands. This is because, besides instructional and programming pressures, today's principals face budgetary constraints, student behaviour, cost planning, supervision, database management, and public relations. A principal's effectiveness in this new educational era will require intricate knowledge and skills relevant to school culture and management, besides practical academic leadership qualities.

The principal's main role is to promote academic performance which can be executed only with the required administrative strategies hence the need for principals to have sound administrative strategies that ensure a good leadership model (Wakoli & Kitainge, 2019). With their teaching staff, school principals are responsible for school operations' day-to-day functioning, deciding their performance direction. She adds that to achieve the desired academic performance, school principals must use best leadership practices. Since the 1980s, school management practices have been used worldwide to improve academic performance.

According to Lai, Luen, Chai, and Ling (2014), school principals must master the school's shared values, culture, and educational values to achieve better performance. Further, school management must work hand in hand with the Principals to ensure all the resources are available on time to create a conducive learning environment. In curriculum implementation, one of the study variables, any teacher should be in a position to prepare lesson plans, and schemes of work, mark students' books and prepare the record of work covered. It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that all teachers prepare the above documents (MoE, 2018). Proponents, assert that sound financial resources help significantly improve school performance.

In Kenya's education sector, in harnessing disparity and compel other teachers to work hard, they have initiated many motivation practices. The Kenyan Ministry of Education (MoE), in partnership with the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), unveiled rewards such as the Principal of the Year Award (POYA) and Teacher of the Year Award (TOYA). These rewards aim at recognizing the teachers who have managed in their unique way to outshine their peers by producing exemplary results in their respective schools. Despite the government, through the Ministry of Education, providing the required resources for public secondary schools, many public schools have been recording below-par academic performance compared to private schools (Barasa, Wamocha, & Poipoi, 2017). Experts and educational analysts linked this with the laxity of school management in running the institutions (Kagama & Irungu, 2018). Wakoli and Kitainge (2019) assessed the administrative strategies' impact on the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Mount Elgon Sub County. Their results revealed that the continuous use of administrative strategies by principals raises the performance of their schools and there exists a significant ($r=0.594$ and $p=0.004$) between the principals' application of various administrative strategies on students' performance in schools. This shows that a unit increase in principal administrative strategies in a school will automatically lead to improved performance in schools.

Likewise, the best assets of any organization are human resources (Njuki, 2018). Njuki (2018) used some variables to analyze human resources in a school set up such as job demands, work resources, employee engagement, job burnout, and employee involvement, which, when considered by all relevant parties, had a positive impact on the average grade of students. Principals are managers of financial resources in secondary schools which determines the performance of any organization (Wanjala, Wamocha, & Sang, 2020). Financial management is key to the success of the education sector, since education quality, operational efficiency, and infrastructural development, effective implementation of educational policies and attainment of academic performance depend on prudent financial management (Mutui, Ngeera, & Kirambia, 2023).

In public schools where principal leadership skills are top-notch, the teaching staff and other subordinates will feel appreciated and strive towards making their school outshine others. In New York City, principals' selection is based on teachers with leadership talent (Clark, Martorell, & Rockoff, 2009). A teacher is selected not only based on their long teaching experience but also demonstrated leadership skills. As Barasa et al. (2017) point out, principals must demonstrate high leadership skills to achieve quality education and improve the education system's overall performance. As these findings suggest, failed teacher leadership has potentially negative consequences, making it essential to comprehend how to promote and facilitate school principals' achievement.

In Machakos county for the past three years running from 2015-2017, the mean score performance has been below the national mean score. According to the Ministry of Education, there has been an ongoing debate on how to avert the situation and make sure the schools attain the national mean scores. However, the Kenya National Teachers' Union (KNUT) and the Kenya Post Primary Education Teachers' Union

(KUPPET) have lately complained of low morale by their employers. All unions cite inadequate salaries paid to teachers and unsafe working conditions as contributing causes of poor results in different schools compared to their civil service peers. What compels other teachers to work hard is still a mystery in the education field. Perhaps the core motivating factor is like that of the private business world. Therefore, the current study will look at public secondary school financial resources management strategies in enhancing the academic performance of their respective schools.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Performing a school is measured by the results it records in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations and this performance comes because of the efficient role of the principal as an administrator, using varied administrative strategies (Wakoli & Kitainge, 2019). School as an organization requires proper management from the principal so the desired goals can be achieved. School administration means running the school along with the desired educational policies. It considers all aspects of the school such as; human resource management, curriculum implementation, financial management, and student welfare among others, and integrates them into a fruitful whole. Statistics of (KCSE) analysis in the last five years, indicate that secondary schools in Machakos County registered a mean score below that of the other schools of similar categories in other counties. The performance of the KCSE examination in Machakos Sub-County is not sufficiently competitive, given that one aim of effective schools is to produce excellent grades (Mutisya, Kimeu, & Nyamboga, 2022). Reviewed studies have not exhaustively looked at how varied administrative practices and principals affected students' academic performance in schools. This study therefore sought to investigate the effect of financial management practices on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Machakos sub-County, Machakos County.

1.3 Study Objective

The objective of the study was to examine the effect of financial management practices on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Machakos Sub-County, Machakos County, Kenya.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study is expected to add to the already available few empirical pieces of literature on financial management practices and public secondary school academic performance in Kenya and the world. The study will benefit these stakeholders. First, the Ministry of Education and the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) in Kenya. Understanding the contributing benefits of financial management practices through the current study, both parties will agree to spur educational development and thus improve schools' overall academic performance in the country.

Second, the study will benefit Machakos County educational officers by providing insights about financial management practices and formulating policies to improve academic performance in their education system. Third, the study will also inform the Kenyan citizens, especially the Machakos county locals and residents, in appreciating the role of nonlocal principals in the area to improve schools' performance. Also,

the study will act as a benchmark for other countries to adopt the same findings in enhancing academic performance in their education sector.

The study will add to the body of existing literature on the effect of financial management practices on academic performance in the education sector and thus carry further studies as suggested to provide enough empirical literature in the scholarly field. Students and other researchers will also benefit from the suggestions for further studies to add to the body of existing literature in the same field of academic performance. This study will provide insight into the financial management practices influencing the performance of schools in Kenya and broaden schools' management perspectives on the importance of financial management practices in eliciting performance.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The prudential theory was propounded by Laffer (1980). According to this theory, everybody including school managers must know how to handle and spend money wisely. According to the author, to be prudent simply means to spend money wisely to achieve the maximum goal. It is essential to note that prudence implies being careful and acting only after careful thought, forethought or planning and exercising sound judgment in the management of practical affairs (Kinyanzii, Ombuki, & Kalii, 2019). In handling financial resources, the school administrator should eliminate wants and reduce unproductive costs in terms of time and money. The finances for learning institutions are used for daily operations and activities of concerned institutions. In the case of secondary schools, school principals and administrators are charged with the responsibility of planning the school budget to achieve the objectives of the school and more so effective financial management (Munge et al., 2016). Delays in the disbursement of funds to institutions, lack of adequate training of educational heads, and negligence of school financial clerks among others are factors that fuel poor management of funds in institutions in Kenya (Aina & Bipath, 2020). On the same note, the poor state of schools in Kenya was because of poor financial management skills such as the inability to generate revenue internally and the misappropriation of existing resources. According to Munge et al. (2016), the government of Kenya has been influencing financial management in schools and institutions. This is through financial regulations such as financial management policies that involve imprest management, financial auditing among others, credit management policy and inventory management policy. It is noted that many schools especially in Machakos County have failed to follow the recommended government financial management practices. Understanding what school financial management entails and compliance with the legal requirements when making financial decisions are vital requirements for achieving effective financial management in schools (Aina & Bipath, 2020). The theory relates to the study as it helps to understand how principals' financial management skills have helped their schools perform better than other schools. Most schools in Kenya have poor structures and working conditions which contributes to poor academic performances in KCSE exams. However, some schools have the best structures and have been performing well because school principals have concrete financial administrative skills.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Area of Study

The study was carried out in Machakos sub-county in Machakos County. The global positioning of the county is on the latitude 1016'1.23"S and longitude 37019'12.64"E. Machakos County has a total area of 6208.2 km² (the Republic of Kenya, 2018).

2.2 Research Design

The research design is a blueprint or a plan of how the research was conducted by describing the research sites, how the subjects are selected, and data collection procedures to anticipate the decisions to be taken to maximize the findings' reliability and credibility. A research design indicates how the research is set up, what happens to the subjects, and what data collection methods are used. The study used a descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey research design provides an insight into the phenomenon in a natural setting the way it is. Surveys are excellent vehicles for collecting original data to study a phenomenon's predictors in a large population. Therefore, through this design, the researcher assessed how principals' financial management practices have affected public secondary school academic performance in Machakos County. Some studies that have used descriptive research design in educational leadership include; Gacheri (2017) who studied how classroom management practices affect students' academic qualifications in public secondary schools in Tharaka Nithi County. Osiri et al. (2019) also used a descriptive research survey design to examine how school administration affects students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Nairobi County.

2.3 Population and Sampling Design

According to the Machakos sub-County education office, the Machakos sub-County has 48 public secondary schools, hence the study's target population were 48 principals from the 48 public secondary schools and 400 teachers. These groups were selected because they are more experienced with the topic under study. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2012), a 10-30 % range on a targeted population can yield an optimal sample size for a descriptive survey study. The study was narrowed to 15 principals and 120 teachers in 15 sampled public secondary schools in Machakos Sub-County. Public Secondary Schools in Machakos County form the unit of analysis of the study. While the principals and TSC teachers formed the study's unit of observation. The study adopted the simple random without replacement sampling technique in obtaining the number of respondents because of the homogenous nature of the public secondary schools.

2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

The study adopted the questionnaires as the research instrument to gather primary data. A questionnaire is a written set of questions to which the subject responds in writing. Both closed and open-ended questionnaires were administered to the respondents. The researcher administered questionnaires to the principals and the teachers. Each item was followed by a five-point Likert Scale, having adverbs indicating the frequency with which the respondents were engaged in an activity as per objectives. The researcher visited the selected schools and self-administered the questionnaires. Once filled in, the researchers then

collected them after a week. Data was then entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 and analysed using Stata Version 17 software. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. In addition, to test the study hypothesis pairwise correlation and regression analysis were conducted and statistical significance was ascertained at the 1%, 5% and 10% levels of significance.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Students' Academic Performance

Table 3.1: Academic performance over the years

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
KCSE 2018 mean score	120	4.21	1.730	2.07	7.59
KCSE 2019 mean score	120	4.33	1.801	2.45	8.62
KCSE 2020 mean score	120	4.29	1.948	1.90	8.69
KCSE 2021 mean score	120	4.39	1.727	2.30	7.98
KCSE 2022 mean score	120	4.34	1.639	2.00	8.01
KCSE 2018-2022 mean score	120	4.31	1.746	2.38	8.18

The academic performance based on the KCSE mean scores for the schools was 4.21 in 2018, 4.33 in 2019, 4.29 in 2020, 4.39 in 2021, and 4.34 in 2022 indicating that schools' mean performance has been oscillating over the last five years (2018 to 2022) in Table 3.1.

3.2 Responses of Principals and Teachers on Students' Academic Performance

Table 3.2 and Table 3.3 give the responses of principals and teachers on the indicators of students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Machakos Sub-County, Machakos County. Students' academic performance was measured using four indicators for the teachers and principals. Mean and standard deviation (SD) statistics for each questionnaire item were tabulated.

Table 3.2: Responses of Principals on Students' Academic Performance

Variable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. dev.
Most of our students attain university entry means a grade of C+ and above.		13	2			2.13	0.352
	%	86.67	13.33				
The overall mean score of the school is above 5	f 9	6				1.40	0.507
	% 60	40					

The school is ranked among the top best-performing schools in the county	f	6	9	1.60	0.507
	%	40	60		
Most of our students qualify for prestigious courses' (e.g. law, engineering) university entry grades	f	9	6	1.40	0.507
	%	60	40		

The results in Table 3.2 have indicated that according to the responses of the Principals, 86.67 per cent of them disagreed that most of their students attain university entry mean grade C+ and above. 100 per cent of the Principals disagreed that the overall mean score of the school is above 5. In addition, 100 per cent of the Principals disagreed that the school is ranked among the top best-performing schools in the county. Lastly, 100 per cent of the Principals disagreed that most of their students qualify for prestigious courses'(e.g. law, engineering) university entry grades. The results in Table 3.2 have indicated that the rating for the Principals on average ranged from 1.40 to 2.13 indicating that the Principals disagreed regarding students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Machakos sub-county, Machakos County.

This study sought to establish from the teachers the indicators of students' academic performance, the findings are as stated in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Responses of Teachers on Students' Academic Performance

Variable		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. dev.
Most of our students attain university entry mean grade C+ and above	f	29	63	3	14	11	2.29	1.219
	%	24.17	52.50	2.50	11.67	9.17		
The overall mean score of the school is above 5	f	34	53	5	9	19	2.38	1.385
	%	28.33	44.17	4.17	7.50	15.83		
The school is ranked among the top best-performing schools in the county	f	38	51	6	7	18	2.30	1.370

	%	31.67	42.50	5.00	5.83	15.00		
Most of our students f	55	34	12	13	6	2.01	1.206	
qualify for prestigious %	45.83	28.33	10.00	10.83	5.00			
courses' (e.g. law,								
engineering) university								
entry grades								

The results in Table 3.3 have indicated that according to the responses of the teachers, 76.67 per cent of them disagreed that most of their students attain university entry mean grade C+ and above. 72.5 per cent of the teachers disagreed that the overall mean score of the school is above 5. In addition, 74.17 per cent of the teachers disagreed that the school is ranked among the top best-performing schools in the county. Lastly, 74.17 per cent of the teachers disagreed that most of their students qualify for prestigious courses'(e.g. law, engineering) university entry grades. The results in Table 3.3 have indicated that the rating for the teachers on average ranged from 2.01 to 2.38 indicating that the teachers disagreed regarding exemplary students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Machakos sub-county, Machakos County. This indicates the schools within the Machakos sub-county have not been performing well.

3.3 Effect of Financial Management Practices on Students' Academic Performance

This study sought to examine the effect of financial management practices on students' academic performance where Table 3.4 and Table 3.5 give the responses of principals and teachers on the indicators of financial management practices in public secondary schools in Machakos Sub-County, Machakos County. Financial management practices were measured using seven indicators for the teachers and the principals. Mean and standard deviation (SD) statistics for each questionnaire item were tabulated. The findings of Table 3.4 and Table 3.5 are as indicated respectively.

Table 3.4: Responses of Principals on the Effect of Financial Management Practices On Students' Academic Performance

Variable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. dev.
The principal has good administrative financial f	3			4	8	3.93	1.580
%	20			26.67	53.33		
The principal ensures that f	3			7	5	3.73	1.486
the bazaar office provides %	20			46.67	33.33		
full accounting reports on time							

The principal allows f students to continue % learning even though they have fee arrears	6 40	9 60	4.60	0.507
The principal ensures that all the accounts records are f well-kept	7	8	4.53	0.516
	46.67	53.33		
The principal always f ensures students improve % breakfast, lunch, and supper hence improving self- esteem	13 86.67	2 13.33	4.13	0.352
The principal strives to f improve the learning % environment for students hence improving their social welfare	9 60	6 40	4.40	0.507
The principal has been initiating the building f projects in the school	4	11	4.73	0.458
	26.67	73.33		

The results in Table 3.4 have indicated that according to the responses of the Principals, 80 per cent of the Principals agreed that the principal has good administrative financial skills. Similarly, 80 per cent of the Principals agreed that the principal ensures that the bazaar office provides full accounting reports on time. The Principals who agreed that the principal allows students to continue learning even though they have fee arrears were 100 per cent. In addition, 100 per cent of the Principals agreed that the principal ensures that all the accounts records are well kept. The Principals agreed that the principal always ensures students improve breakfast, lunch, and supper hence improved self-esteem was 100 per cent. Likewise, 100 per cent of the Principals agreed that the principal strives to improve the learning environment for students hence improving their social welfare. Lastly, 100 per cent of the Principals agreed that the principal has been initiating the building projects in the school. The results in Table 3.4 have indicated that the rating for the principals on average ranged from 3.73 to 4.73 indicating that the Principals agreed regarding financial management practices in public secondary schools in Machakos sub-county, Machakos County. In addition, the Principals strongly agreed that the principal allows students to continue learning even though they

have fee arrears; the principal ensures that all the accounts records are well kept; and the principal has been initiating the building projects in the school.

This study sought to establish from teachers the effect of financial management practices on students' academic performance, the findings are as stated in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Responses of Teachers on the Effect of Financial Management Practices On Students' Academic Performance

Variable		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. dev.
The principal has good administrative financial f skills	f	16	44	11	24	25	2.98	1.396
	%	13.33	36.67	9.17	20.00	20.83		
The principal ensures that the bazaar office provides full accounting reports on time	f	10	41	19	33	17	3.05	1.236
	%	8.33	34.17	15.83	27.5	14.17		
The principal allows students to continue learning even though they have fee arrears	f	7	35	25	28	25	3.24	1.243
	%	5.83	29.17	20.83	23.33	20.83		
The principal ensures that all the accounts records are well-kept	f	4	24	32	42	18	3.38	1.070
	%	3.33	20.00	26.67	35.00	15.00		
The principal always ensures students improve breakfast, lunch, and supper hence improving self-esteem	f	2	12	31	58	17	3.63	0.907
	%	1.67	10.00	25.83	48.33	14.17		
The principal strives to improve the learning environment for students hence improving their social welfare	f	4	18	25	49	24	3.59	1.073
	%	3.33	15.00	20.83	40.83	20.00		

The principal has been initiating the building projects in the school	f	8	17	24	42	29	3.56	1.194
	%	6.67	14.17	20.00	35.00	24.17		

The results in Table 3.5 indicated that according to the responses of the teachers, 40.83 per cent of the teachers agreed that the principal has good administrative financial skills. 41.67 per cent of the teachers agreed that the principal ensures that the bursar's office provides full accounting reports on time. The teachers who agreed that the principal allows students to continue learning even though they have fee arrears were 44.16 per cent. In addition, 50 per cent of the teachers agreed that the principal ensures that all the accounts records are well kept. The teachers who agreed that the principal always ensures students improve breakfast, lunch, and supper hence improved self-esteem was 62.5 per cent. 60.83 per cent of the teachers agreed that the principal strives to improve the learning environment for students hence improving their social welfare. Lastly, 59.17 per cent of the teachers agreed that the principal has been initiating the building projects in the school. The results in Table 3.5 have indicated that the rating for the teachers on average ranged from 2.98 to 3.63 indicating that the teachers agreed regarding financial management practices in public secondary schools in Machakos subcounty, Machakos County. Even though on average the teachers were not sure that the principal has good administrative financial skills; the principal ensures that the bursars' office provides full accounting reports on time; the principal allows students to continue learning even though they have fee arrears; and the principal ensures that all the accounts records are well kept.

3.4 Correlation Test

In this section, the Pearson correlation test was performed as shown in Table 3.6. In the table, FM indicates financial management practices.

Table 3.6: Pearson Correlation Test

	Mean score 2018-2022	FM	Gender	Age	Education	Duration
Mean score 2018-2022	1					
FM	0.447*	0.000	1			
Gender	0.171***	0.367*	1			
	0.062	0.000				
Age	-0.053	0.260*	0.099	1		
	0.566	0.004	0.293			

Education	-0.092 0.319	-0.198** 0.031	-0.176 0.054	0.390* 0.000	1	
Duration	0.281* 0.002	0.016 0.866	0.294* 0.001	0.266* 0.003	0.375* 0.000	1

*, ** and *** represent 1%, 5% and 10% levels of significance

Table 3.6 shows that the academic performance as measured by the mean score 2018-2022 is positively and significantly related to financial management practices ($r=0.447^*$, $p=0.000$) at the one per cent level of significance.

3.5 Hypothesis Testing

In this section, the study hypothesis was formulated and tested using a multiple regression model in Table 3.7, based on the mean score for 2018-2022 as the measure of students' academic performance.

Table 3.7: Multiple Regression Results

Students' academic performance	Coefficient	Std. err.	t	P-value
Human resource management practices	0.904*	0.236	3.82	0.000
Curriculum implementation practices	-0.506**	0.248	-2.04	0.043
Students' welfare practices	-0.055	0.189	-0.29	0.772
Financial management practices	0.778*	0.218	3.56	0.001
Gender	0.123	0.345	0.36	0.723
Age	-1.165*	0.279	-4.18	0.000
Education	-0.047	0.292	-0.16	0.874
Duration	0.700*	0.185	3.78	0.000
Constant	1.385	0.949	1.46	0.147
Number of obs	=	120		
F(8, 111)	=	10.73*		
Prob > F	=	0.000		
R-square	=	0.4362		
Adj R-squared	=	0.3955		

*, ** and *** represents 1%, 5% and 10% levels of significance

Hypothesis testing in this study was done using a multiple regression model tested at the 1 per cent, 5 per cent and 10 per cent levels of significance. The results of hypothesis testing gave a positive coefficient of 0.778 on financial management practices was realized with a p-value of 0.001 statistically significant at the 0.01 level in Table 3.7. Hence we reject the hypothesis that financial management practices do not affect

students' academic performance. This indicates that financial management practices have a positive and statistically significant effect on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Machakos Sub-County, Machakos County. Similar findings were deduced in France by Crouch and Wrinkler (2008) that prudent financial management practices positively influenced academic performance among the surveyed institutions. Likewise in Nigeria, Eniang-Esien's findings revealed there is a significant influence of financial planning skills budgeting skills, accounting skills and auditing skills by principals have a significant influence on the quality of public secondary education. Similarly, a study by Wanjala et al. (2020) in Bungoma East Sub-County established a strong positive relationship between principals' financial management practices and academic achievement in public secondary schools. However, the study negates the findings by Ngigi and Tanui (2019) on a study in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya who found that financial management level did not significantly predict the level of performance since the estimated coefficient of 0.122 had an associated p-value which was greater than 0.05, and hence not statistically significant.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

The findings of the study led to the following conclusions: Public secondary schools in Machakos subcounty, Machakos County have not been performing well based on the KCSE mean scores of 4.21 in 2018, 4.33 in 2019, 4.29 in 2020, 4.39 in 2021, and 4.34 in 2022 thus the overall mean score of the school was below 5. Most of their students did not attain university entry mean grade of C+ and above, and hence most students did not qualify for prestigious courses'(e.g. law, engineering) university entry grades. Financial management practices have a positive and statistically significant effect on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Machakos Sub-County, Machakos County.

4.2 Recommendations

Regarding financial management practices, there is a need for the principal to: i) Have good administrative financial skills; ii) Ensure the bursars' office provides full accounting reports on time; iii) Allow students to continue learning even though they have fee arrears; and iv) Ensure all the accounts records are well kept.

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