Controlling management practices and pupils' academic achievement in public primary schools in West Pokot County, Kenya: The moderating role of headteachers demographic characteristics

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ABSTRACT

This study systematically analyzes the moderating role of Headteachers' demographic characteristics (experience as a Headteacher, teaching experience, and academic qualifications) on the relationship between their controlling management practices and pupils' academic achievement, in public primary schools in West Pokot County, Kenya. The study was guided by theories of education (functionalism, conflict, symbolic interactionism) and leadership (participative & transformational) theories. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey with a mixed-methods approach. The target population for this study comprised 320 Headteachers from public primary schools in West Pokot County that had recorded Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations results between 2012 and 2016, 1280 subject Heads of departments (HOD's), 1920 class eight pupils, 4 Teachers Service Commission Sub- County Directors of Education (TSC SCDE) and One Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (QUASO). A sample size of 32 Headteachers, 128 Subject HODs, 4 TSC SCDE and One QUASO were selected purposively. Data was gathered using Questionnaires, structured interview guides, observation guides and document analysis of KCPE results for public primary schools. Simple linear regression and moderation analysis using the PROCESS macro in SPSS were employed for data analysis. Headteachers' controlling management practices are reported as extensively implemented within West Pokot County schools, demonstrating a strong positive statistical correlation with KCPE mean scores from the Headteachers' perspective ($R^2 = 0.839$). The moderation reduced the explained variance (R^2) from 83.9% to 50.3%. Experience as a Headteacher reduced to 30.50%, teaching experience itself showed a negative significant main effect on KCPE mean scores in the moderation model. This moderation reduced the explained variance (R^2) to 35.1%. The Headteachers academic qualifications also showed a negative significant main effect on KCPE mean scores. This moderation reduced the explained variance (R^2) to 40.2%. The central conclusion is that the current controlling management practices and skills employed by Headteachers in West Pokot County are not effective in genuinely improving pupils' academic achievement. To address this, the study recommends that Headteachers adopt a more strategic approach to controlling management practices, focusing on clear standard setting, meticulous performance measurement, thorough deviation analysis, and prompt, targeted corrective actions.

Keywords: Controlling Management Practices, Headteacher Demographics, KCPE, Kenya, Moderation, Pupils' Academic Achievement, Public Primary Schools

I. INTRODUCTION

Formal education is widely acknowledged as playing critical roles in both individual and societal development which serves as a basic human development indicator crucial for determining the quality of life (Ampofo et al., 2019). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2017). It equips citizens with knowledge to reshape society, eliminate inequality, and develop capabilities, attitudes, and behaviors acceptable to society (Kimani et al., 2013). Management in organizations coordinates efforts to accomplish goals and objectives efficiently and effectively, encompassing various functions, including controlling management practice, which are vital for achieving organizational goals (Ali & Abdalla, 2017; Ampofo et. al., 2019).

Controlling management practices ensure that the school is actually attaining its objectives as planned (Akpan, 1999; 2016). They are an end practices which come once the performance is made in conformity with plans and a pervasive practice which is performed by Headteachers and teachers at all levels and in all type of concerns. Effective control practices

are not possible without the past being controlled and they involve determining how well an actual operation conforms with expected results (Akpan, 2011).

In educational context, Headteachers utilize controlling management practices to ensure that the school is actually attaining its objectives as planned (Akpan, 1999; 2016). This function is dynamic, often referred to as monitoring and evaluation, requiring continuous review and revision of operational standards (Musingafi et al., 2014). It involves a continuous review of performance and the revision of operational standards (Akpan, 2016). Teachers are inextricably linked to the academic results of their schools, making their performance a critical component of this process. Consequently, standardized pupil assessment results are logically employed as a basis for judging teacher performance (Akpan, 2016). Another study found that pupils' academic progress was significantly impacted by their teachers' teaching qualifications (Fakeye, 2012).

Researchers concur that students' academic performance is a composite outcome of their cognitive and non-cognitive characteristics (Lee & Shute, 2010; Lee & Stankov, 2016), together with the sociocultural environment in which learning occurs (Liem & McLnerney, 2018; Liem & Tan, 2019). Performance is the assessment of achievement and the extent to which a task or assigned function is executed and completed. Academic achievement refers to the degree to which a student or institution has attained specific short- or long-term educational objectives (Liem & Tan, 2019). Several academics have posited that excellent educational management techniques are crucial for enabling students to achieve high academic success in schools (Ololube et al., 2012).

Academic performance is the driving force of academic institutions to carry out innovative ideas (Paudel, 2021). Students' academic performance influences students' academic achievement and it is short term and can be teacher made test scores, while academic achievement is medium or long term and standardized achievement test scores (Liem & Tan, 2019). Achievement may be measured through students' grade point average, whereas for institutions achievement may be measured through graduation rates and school mean scores (Liem, et al, 2019). Therefore, individual differences in academic performance are strongly correlated with differences in personality and intelligence.

The assessment of academic achievement serves as an indicator of educational progress, with origins dating back to the Victorian era (Bell, 2013). Academic achievement signifies performance results that reflect the degree to which an individual has attained certain objectives targeted in educational settings, particularly in schools, colleges, and universities (Ricarda et al., 2017). Further, academic performance is also the assessment of student achievement in many academic disciplines (Onyali, et al, 2018). The measurement of academic success is contingent upon stakeholders' involvement in education, necessitating a parameter to evaluate the degree of students' academic advancement (Onyali et al., 2018). Educators and educational authorities generally assess achievement through classroom performance, graduation rates, and standardized test scores.

Headteachers are tasked with recognizing discrepancies from the school's objectives; in certain instances, instructors may lack full awareness of these aims, as their primary focus is only to earn a livelihood, rather than understanding the school's goals (Thenmozhi, 2017; Pal, n.d., 2017). A deficiency in awareness leads to deviations from objectives; therefore, the proper execution of control techniques provides answers to this issue. Certain educators may choose the field based on anticipated benefits from the educational institutions, and when these expectations are unmet, uncooperative behaviors may emerge, thereby hindering the development of the school and adversely affecting students' academic performance (Thenmozhi, 2017).

A study on Introduction to Management (Thenmozhi, 2017) found several critical areas necessary for effective control. The assessment of actual performance relative to established goals or intended standards, followed by the rectification of discrepancies to guarantee the achievement of predetermined objectives. Performance appraisal systems are regarded as significant, as they may aid in identifying deficiencies and offering remedies (Akpan, 1999). This can only be effectively achieved by measuring current performance against the established standard (Akpan, 2016). Consequently, educators are inextricably linked to the institutions where they instruct and the academic outcomes of those institutions (Kimani et al., 2013).

The significance of effective controlling management practices is underscored by prevalent concerns regarding teacher attitudes, poor academic performance of students, and student indiscipline in public primary schools. These issues are often attributed to a lack of adequate control measures by Headteachers to ensure activities align with plans and procedures to achieve institutional objectives (Arop et al., 2020). However, the majority of studies carried out on school leadership has revealed that school leadership quality directly impacts on the school success, teacher's effectiveness and pupils' academic performance (Aboyassin & Abood, 2013; Akoth, 2015; Azlin et al., 2021). In a study that examined 69 research studies of 2,802 schools, approximately 1.4 million students, and 14,000 teachers and concluded that Headteachers have an impact on student achievement (Marzano et al., 2005).

While studies have been conducted in several African nations, limited research has explored controlling management practices in Kenya. Specifically, no studies have comprehensively investigated the controlling management practices and the moderating effect of Headteachers demographic characteristics on academic outcomes in West Pokot County. This study specifically delves into the findings concerning the moderating role of experience as

a Headteacher, teaching experience, and academic qualifications of the Headteachers. This adds a layer of sophistication to the research inquiry, recognizing the significant human element in management effectiveness. If demographic characteristics are found to significantly moderate this relationship, it implies that policy and training programs should not adopt a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Instead, they may need to be tailored to the specific profiles of Headteachers, or recruitment and placement strategies might need to consider these characteristics to optimize educational outcomes.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The state of education in Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) has historically been, and continues to be, extremely poor. Despite repeated commitments by the national government to provide Education for All (EFA), including provisions within the new constitution, educational investment has had limited impact in these regions (Ayiro & Sang, 2017). Ideally, education provision in ASALs should mirror that in other parts of the country in terms of delivery mechanisms, human resources, and curricula. However, significant disparities persist in infrastructure, human resource availability, livelihood bases, and overall social environmental conditions within the ASALs). Despite the fact that the access to primary schools has improved rapidly throughout the developing world since 1990 due to abolition of school fees, learning outcomes have lagged behind (World Bank, 2006). The problem of poor performance, widespread in many countries, is profoundly rooted in management and in examinations (Odhiambo, 2009).

There is critical need for transformative Headteachers possessing the competencies and skills to strategically influence the direction of education, particularly within schools, as Headteachers are recognized as pivotal factors in school management. some researchers have stated some key characteristics of high academic achieving schools to include; competent Headteachers, committed teaching staff with an instructional focus on fundamental skills, a positive and conducive atmosphere, support staff and local community (Middlewood & Lumby, 2010). Public primary schools in West Pokot County, a region within the ASALs, have consistently recorded dismal academic performance over the years when compared to other public primary schools across Kenya. Despite Headteachers in West Pokot County implementing various controlling management practices in an attempt to improve pupils' academic achievement, the expected levels of performance have not been realized. Therefore, it is critical to determine the effect of controlling management practices in academic programs and the moderating effect of Headteachers demographic characteristics on the relationship between these practices and pupils' academic achievement in public primary schools of West Pokot County, Kenya.

1.2 Research Objectives

i. To determine the effect of Headteachers' controlling management practices in academic programs on pupils' academic achievement,
ii. To analyze the moderating effect of Headteachers' demographic characteristics on the relationship between controlling management practices and pupils' academic achievement.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was guided by a combination of educational and leadership theories, selected for their complementary nature in comprehensively explaining Headteachers' controlling management practices and pupils' academic achievement. No single theory fully accounts for this complex interplay.

Functionalism is the belief that a social pattern is best understood, not in terms of its historical origin, but in terms of its consequences and functions in a given society (Mohammed & Osuala, 2014). The sociologist's task was to explain the cause of any social phenomenon like education and religion and the function it fulfills (Durkheim, 1982) because institutions are not always conscious of the consequences of their existence (Mohammed & Osuala, 2014). The focus was on the positive functions of education of creating social solidarity, teaching core values and work skills and role allocation/ meritocracy (Thompson, 2015). Education therefore acts as the 'focal socializing agency' in terms of teaching of core values in schools (Ballantine & Hammack, 2012).

Conflict theory emphasis was on how education also perpetuates social inequality preserving the power of those who dominate society (Ballantine & Hammack, 2012). Education is seen as a beneficial contribution to an ordered society; however, conflict theorists also see the educational system as perpetuating the status quo by dulling the lower classes into being obedient workers. The function of social placement (sorting) is one process that can be seen in most schools when they begin tracking pupils according to their abilities where those considered bright are placed in the faster tracks while the slower pupils are placed in the slower tracks (Ballantine & Hammack, 2012).

Symbolic interactionists perspective focuses on social interaction in the classroom, on the playground, and in other school venues. These studies help us understand what happens in the schools themselves and how what occurs in school is relevant for the larger society. Specific research finds that social interaction in schools affects the development

of gender roles and that teachers' expectations of pupils' intellectual abilities affect how much pupils learn (Baron, 1982). The basis of certain educational problems is therefore from social interaction and expectations and that teachers' views about students could affect how much the students learn.

The leadership theories guiding this study include participative theory of leadership which emphasizes the involvement of subordinates in decision-making processes and the relationship/transformational theories of leadership focus was on leaders who inspire and motivate their followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes, often by fostering a shared vision and empowering individuals (Lumbasi et al., 2016).

The study's integration of macro-level theories (Functionalism, Conflict Theory) with micro-level theories (Symbolic Interactionism, Participative/Transformational Leadership) provides a robust analytical framework. Functionalism offers a societal perspective on education's role in maintaining order, while conflict theory critically examines its role in perpetuating inequality. Symbolic interactionism, conversely, delves into the nuances of classroom dynamics, such as teacher-pupil interactions and expectations, which are directly influenced by Headteachers' controlling practices. Leadership theories then illuminate the mechanisms through which Headteachers enact these practices.

This multi-theoretical approach enables a comprehensive understanding that spans from broad systemic issues to intricate interpersonal dynamics. For instance, the observation that controlling practices are often treated as a "routine task" can be re-examined through a symbolic interactionist lens: if Headteachers perceive controlling practices merely as procedural, the symbolic meaning of these practices for teachers and pupils may also become superficial, potentially undermining genuine engagement and improvement. This theoretical grounding implies that academic achievement is not solely a product of administrative control but is profoundly interconnected with societal structures, power dynamics, and the quality of interpersonal interactions within the school environment.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework being a model or diagrammatic way of examining study variables adopted for this study depicted how various activities were used to carry out the controlling management practices in academic programmes in schools by the Headteachers for improvement of teaching and learning to improve pupils' academic achievement vis-à-vis the schools' mean scores in public primary schools in West Pokot County, Kenya. The conceptual framework shows how the independent variable which is Headteachers controlling management practices in academic programmes influences the dependent variable 2pupils' academic achievement which is KCPE mean scores of schools.

The conceptual framework also aligned to theories of education namely: functionalist, conflict and symbolic interactionist theories and leadership theories namely; the participative theory of leadership and the relationship/transformational theories of leadership depending on how they can be moderated, have the potential to negatively or positively influence the academic achievement of pupils.

This study looked at the Headteachers demographic characteristics (experience as Headteacher, academic qualifications and teaching experience) as the moderating variables on the relationship between controlling management practices in academic programmes and pupils' academic achievement (KCPE mean scores of schools). The controlling management practices looked at in this study were how the Headteachers managed teaching and learning in their schools, the management of teachers and pupils and management of examinations and tests in their schools.

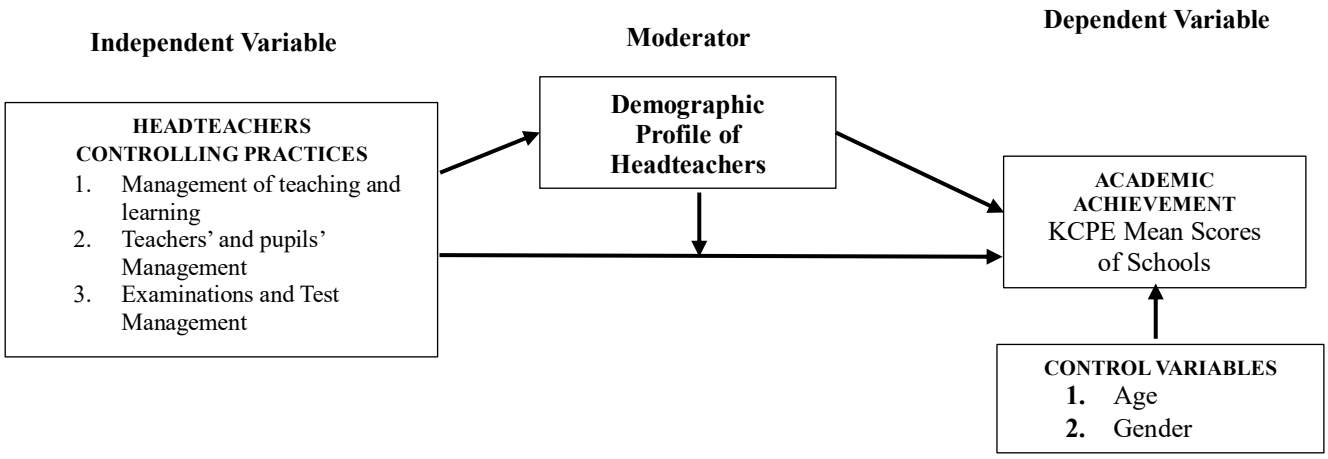

Figure 1

Controlling Practices in Academic Programmes and Pupils' Academic Achievement

2.3 Empirical Review

The concept and execution of controlling management practices by Headteachers, emphasizes their critical role in enhancing pupils' academic performance in public primary schools. Controlling management practices are defined as strategic managerial activities (Akpan, 2016), that ensure educational objectives are achieved through systematic planning, performance measurement, and corrective actions. These practices are considered fundamental in addressing dynamic educational challenges and maintaining operational standards in schools (Musingafi, et. al, 2014). Controlling is regarded as an imperative managerial practice due to the continuous changes in working environmental conditions, driven by both internal and external factors (Luke & Mavis, 2014). It is essential for initiating changes and transformations across all activities and functions of an organization. Policies, strategies, and approaches that are effective in the present may not remain applicable in the future, necessitating continuous adaptation for the sustained progress of the school.

A key focus is the four-stage controlling process: setting standards, measuring performance, comparing results, and implementing corrective actions (Sisk, (1973;, Akpan, 1999). Headteachers are responsible for setting academic (Akinfolarin & Onyali, 2017) and behavioral expectations, monitoring instructional quality, ensuring effective teaching and learning, evaluating teacher and pupil attendance, managing resources, and analyzing performance data (Thenmozhi, 2017; Haramain, 2019a; Haramain, 2019b; Tarsianer, 2021; Onyancha, et. al., 2021). These actions aim to align school operations with intended outcomes and continuously improve learning environments (Pal, n.d., 2017).

Headteachers must guarantee that an analysis of examination results is conducted in their schools, along with recommendations for enhancing standards (Musingafi, et al., 2014). This indicates that if outcomes do not align with expectations, an effort must be made to ascertain the cause of the failure and implement corrective measures. The assessment encompasses the performance of teachers and students relative to established plans, as well as the implementation of control measures by Headteachers to promote effective and efficient school administration in order to achieve quality standards (Akpan, 1999; Ampofo et al., 2019).

In educational institutions, non-cooperative behaviors are evident in teachers' lack of commitment to their responsibilities and their reluctance to prioritize the needs of the school over their personal interests. Additionally, some educators execute their duties carelessly, disregarding the impact on students (Arop, et al., 2020). Deviations from aims and plans must be acknowledged and examined, and corrective measures should be implemented. Subsequent divergences from plans and objectives furnish input to the Headteachers, necessitating ongoing revisions and modifications to all management processes, including planning, organizing, staffing, leading, and controlling, as required (Akpar, 2018).

The core business of schools is teaching and learning in order to give pupils quality education and academic performance has been used to grade schools and most importantly to determine one’s career paths (Muiruri, 2019). As an affirmation on the above, it is stated that; “one of the indicators of quality education being provided is cognitive achievement of learners” (Kimani, et al, 2013). The use of pupils’ achievement in academic work has therefore been used to assess the teacher’s effectiveness. Since then, academic performance has been used to grade schools and good schools are acclaimed to be those that are able to groom the pupils well enough to achieve the set standards. This is measured by use of pupils’ academic performance both at school and at nationally levels.

Students' academic performance improves in correlation with teachers' years of experience, and the reverse is also true (Sandra, 2013; Mageka & Ogochi, 2020). The academic success of pupils is positively impacted by school characteristics, such as the number of years of experience of principals and teachers (Aturapane et al., 2013; Mageka et. al., 2020). In addition, Adeyemi (2010), Yala &Wanjohi (2011), and Akiri & Ugborugbo (2008) all came to the same conclusion: that students' performance in school was most strongly correlated with their teachers' levels of experience and education. Another study, however, discovered no correlation between students' performance and instructors' levels of education or experience in the classroom (Ravkin et al., 2005).

A teacher's personal and professional demographic traits are associated with their pupils' academic achievement, according to studies (Francisco & Celon, 2020). According to research (Fehintola, 2014), students' academic performance was positively correlated with teachers' academic qualifications, evaluation methods, and job satisfaction. The qualities of a teacher have an effect on their competence, according to yet another research (Asio & Riego, 2018). In addition, Sandra (2013) found that students' academic achievement increased as teachers' years of experience increased.

Teachers' perceptions of their own abilities in the classroom are somewhat to strongly impacted by principals' transformational leadership methods (Francisco, 2019). Furthermore, the evidence of a relationship between an educator's traits and competencies was modest to low (Asio & Riego, 2019). But a study on poorly educated educators could lead to lessons that gloss over more challenging material (Mosha, 2014). An author claims that pupils exhibit inappropriate behaviour when it comes to bullying, particularly towards instructors (Asio, 2018, 2019). This could result in bullying of teachers due to their perceived incompetence.

However, the review highlights a significant discrepancy between the formal application of these practices and their real impact. Despite structured efforts such as lesson monitoring, assessment, and parental engagement (Onyancha, et. al., 2021; Tarsianer, 2021), schools in West Pokot County report persistent underachievement in KCPE results. The literature attributes this to superficial or symbolic implementation of controls, where routine checks lack strategic depth or fail to translate into meaningful improvements (Onyancha et al., 2021; Tarsianer, 2021). Moreover, it is argued that Headteachers' leadership styles and personal characteristics—such as experience and qualifications—shape the effectiveness of controlling practices. Leadership should go beyond documentation and compliance to actively fostering teacher development, mentoring, and curriculum support. The literature underscores the need for genuine instructional leadership, emphasizing that Headteachers must not only perform tasks but also inspire and guide educational improvement.

In conclusion, while controlling management practices are theoretically sound, their effectiveness is undermined when applied in a routine or non-strategic manner. The literature calls for a shift from procedural control to purposeful leadership that integrates data-driven decision-making, meaningful teacher support, and contextual awareness to drive academic achievement.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey with a mixed-methods approach. This choice was pivotal, as it allowed for the simultaneous collection of both quantitative and qualitative data to determine the current state of affairs of Headteachers controlling management practices and pupils' academic achievement (KCPE mean scores) in public primary schools in West Pokot County, Kenya.

3.2 Population, Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The target population for this study comprised Headteachers from 320 public primary schools in West Pokot County that had recorded Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examination results between 2012 and 2016. Additionally, the population included 1280 Subject Heads of Departments (HODs), 1920 class eight pupils, 4 Teachers Service Commission Sub-County Director of Education (TSC SCDE), and one Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (QUASO). The sample size for schools was determined using the "Rule of Thumb," a commonly applied approach suggesting a minimum sample size of 10% of the population or 30 for smaller populations, based on the premise that 30 data points generally provide sufficient information for statistically sound conclusions about a population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). From the accessible population, 32 Headteachers, 128 Subject HODs, 192 class eight pupils, 4 TSC SCDE, and one QUASO were purposively sampled. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation across different strata within the pupil population.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

The study utilized a multifaceted approach to data collection, employing a combination of instruments to gather comprehensive information. Questionnaires were the primary instruments for collecting quantitative data from the Headteachers of public primary schools, subject HODs, and class eight pupils during the initial phase of the mixed-methods research. Structured interview guides were employed to elicit verbal responses and facilitate the collection of in-depth qualitative information from the Headteachers, TSC SCDE, and QUASO. Observation guide was used to systematically record observations during visits to schools and classrooms. Data was captured through research journal entries and photographs of the school environment, with strict adherence to ensuring that photographs did not reveal the identity of any school. Document analysis involved the systematic review of existing records, specifically focusing on KCPE mean scores of schools, pupils' records, and other relevant educational data.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The study utilized distinct analytical approaches for quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data, collected using questionnaires from Headteachers, subject HODs and class eight pupils, was analyzed descriptively using frequencies, means, percentages, t-tests, and standard deviations. Inferential analysis involved correlations and regression analysis, performed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 software. The study utilized the PROCESS macro in SPSS to determine the moderating effect of Headteachers demographic characteristics on the relationship between controlling management practices in academic programmes and pupils' academic achievement (Hayes & Preacher, 2012; Hayes, 2017). Qualitative data, gathered through interview guides from Headteachers, TSC SCDE, and QUASO, was analyzed thematically. The findings from this qualitative analysis were presented in a narrative form, proving rich contextual details.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Academic Performance of West Pokot County Public Primary Schools from the Year 2012- 2016

Despite national commitments to provide Education for All (EFA), including in the new Constitution, educational investment has had limited impact in Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs), including West Pokot County, where the status of education remains extremely poor (Ayiro & Sang, 2017). Public primary schools in West Pokot County have consistently registered dismal academic performance over the years compared to other parts of the country as indicated in Table 1.

Results in Table 1 indicate that in 2012, 37.5% of schools had mean scores below 249, with only 15.6% scoring between 291-310. No school surpassed the 311 marks, indicating overall low performance. In 2013 there were minor improvements: 34.4% of schools scored between 250-270, while 21.9% achieved scores between 271-290. A few schools (6.3%) entered the 311-330 range, showing slight gains. In 2014, while 28.1% of schools still scored below 249, there was a notable increase to 25.0% of schools scoring between 291-310, the highest for that band in the five years, though still no school crossed 311 marks. In 2015 marked a regression, with 37.5% of schools falling back below 249 marks. However, 9.4% of schools scored between 311-330 an improvement from earlier years. The 2016 results showed further decline, with 43.8% of schools scoring below 249. Nonetheless, 12.5% achieved scores between 311-330, and for the first time, one school (3.1%) exceeded 331 marks- a rare indication of high-quality performance.

Table 1

KCPE Mean Scores for the Years 2012-2016

	KCPE YEAR									
	2016		2015		2014		2013		2012	
KCPE Mean Score	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
< 249	14	43.8	12	37.5	9	28.1	10	31.3	12	37.5
250-270	5	15.6	5	15.6	9	28.1	11	34.4	11	34.4
271-290	4	12.5	4	12.5	6	18.8	7	21.9	4	12.5
291-310	4	12.5	8	25.0	8	25.0	2	6.3	5	15.6
311-330	4	12.5	3	9.4	0	0	2	6.3	0	0
>331	1	3.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Ideally, education provision in ASALs should mirror that is in other parts of the country in terms of delivery mechanisms, human resources, and curricula. However, these areas face significant disparities in infrastructure, human resource and livelihood bases, and socio-environmental conditions. Lanyasunya (2012), notes that the number of primary school pupils from the ASALs making it to national secondary schools and public universities remains dismally low as supported by other scholars who have done their study in these areas (Dyer, 2013; Jackson, 2012). In this challenging context, transformative Headteachers possessing the competencies and skills to influence the strategic direction of education, particularly within schools, are recognized as critical factors in school management. Even with Headteachers employing various controlling management practices to influence pupils' academic achievement, the expected improvements have not materialized. This situation highlights a critical gap in existing literature, noting that very little research specifically addresses Headteachers' controlling management practices in academic programs and pupils' academic achievement within schools, particularly in the context of West Pokot County, Kenya (Middlewood & Lumby, 2010).

4.2 Management of Teaching and Learning / Teachers and Pupils Management

4.2.1 Headteachers' Management Practices in the Classroom

The management of teaching/learning and teachers and pupils by Headteachers in West Pokot County is indicated in Table 2. Headteachers reported substantial engagement in various controlling management practices. A majority of Headteachers (75.0%), HODs (73.4%), and pupils (70.6%) indicated that Headteachers monitor pupils' performance. Discussions about pupils' performance with teachers were also prevalent (75.0% of Headteachers). Headteachers reported high rates of checking curriculum implementation (65.6%) and syllabus coverage (66.9% by HODs), and regularly checked records like lesson notes and attendance (75% of Headteachers). They also reported high involvement in resourcing (75.0%) and maintaining school facilities (71.9%).

Further, despite these reported efforts, discrepancies emerged. Discussions with parents were less frequent (59.4% of Headteachers). This is supported by Ndirangu (2015) who indicated that pupils of parents that get involved in their children's academic performance do better than those who do not. Reward systems were notably deficient, with only a minority (40.6% of Headteachers) reporting academic rewards. Most strikingly, while Headteachers reported high involvement in maintaining facilities, observations revealed *"minimal maintenance of school facilities"*, evidenced by dilapidated buildings, pot holed classrooms with broken windows, poor sanitation, lack of clean water, overcrowded

classrooms, broken desks, and 'missing libraries' in 85% of the schools. Majority of the HOD's (71%) indicated that Headteachers rarely supervised teaching and learning when teaching is going on which could have effect on syllabus coverage and teacher attendance.

Table 2

Implementation of Headteachers Controlling Management Practices in Schools

Academic Programme Activities	Responses					
	HT		HOD's		Pupils	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Monitoring pupils' performance progress	24	75.0	91	73.4	113	70.6
Discuss pupils' performance with teachers	24	75.0	68	54.8	107	66.9
Discuss pupils' performance with parents	19	59.4	54	43.5	75	46.9
Rewarding school academic performers	13	40.6	57	46.0	72	45.0
Reward school KCPE performers	13	40.6	42	33.9	57	35.6
Supervises teaching and learning when teaching is going on	16	50.0	36	29.0	85	53.1
Headteacher checks curriculum implementation and syllabus coverage by the teachers	21	65.6	83	66.9	0	0
Headteacher checks teacher & pupil class attendance	19	59.4	85	68.5	115	71.9
Headteacher checks teacher school attendance	25	78.1	95	76.6	120	75.0
Checks teachers' lesson books, schemes of work, registers, and records of work covered and attendance records are up to date	24	75.0	77	62.1	0	0
Headteacher ensures teacher discipline in the school	25	78.1	95	76.6	0	0
Headteacher ensures pupil discipline in school	23	71.9	98	79.0	115	71.9
Maintains teaching and learning facilities in the school	23	71.9	80	64.5	122	76.3
Headteacher participates in supervision of exams	17	53.1	55	44.4	100	62.5
Pupils' academic records are kept well in your school	26	81.3	86	69.4	111	69.4
The school organizes and conducts parents' meetings annually	20	62.5	69	55.6	55	34.4
Headteacher supports teacher efforts in school	18	56.3	75	60.5	64	40.0
Headteacher helps sustain practices that would improve learning	22	68.8	80	64.5	72	45.0
Headteacher is involved in resourcing for improving teaching and learning	24	75.0	79	63.7	50	31.3

A study done by Ndirangu (2015) indicated that monitoring teachers' coverage of the syllabus through classroom visitation gradually improved the performance of pupils in Mathioya sub-county. Mulinge (2021) indicates that teacher and pupils continued missing and low attendance from class results in loss of content and knowledge contributing to low performance of pupils. This suggests that controlling management practices may be superficial or their positive effects overshadowed by other forces.

The effectiveness of these practices is severely undermined by overwhelming external constraints. Headteachers cited parental non-involvement due to illiteracy or busyness. Limited funds for rewards were corroborated by the TSC SCDE and QUASO of West Pokot County. This finding is supported by Anderson (2001) who reports that teachers` motivation is a key factor in enhancing teachers' commitment which in turn is an important determinant of learning outcomes. Pervasive cultural practices and insecurity such as early marriages, circumcision ceremonies, cattle rustling, floods, FGM, poverty, hunger and insecurity, contribute to teacher and pupil absenteeism and dropouts, severely undermining school-level interventions.

4.2.2 External Oversight (QUASO & SCDE) Activities in Public Primary Schools

The TSC SCDE and QUASO are officials who are in every County to ensure that schools operate as required. The views of Headteachers and subject HODs are indicated in Table 3. External oversight bodies, QUASO and the TSC SCDE are mandated to monitor and advise schools. While 62.5% of Headteachers and 61.3% of HODs reported that these bodies "sometimes" visit schools, feedback is consistently provided after supervision, and teachers generally relate well with supervisors. Comments from supervision panels are perceived to help Headteachers become better managers.

However, QUASO and the TSC SCDE face substantial challenges limiting their effectiveness. Logistical and financial constraints are prominent, as visits are *"not frequent due to lack of finances and vehicles for monitoring and evaluation"*. Further, the *"remoteness of most areas and insecurity in some of the areas also limits our visits"*. This limited and inconsistent external oversight creates a significant "support-effectiveness" gap, hindering sustained improvement in school management and academic outcomes.

Table 3

Views on Activities of Sub-County Director of Education and QUASO in Schools

QUASO and SCDE Academic Programme Activities	Responses							
	Headteachers				HOD's			
	Always		Sometimes		Always		Sometimes	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
QUASO's and SCDE visit our schools	10	31.3	20	62.5	35	28.2	76	61.3
Monitoring and advising my school on academic performance	17	53.1	13	40.6	53	42.7	57	46.0
Monitoring and advising my school on sports, games, drama and music	11	34.4	14	43.8	42	33.9	46	37.1
Monitor and advice my school on environmental conservation	10	31.3	15	46.9	45	36.3	40	32.3
Provide career guidance to my school	9	28.1	13	40.6	43	34.7	46	37.1
Advice teachers on curriculum delivery	18	56.3	11	34.4	60	48.4	52	41.9
Advice teachers on assessment	18	56.3	13	40.6	50	40.3	62	50.0
Advice on proper and adequate provision of physical facilities	14	43.8	12	37.5	50	40.3	50	40.3
Identify the teachers' needs and advice on improvement	22	68.8	9	28.1	44	35.5	62	50.0
After the supervision the QASO and SCDE give feedback to teachers	24	75.0	7	21.9	66	53.2	40	32.3
Teachers relate well with the QASOs and SCDE during the supervision process	25	78.1	7	21.9	68	54.8	39	31.5
QASOs and SCDE recommend teachers for seminars and workshops?	19	59.4	11	34.4	61	49.2	43	34.7
Comments from supervision panels help head teachers become better managers	16	50.0	15	46.9	61	49.2	54	43.5
QASOs and SCDE supervision helps Headteachers in developing skills in school management?	19	59.4	13	40.6	64	51.6	51	41.1

However, QUASO and the TSC SCDE face substantial challenges limiting their effectiveness. Logistical and financial constraints are prominent, as visits are *"not frequent due to lack of finances and vehicles for monitoring and evaluation"*. Further, the *"remoteness of most areas and insecurity in some of the areas also limits our visits"*. This limited and inconsistent external oversight creates a significant "support-effectiveness" gap, hindering sustained improvement in school management and academic outcomes.

4.3 Examinations and Test management

4.3.1. Assessment of Pupils in the Classroom

Schools in West Pokot County extensively use a wide range of assessment tools with considerable frequency as indicated in Table 4. Daily classroom tests and quizzes are administered more than twice a week (65.6% of Headteachers, 70.2% of HODs, 73.1% of pupils). Monthly tests are also common (75% of Headteachers, 99.2% of HODs). Midterm tests are frequent (46.9% of Headteachers, 50.8% of HODs, 46.3% of pupils), and terminal and annual examinations are regularly administered. The majority also reported frequent use of past papers for revision (68.8% of Headteachers, 79.0% of HODs, 69.4% of pupils).

Further, despite this extensive and frequent use of diverse assessment tools, a striking discrepancy exists with actual academic outcomes since the study explicitly states that the KCPE mean scores do not reflect the effect of these evaluations on the performance of the learners. The majority of schools consistently recorded a mean of less than 250 marks in KCPE from 2012 to 2016 as indicated in Table 1. This finding contradicts the general understanding that adequate evaluation improves performance. Related literature by Nimmi, et. al. (2021), indicates that adequate evaluation of pupils improves the performance of pupils in external examination. This highlights a significant assessment-action gap, where assessments are performed, but the subsequent stages of analyzing deviations, determining reasons, and implementing effective remedial actions appear weak or ineffective, leading to a disconnect between evaluation activity and genuine improvement.

Table 4

Type and Frequency of Assessment Tools in Schools

Type of Assessment Tools	Frequency of Assessment Tools								
	HT			HOD's			Pupils		
	No. of Times	F	%	No. of Times	F	%	No. of Times	F	%
Daily classroom tests and quizzes	> 2	21	65.6	> 2	87	70.2	> 2	117	73.1
Monthly tests	> 2	24	75.0	> 2	123	99.2	> 2	78	48.8
Midterm tests	> 2	15	46.9	> 2	63	50.8	> 2	74	46.3
Terminal examinations	1	17	53.1	1	60	48.4	1	65	40.6
Annual examinations	1	20	62.5	> 2	61	49.2	> 2	136	85
Past papers Examinations	> 2	22	68.8	> 2	98	79.0	> 2	111	69.4

4.3.2 Communication of Pupils Results and Parental Engagement

Results on the mode of communication of academic achievement of pupils in West Pokot County public primary schools is presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Mode of Communication of Academic Achievement of Pupils in Schools

Mode of Communication	Responses					
	HT		HOD's		Pupils'	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Report Forms	20	62.5	84	67.7	87	54.4
Notice boards	10	31.3	59	47.6	101	63.1
Pamphlets during academic meetings	8	25.0	44	35.5	63	39.4
Orally in class	25	78.1	92	74.2	117	73.1
Report Books	22	68.8	86	69.4	114	71.3

Headteachers in West Pokot County public primary schools reportedly use diverse methods to communicate pupils' academic achievement, including oral communication in class (78.1% of Headteachers, 74.2% of HODs, 73.1% of pupils), report books (68.8% of Headteachers, 69.4% of HODs, 71.3% of pupils), and report forms (62.5% of Headteachers, 67.7% of HODs, 54.4% of pupils). This multi-modal approach aims to facilitate follow-up and pupil motivation.

However, despite these efforts, significant challenges hinder effective parental involvement. Headteachers noted that *"some parents are not educated and are not able to follow up on the academic performance of their children from the report forms,"* leading to poor academic performance due to insufficient parental engagement. They also observed that *"parents do not discuss performance of learners with teachers and rarely came for such discussions, even when called upon to do so."* This indicates that the problem is not lack of communication channels, but a weakness in the quality of engagement, as strategies may not be tailored to parental literacy levels, suggesting a need for more adaptive, culturally sensitive approaches. Literature review on the findings by Ndirangu (2015) revealed that parents' involvement in the education of their children had a positive impact on pupils' academic performance.

4.3.3 Pupils' Perceptions on Headteachers Management Practices and Academic Achievement

Pupils expressed overwhelmingly positive views regarding their Headteachers management practices, academic preparation, school environment, and parental involvement as indicated in Table 6.

A significant majority (91.9%) believed their school was good and could yield good results, and 94.4% felt adequately prepared for KCPE. According to Luke & Mavis (2014), the 'good schools' are those that are able to groom the pupils well enough to achieve the set standards which is measured by use of pupils' academic achievement both at school level and nationally. They also reported high parental encouragement (95.0%) and belief that parents ensured work was done properly (78.2%).

Table 6

Pupils' Views on Headteachers Controlling Management Practices in Schools

	Strongly Agree		Undecided		Strongly Disagree	
Statements	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**
This a good school where pupils get good results	147	91.9	6	3.8	7	4.4
We are adequately prepared for Kenya Certificate Primary Education Examinations (KCPE).	151	94.4	6	3.8	3	1.9
Parents encourage us in many ways to do well at school.	152	95.0	2	1.3	6	3.8
Revision of past papers by our teachers promotes good results.	142	88.8	9	5.6	9	5.6
The Headteacher sometimes supervises the teachers when they are teaching	117	73.2	13	8.1	15	18.8
The Headteacher ensures there are enough teaching and learning resources	136	85.0	9	5.6	15	9.4
Teachers use teaching and learning resources all the time they are teaching	147	91.9	5	3.1	8	6.1
Our parents buy for us the books we need to improve our performance	135	84.4	12	7.5	13	8.2
The Headteacher discusses with our parents our performance in school	132	82.6	10	6.3	8	11.3
The Headteacher ensures teachers attend classes	147	91.9	8	5.0	5	3.1
The Headteacher ensures there is security in the school	135	84.4	12	7.5	13	8.1
Top performers are usually awarded for good performance	129	80.6	12	7.5	19	11.9
The Headteacher improves the infrastructure of our school	133	83.2	15	9.4	12	7.5
Teachers communicate well with us on different issues concerning our performance	147	91.9	6	3.8	7	4.4
The Headteacher ensures there is good discipline by all pupils	149	93.2	7	4.4	4	2.5
Parents ensure that our school work is done properly by checking progress records	125	78.2	24	15.05	11	6.9
KCPE candidates are usually given motivational speeches before the exams	136	85.1	9	5.6	15	9.4
Teachers always encourage and help us whenever we do not perform well in our exams	146	91.3	9	5.6	2	1.3
The Headteacher ensures pupils do not absentee themselves from school	133	83.1	13	8.1	6	3.8
The Headteacher ensures pupils do not absentee themselves from class when teaching is going on	127	79.4	13	8.1	9	5.6
The cultural practices of our community affect our academic performance	90	56.3	19	11.9	26	16.3

A significant finding was that 56.3% of pupils agreed that cultural practices affected their academic performance, a perception strongly supported by the TSC SCDE and QUASO of West Pokot County who cited *"early marriages, circumcision ceremonies, cattle rustling, FGM, poverty and insecurity"* as contributing to absenteeism and dropouts. Odhiambo (2009) and Mulinge (2021) indicated that Lateness, absenteeism, and irregular school attendance contribute to the difficulty students experience in comprehending material when studying independently, and Persistent class absences lead to a deficit in content and knowledge acquisition.

Further, despite these positive perceptions, the study revealed a contradiction with the actual academic outcomes as observed in Table 1 and observations from Headteachers. The persistently poor KCPE mean scores directly undermine pupils' belief in adequate preparation. This perception of performance disconnect suggests a critical breakdown in the feedback loop, where students' unrealistic beliefs may perpetuate low achievement. Headteachers countered pupils' perceptions of strong parental involvement, stating that *"some parents are not educated and are not able to follow up"* and that *"parents do not discuss performance of learners with teachers and rarely came for such discussions"*. According to Mohai & Kweon (2020), a child's academic environment has a significant impact on how they develop intellectually. Further Mulinge (2021) indicated that the physical, social, cultural and psychological environments all have a role in the educational process of a child. These findings are in agreement with those of Chebitwey (2013) that pupils in marginalized areas faced many challenges including under staffing in schools, lack of proper infrastructure, few or lack of funds, lack of teaching and learning resources and interference of some cultural practices such as cattle rustling and FGM which have led to low academic outcomes of pupils.

4.4 Inferential Statistics

4.4.1 The Effect of Headteachers Controlling Management Practices in Academic Programmes and Pupils' Academic Achievement

Simple linear regression was used to determine the effects of Headteachers controlling management practices in academic programmes on pupils' academic achievement (KCPE mean scores) in public primary schools in West Pokot County, Kenya as indicated in Table 7.

From the Headteachers' perspective, controlling management practices in academic programs showed a very strong positive statistical relationship with pupils' academic achievement, explaining 83.9% of the variance in KCPE

mean scores (R^2 = 0.839), 21.9% (R^2 = 0.219) for HODs, and 67.3% (R^2 = 0.673) as perceived by pupils. This suggests that, in theory, these practices are highly effective in driving academic outcomes. Thenmozhi, n.d., (2017) indicated that controlling as a practice is primarily the process of laying standards, comparing actuals and correcting deviation to achieve objectives in accordance to the plans. Akpan (1999) also emphasized that measurement of performance is also a major step in the Headteachers controlling management practice since finding out deviations becomes easy through measuring the actual performance even though performance levels may or may not be easy to measure.

Table 7

Model Summary of the Headteachers Controlling Management Practices in Academic Programmes on Pupils' Academic Achievement

	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	ANOVA	
						F	Sig.
Headteachers	**1**.(Constant)	.956	.914	.898	.10091	55.301	.000
	Controlling	.916	.839	.834	.12855	156.405	.000
Subject HOD's	**2**.(Constant)	.994	.987	.987	.02794	1832.44	.000
	Controlling	.468	.219	.212	.21623	33.916	.000
Pupils	**3**.(Constant)	.983	.967	.967	.05406	2314.13	.000
	Controlling	.820	.673	.671	.17012	325.18	.000

b. Predictors: (Constant), Controlling.

a. Dependent Variable: KCPE Mean Scores

However, despite this high reported implementation and strong statistical association, the study consistently concludes that public primary schools in West Pokot County continue to register poor results as indicated in Table 1. The study reveals that Headteachers often carry out these practices routinely rather than strategically, leading to infective management and poor academic outcomes (KCPE results) rather than a genuine means to improve performance. This suggests that the issue lies not in whether the practices are done, but in how well they are implemented and the context in which they occur. The inconsistency between the practices and the outcomes highlights the need to explore whether Headteachers' demographic characteristics influence the effectiveness of these practices and thus setting the stage for moderation analysis.

4.4.2 Impact of Headteachers Controlling Management Practices in Academic Programmes on Pupils' Academic Achievement

The simple linear regression was used to predict the value (impact) of the independent variable (Headteachers controlling management practices) on the dependent variable (KCPE mean grades). Subject HODs and pupils' results were used to verify the findings of Headteachers. The standardized Coefficients are presented in Table 8.

The ANOVA test in Table 8 confirms a statistically significant difference between Headteachers' controlling management practices and pupils' academic achievement (F = 108.798, ρ = 0.000 for Headteachers; F = 1832.441, ρ = 0.000 for Subject HODs). This suggests that the observed relationship in the sample is unlikely to have occurred by chance, implying a genuine relationship in the population. The estimated standardized coefficients, indicated a moderately strong positive relationship between Headteachers' controlling management practices in academic programs and pupils' academic achievement, which was statistically significant (β = 0.522, ρ = 0.000), with a strength of 52.2% for Headteachers. For the Subject HODs, a very weak positive relationship was found (β = 0.305, ρ = 0.000) with a strength if of 30.5%. For pupils, a weak positive relationship was observed (β = 0.463, ρ = 0.000) with a strength of 46.3%.

Table 8

Standardized Coefficients of Headteachers Controlling Management Practices on the KCPE Mean Scores

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			ANOVA	
	Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	F	Sig.
Headteachers	**1**.(Constant)	-.062	.142		-.437	.666	108.798	.000
	Controlling	.759	.095	.522	7.99	.000		
Subject HOD	**2**.(Constant)	.035	.021		1.68	.095	1832.44	.000
	Controlling	.190	.007	.305	28.69	.000		
Pupils	**3**.(Constant)	.075	.036		2.06	.041	2314.13	.000
	Controlling	.457	.017	.463	26.74	.000		

a. Predictors: (Constant), Controlling.

b. Dependent Variable: KCPE Mean Scores

The unstandardized coefficients indicate that a one-unit increase in Headteachers controlling management practices in academic programmes is associated with a 75.9% increase in KCPE mean scores for Headteachers, a 19.0% increase for Subject HODs, and a 45.7% increase for pupils. The results of the study reveal a significant effect, that despite high R^2 values indicating that both Headteachers (83.9%) and pupils (67.3%) believe that controlling management practices strongly influence KCPE performance, actual results remain poor as indicated in Table 1.

These results further suggest a disconnect between perceived effectiveness and real academic outcomes. The issue is not the absence of control, but rather its ineffectiveness. Possible reasons could be misalignment between what is being controlled and what truly impacts learning and ineffective execution of control, often reduced to routine tasks. From reviewed literature, lack of meaningful evaluation, as emphasized by Musingafi et al. (2014), who stress that assessment and feedback are vital for improving outcomes. Further, failure to set and communicate clear standards, as noted by Thenmozhi (2017), which weakens the ability of control to guide performance. There is an urgent need to rethink and realign controlling management practices in schools so they can genuinely support academic improvement.

4.4.3 The Moderating Effect of Demographic Characteristics of the Headteacher

The study utilized the PROCESS macro in SPSS to determine the moderating effect of Headteachers' demographic characteristics on the relationship between controlling management practices in academic programs and pupils' academic achievement. The analysis revealed that all the three Headteacher demographic characteristics; experience as a Headteacher, teaching experience, and academic qualifications, significantly moderated this relationship as indicated in Tables 9, 10 and 11.

4.4.4 The Moderating Effect of Experience as a Headteacher

A moderation test was conducted with Headteachers' controlling management practices as the predictor, KCPE mean scores as the dependent variable, and experience as a Headteacher as the moderator as presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Moderation Effect of Experience as Headteacher between the Headteachers Controlling Practices and KCPE Mean Scores

Y- KCPE MEAN SCORES X- CONTROLLING PRACTICES M- EXPERIENCE AS A HEADTEACHER
SAMPLE SIZE: 32
OUTCOME VARIABLE: KCPE MEAN SCORES

Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.7092	.5030	304.5153	9.4450	3.0000	28.0000	.0002
Model Coefficients						
Variable	Coeff	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	266.9552	3.1555	84.6007	.0000	260.4914	273.4191
IV5Cont	14.7725	4.2113	3.5078	.0015	6.1458	23.3992
A5	7.5816	2.8251	2.6836	.0121	1.7944	13.3688
Int_1	17.8562	4.5543	3.9207	.0005	8.5549	27.158
Conditional effects of the focal predictor at values of the moderator(s)						
A5	Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
-1.1341	21.3007	5.6472	3.7719	.0008	9.7326	32.8687
0.0000	14.7725	4.2113	3.5078	.0015	6.1458	23.3992
1.1341	8.2443	6.4209	1.2840	.0209	-4.9086	21.3972

The moderation analysis indicated a moderately strong correlation ($R = 0.7092$) between controlling management practices and KCPE mean scores. Approximately 50.30% of the variance in KCPE mean scores was explained by Headteachers' controlling practices, experience as a Headteacher, and their interaction ($R^2 = 0.5030$, $F = 9.45$, $\rho < 0.05$). This represents a significant reduction from the 83.9% variance explained by controlling management practices alone, indicating that experience as a Headteacher accounts for a substantial portion of the variability in the relationship. A positive significant main effect was found between controlling practices and KCPE mean scores ($b = 14.77$, $\rho < 0.05$). Similarly, experience as a Headteacher also showed a positive significant main effect on KCPE mean scores ($b = 7.58$, $\rho < 0.05$). Crucially, a significant interaction effect was observed ($b = 17.86$, $\rho < 0.05$), confirming that experience as a Headteacher moderates the relationship between controlling management practices and KCPE mean scores.

Further, the analysis of conditional effects revealed that at low levels of experience as a Headteacher, the positive effect of controlling management practices on KCPE mean scores was stronger ($b = 21.30$, $\rho < 0.05$). This effect

progressively diminished at average levels (b = 14.77, ρ < 0.05) and higher levels of experience (b = 8.24, ρ < 0.05). This pattern suggests that for Headteachers who are relatively new to the role, actively implementing structured controlling management practices yields a greater positive impact on academic outcomes. This is supported by Akpan (2011), who indicates that the Headteachers controlling management practices is an end management practice which comes once the performance is made in conformity with plans and a pervasive function which is performed by Headteachers at all levels and in all type of concerns.

These practices might provide a critical framework and guidance for managing school operations effectively when other forms of leadership, capital, such as extensive experience, are still developing (Musingafi, et. al., 2014). Conversely, as Headteachers gain more experience, while controlling management practices still contribute positively, their additional marginal impact diminishes. This could imply that highly experienced Headteachers may have developed a broader and more sophisticated repertoire of leadership strategies, perhaps more subtle, empowering, or transformational approaches that are not fully captured by the Headteachers controlling management practices. Their effectiveness might stem from these alternative strategies, making reliance on overt controlling practices less singularly impactful. This suggests a shift in optimal leadership approaches as experience grows.

4.4.5 The Moderating Effect of Teaching Experience

A moderation test was also performed with Headteachers' controlling management practices as the predictor, KCPE mean scores as dependent variable, and teaching experience of the Headteachers as the moderator as presented in Table 10

Table 10

Moderation Effect of Teaching Experience between the Headteachers Controlling Practices and KCPE Mean Scores

Model: 1
Y- KCPE MEAN SCORES X- CONTROLLING PRACTICES M- TEACHING EXPERIENCE
SAMPLE SIZE: 32

Model Summary						
R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.5924	.3510	397.6454	5.0471	3.0000	28.0000	.0064
Model Coefficients						
	Coeff	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	265.7971	3.6257	73.3099	.0000	258.3700	273.2241
IV5Cont	16.6966	5.0495	3.3066	.0026	6.3529	27.0403
A4	-2.5072	3.7541	-.6679	.0097	-10.1973	5.1829
Int_1	-.8166	4.3533	-.1876	.0085	-9.7341	8.1009
Conditional Effects of the Focal Predictor at Values of the Moderator						
A4	Effect	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
-.9980	17.5116	5.6466	3.1013	.0044	5.9448	29.0784
.0000	16.6966	5.0495	3.3066	.0026	6.3529	27.0403
.8125	16.0331	6.9408	2.3100	.0285	1.8150	30.2512

From Table 10, teaching experience was found to significantly moderate the relationship between controlling management practices and KCPE mean scores. The overall moderation model, including controlling management practices, teaching experience, and their interaction, explained approximately 35.10% of the variance in KCPE mean scores (R^2 = 0.3510, F = 5.05, ρ < 0.05). A statistically significant positive main effect of controlling practices on KCPE mean scores was observed (b = 16.70, ρ < 0.05). However, a statistically significant negative main effect of teaching experience on KCPE mean scores was observed (b = -2.51, ρ < 0.05). This indicates that, holding controlling practices constant, Headteachers with more teaching experience are associated with lower KCPE mean scores. A statistically significant interaction effect was also found (b = 0.817, ρ < 0.05).

Further, the results indicated that at low levels of teaching experience, controlling management practices had a stronger positive effect (b = 17.51, ρ < 0.05) compared to average levels (b = 16.70, ρ < 0.05) or higher levels (b = 16.03, ρ < 0.05). The negative main effect of teaching experience is a notable and counter-intuitive finding, as more experienced is generally assumed to be beneficial for educational outcomes. This suggests that, all else being equal, Headteachers with more teaching experience are associated with lower KCPE mean scores. This could be explained by several factors within the challenging context of West Pokot County.

The pervasive and severe contextual challenges, such as insecurity, cultural practices, like early marriages and FGM, poverty, hunger, dilapidated infrastructure, and high teacher/pupil absenteeism rates, may be so profound that

they dilute or overwhelm the positive influence of even highly experienced Headteachers. Their extensive experience might not be sufficient to overcome these deep-seated systemic impediments. It is also plausible that more experienced Headteachers are strategically assigned to schools facing the most severe pre-existing challenges and lowest academic performance, precisely because they are perceived as more capable of handling such difficulties. If this is the case, their presence might correlate with lower overall school performance due to the severity of the problems they inherit, rather than their own ineffectiveness.

The interaction effect and conditional effect further reinforce the pattern observed with Headteacher experience that the positive impact of controlling management practices slightly diminishes as teaching experience increases. This suggests that the benefits of explicit control are more pronounced when the Headteacher has less prior teaching experience to draw upon, possibly because they rely more heavily on structured management approaches.

4.9.3 The Moderating Effect of Academic Qualifications of the Headteachers

A moderation test was also performed with Headteachers' controlling management practices as the predictor, KCPE mean scores as dependent variable, and academic qualifications of the Headteachers as the moderator as presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Moderation Effect of Academic Qualification between the Headteachers Controlling Practices and KCPE Mean Scores

Model: 1
Y- KCPE MEAN SCORES X- CONTROLLING PRACTICES M- ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS
SAMPLE SIZE: 32
OUTCOME VARIABLE: KCPE MEAN SCORES

Model Summary						
R	**R-sq**	**MSE**	**F**	**df1**	**df2**	**p**
.6340	.4020	366.4035	6.2732	3.0000	28.0000	.0022
Model Coefficients						
	coeff	**se**	**t**	**p**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**
constant	265.6715	3.3956	78.2393	.0000	258.7157	272.6273
V5Cont	16.7790	4.5414	3.6947	.0009	7.4761	26.0819
A3	-6.7494	4.249	-1.5881	.0123	-15.4552	1.9565
Int_1	-6.9868	6.9493	-1.0054	.0323	-21.2221	7.2485
Conditional effects of the focal predictor at values of the moderator(s):						
A3	Effect	se	**t**	**p**	LLCI	ULCI
-.8328	22.5976	6.8168	3.3150	.0025	8.6336	36.5616
.0000	16.7790	4.5414	3.6947	.0009	7.4761	26.0819
.8328	10.9604	7.8592	1.3946	.0174	-5.1388	27.0596

Academic qualifications were found to significantly moderate the relationship between controlling management practices and KCPE mean scores. The overall moderation model, including controlling practices, academic qualifications, and their interaction, explained approximately 40.2% of the variance in KCPE mean scores ($R^2 = 0.4020$, $F = 6.27$, $\rho < 0.05$). A statistically significant positive main effect of controlling practices on KCPE mean scores was observed ($b = 16.78$, $\rho < 0.05$). However, a statistically significant negative main effect of academic qualifications on KCPE mean scores was observed ($b = -6.75$, $\rho < 0.05$). This implies that, holding controlling practices constant, Headteachers with higher academic qualifications are associated with lower KCPE mean scores. A statistically significant negative interaction effect was also found ($b = -7.00$, $\rho < 0.05$).

Further, the results indicated that at low levels of academic qualifications, controlling management practices had a stronger positive effect ($b = 22.60$, $\rho < 0.05$) compared to average levels ($b = 16.78$, $\rho < 0.05$) or higher levels ($b = 10.96$, $\rho < 0.05$). Similar to teaching experience, the negative main effect of academic qualifications is unexpected. This suggests that, all else being equal, Headteachers with higher academic qualifications are associated with lower KCPE mean scores. The explanation for this negative main effect likely parallel those for teaching experience and the overwhelming contextual challenges of West Pokot County may significantly dilute the benefits of higher academic knowledge.

Further, from the study we could say that highly qualified Headteachers might be grappling with more severe systemic issues in the schools they lead. Alternatively, highly qualified Headteachers might be more inclined towards broader educational philosophies (student-centered learning, holistic development) that are not fully captured by the specific operationalization of controlling management practices in this study. If their more nuanced approaches do not immediately translate into higher standardized test scores within highly constrained and challenging environment, it could manifest as a negative correlation. The interaction effect indicates that the positive impact of controlling practices

diminishes as academic qualifications increase. This reinforces the consistent pattern and explicit controlling practices yield greater benefits when the Headteacher has less academic capital to draw upon.

4.5 Discussion

The central finding established from the results is that all the three Headteacher demographic characteristics; namely, experience as a Headteacher, overall teaching experience, and academic qualifications, exert a statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between Headteachers management practices and pupils' academic achievement. This represents a pivotal advancement beyond a simplistic direct cause-and-effect, highlighting the nuanced and contingent nature of leadership effectiveness in educational settings. This is in line with Francisco (2020) who reiterated that one of the most crucial factors in designing an educational system, particularly in pedagogical advances aimed at providing high-quality instruction, has been the demographic makeup of teachers (Francisco, 2020).

The Headteachers controlling management practices accounted for a substantial proportion of the variance in KCPE mean scores of schools and alone explained 83.9% of this variance ($R^2 = 0.839$), which in isolation, might initially suggest a very strong and direct predictive power for controlling management practices from the Headteachers' perspective. This is supported by a majority of studies carried out on school leadership which has revealed that school leadership quality directly impacts on the school success, teacher's effectiveness and pupils' academic performance (Aboyassin & Abood, 2013; Akoth, 2015; Azlin et al., 2021). Further, in a study that examined 69 research studies of 2,802 schools, approximately 1.4 million students, and 14,000 teachers and concluded that Headteachers have an impact on student achievement (Marzano et al., 2005).

A key aspect of the findings is the impact of the three moderators on the proportion of variance explained in pupils' academic achievement. As previously noted, before the introduction of any moderating variables, controlling management practices alone accounted for 83.9% of the variance in KCPE mean scores. The subsequent introduction of the demographic moderators fundamentally alters the perception of a straightforward, universal efficacy. However, the subsequent introduction of each demographic characteristic as a moderator resulted in a significant reduction in the proportion of variance explained by controlling management practices in their relationship with KCPE mean scores. For experience as a Headteacher, the R^2 for the moderation model was 50.3%, for teaching experience the R^2 was 35.1% and for academic qualification it was 40.2%.

The substantial reduction in R^2 values, when the moderators are introduced, powerfully demonstrates that these demographic characteristics account for a significant portion of variability in the relationship itself. This implies that the perceived "effectiveness" of predictive power of controlling management practices is not a fixed, universal value. Instead, it is highly context-dependent, specifically on the Headteacher's demographic profile. Middlewood & Lumby (2010), reiterated that one of the key characteristics of high academic achieving schools included competent Headteachers. Further, Pupils' academic achievement is affected by various factors, with research indicating that the Headteacher, teacher quality, parental support, and pupil characteristics significantly impact academic performance (MacNeil & Maclin, 2005; Okonkwo, 2016; Ememe, 2018). Another study found that pupils' academic progress was significantly impacted by their teachers' teaching qualifications (Fakeye, 2012).

The statistically significant moderating effect implies that the relationship between controlling management practices and academic outcomes is not linear or universally applicable, but intricately contingent upon the specific personal and professional profile of the Headteacher. The analytical shift moves the inquiry from a question of "what practices are universally effective?", under what specific conditions are these practices effective, and for which type of leaders", representing the complexities of leadership efficacy within the educational domain, underscoring that the study's primary contribution lies in revealing the conditional nature of leadership effectiveness, thereby moving beyond a universalistic approach to school management. Reviewed literature by Sandra (2013) & Mageka and Ogochi (2020) indicated that students' academic performance improves in correlation with teachers' years of experience, and the reverse is also true. The academic success of pupils is positively impacted by school characteristics, such as the number of years of experience of principals and teachers (Aturapane, Glewwe & Wisniewski, 2013; Mageka et. al., 2020).

The initial high R^2 of 83.9% for controlling practices alone may reflect Headteachers' strong belief in the importance and efficacy of controlling management practices, rather than their universal, unconditional effectiveness in practice. The substantial reduction in R^2 when the moderators are introduced reveals that a significant portion of the variance attributed by controlling practices alone is explained by the interaction between the practices and the Headteachers' demographic attributes, indicating that the unmoderated effect of the practices is not as high as indicated, and that their actual impact is heavily conditional. The moderation analysis gives the true predictive power of controlling management practices revealing their conditional nature. This analysis explicitly states that the moderators help us understand why poor pupil academic outcomes may persist despite reported high implementation of controlling management practices. Onyancha, Ondigi, Mobegi (2021) & Tarsianer (2021), indicated that despite structured efforts such as lesson monitoring, assessment, and parental engagement, schools in West Pokot County report persistent underachievement in KCPE results. The literature attributes this to superficial or symbolic implementation of controls,

where routine checks lack strategic depth or fail to translate into meaningful improvements (Onyancha et al., 2021; Tarsianer, 2021).

If controlling practices were universally effective, as suggested by the initial R^2, then a high degree of implementation should logically lead to high academic outcomes. The moderation analysis provides the missing link: high implementation might indeed be occurring, but it might be happening in contexts or by Headteachers for whom these specific practices are less effective or, in some cases, even counterproductive. This explains the observed disconnect between reported effort in implementing controlling practices and the actual academic results, explaining the persistent low academic achievement despite widespread adoption and seemingly effective management practices.

Further, the positive impact of these practices on pupils' academic achievement, as measured by KCPE mean scores, was notably more pronounced at lower levels of the moderating demographic variables. This implies that for Headteachers possessing less experience in their role, less overall teaching experience, or lower academic qualifications, the implementation of structured and explicit controlling management practices yielded a more significant and beneficial improvement in pupils' academic outcomes. Conversely, as the levels of these demographic characteristics increased, meaning Headteachers accumulated more experience or attained higher qualifications, the positive effect derived from controlling management practices on academic achievement progressively diminished. This points to a potential developmental or adoptive model of leadership effectiveness. It suggests that Headteachers with less intrinsic professional capital, characterized by a smaller accumulation of experience or formal knowledge, tend to rely more heavily on structured and explicit controlling practices. For these individuals, such practices appear to provide a more significant and necessary boost to academic outcomes, serving as foundational guidance and crucial framework for school management. They actually compensate for a nascent leadership repertoire by providing clear structures and directives.

As Headteachers gain more experience and higher qualifications, they are likely to develop a broader and more adaptive repertoire of leadership skills. This expanded set of capabilities might encompass more nuanced approaches, such as transformational, participative, or empowering leadership strategies which were covered in the theoretical framework of the study. A study by Francisco, (2019) indicated that teachers' perceptions of their own abilities in the classroom are somewhat to strongly impacted by principals' transformational leadership methods. Consequently, the additional benefit derived from explicit controlling practices becomes less pronounced or even redundant for these more seasoned leaders, as their effectiveness increasingly stems from these other, more sophisticated strategies. This dynamic model of leadership efficacy carries critical implications for the design and implementation of targeted leadership training and professional development programs.

The observation of negative significant main effects for both teaching experience and academic qualifications on KCPE mean scores implies that, when controlling management practices are held constant, Headteachers with greater experience or higher academic qualifications are associated with lower KCPE mean scores. This necessitates a deeper consideration of the complex interplay with challenging contextual factors prevalent in West Pokot County. West Pokot County is characterized by severe and entrenched problems, including pervasive issues such as high insecurity, extreme poverty, and deeply engrained cultural practices that significantly contribute to chronic absenteeism (Ayiro, et. Al., (2017). However, Arop, et al., (2020), indicated that some educators executed their duties carelessly, disregarding the impact on students. This suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach to leadership development may be suboptimal and instead, initiatives should be tailored to the specific developmental stage and needs of the Headteacher, ensuring that training is maximally effective at different career junctures. For instance, novice leaders might benefit most from explicit guidance on foundational management practices, while experienced leaders might instance more from advanced workshops on strategic leadership or complex problem-solving, aligning development with their evolving professional requirements.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The collective findings of this analysis lead to a profound overall conclusion that the efficacy of controlling management practices in influencing pupils' academic achievement is unequivocally not universal. Instead, it is intricately contingent upon the personal and professional profile of the Headteacher and the challenging context within which they operate. The statistically significant moderating effects of experience as a Headteacher, teaching experience, and academic qualifications, coupled with the nuanced patterns of their influence and the counter-intuitive main effects, dismantle the notion of universal best practices in school leadership.

The most critical implication derived from this study is that a "one-size-fits-all" approach to implementing controlling management practices or evaluating Headteacher effectiveness is demonstrably insufficient and potentially counterproductive. Simply providing more "controlling management" training, or assuming that more qualified Headteachers will automatically improve scores across all contexts, is unlikely to be effective. The study implies that

the impact of a highly qualified Headteacher in a severely disadvantaged school might primarily be in preventing even worse outcomes, rather than achieving high standardized test scores, which may be an unrealistic expectation given the prevailing conditions. Their success might be better defined as mitigating decline or maintaining stability in the face of immense challenges, a crucial nuance that traditional, growth-oriented metrics often fail to capture. If achieving high scores is deemed "unrealistic" under such circumstances, then the true value and contribution of these leaders lie in their capacity to prevent a collapse or further deterioration of educational standards.

The findings also underscore that effective school leadership, particularly in challenging and marginalized contexts, requires more than just the mechanical implementation of management functions. It demands a nuanced understanding of how a leaders personal attributes interact with their applied practices and the prevailing environmental constraints. The persistent poor academic results, despite reported efforts, highlight a systemic issue. Individual school-level interventions and Headteacher efforts, while necessary, are insufficient on their own without broader policy and resource interventions that directly address the fundamental socio-economic, cultural, and security impediments prevalent in West Pokot County.

5.2 Recommendations

Therefore, tailored professional development and support initiatives are essential to maximize the impact of management interventions. Such interventions must explicitly acknowledge and integrate the Headteacher's demographic profile and the severe contextual constraints they face. This research provides a strong empirical basis for a more nuanced, context-sensitive approach to educational leadership policy and training, moving beyond simplistic input-output models. It points to a need for diagnostic approaches to leadership development that assess the Headteacher's individual profile and the specific challenges of their school. Only then can interventions be appropriately tailored, shifting from prescriptive to a more responsive and adaptive policy framework designed to truly support Headteachers in fostering academic success in diverse and challenging environments like schools in West Pokot County.

The TSC needs to provide additional support to teachers with lower academic qualifications to maximize the benefits of controlling practices implicitly since controlling practices are more critical leverage point for leaders with less formal academic background. Further, there should be tailored training where novice Headteachers should be trained in basic, structured controlling management practices and experienced leaders should be empowered with transformational and adaptive leadership skills. Headteachers should have strategic use of controls and should be taught to use controlling management practices strategically (e.g., using data for improvement, not just compliance). There should also be systemic interventions where authorities (TSC SCDE, QUASO) must tackle external challenges such as cultural practices, insecurity, poverty that limit school effectiveness. Solutions must also be multi-sectoral, involving education officials, community and policy actors.

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