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Administrative Support Systems and Teacher Transfer intentions in Public Day Senior Schools in Bungoma West Sub-County, Kenya

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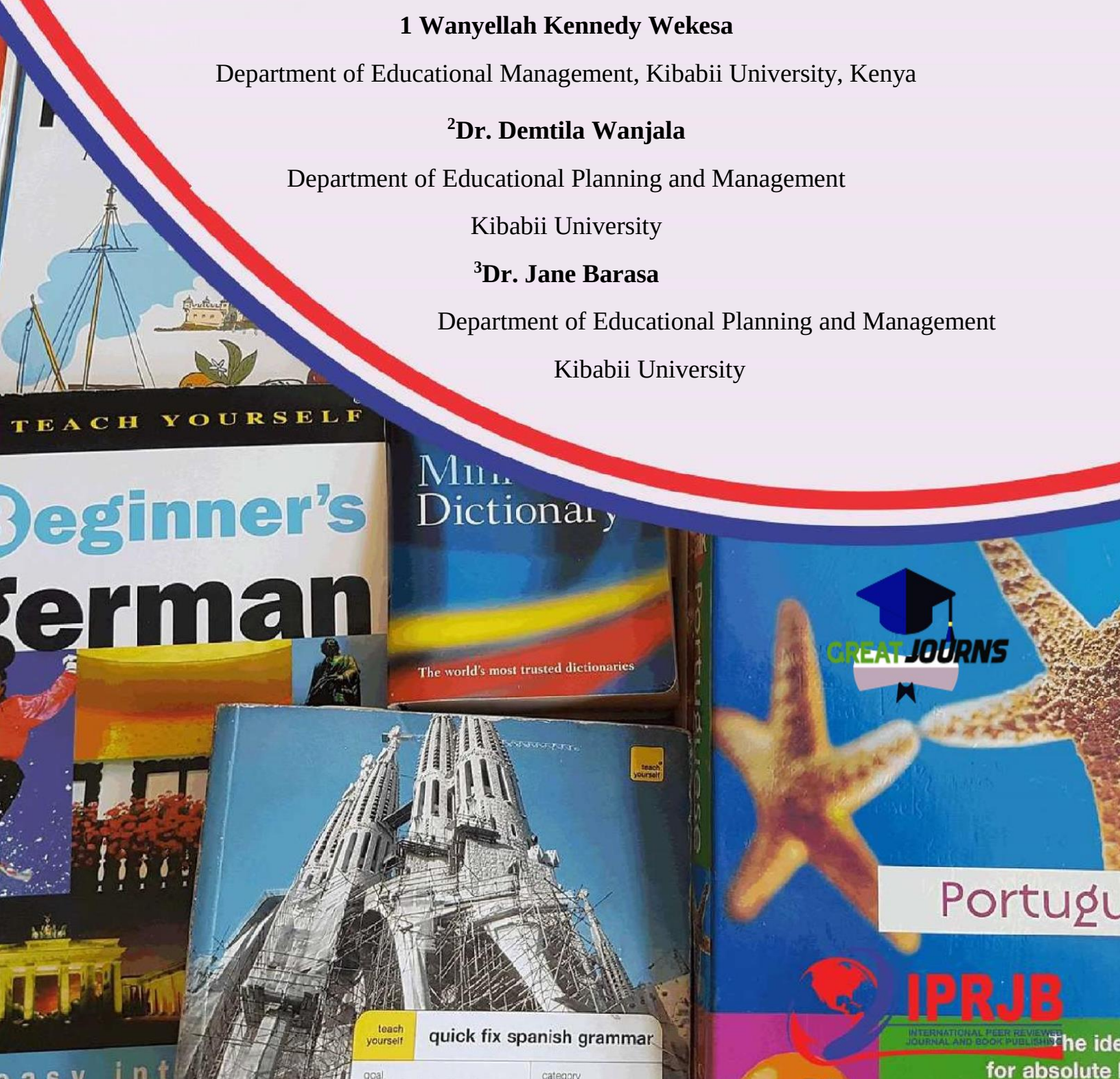
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ABSTRACT

Teacher attrition through transfer requests remains a persistent threat to instructional continuity and institutional stability in Kenya's public day senior schools, with Bungoma West Sub-County recording an annual attrition rate of approximately 8.7 percent, a figure that exceeds both the county average of 6.4 percent and the national average of 5.8 percent. Although school management practices are widely presumed to shape teachers' decisions to remain in or leave their stations, the specific contribution of administrative support systems, namely instructional guidance, resource provision, conflict resolution, and participatory decision-making, has not been systematically established within this resource-constrained rural context. This study therefore sought to analyze the influence of administrative support systems on teacher transfer intentions in public day senior schools in Bungoma West Sub-County, Kenya. The study was anchored on Social Exchange Theory and employed a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design. From a target population of 835 educational professionals drawn from 42 public senior schools, a sample of 297 respondents was selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure combining stratified, purposive, and systematic random sampling. Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to 180 teachers and analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression in SPSS version 31, while qualitative data from interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis were analyzed thematically. Descriptive results showed that teachers held moderately positive perceptions of administrative support, with mean scores ranging from 3.56 to 3.60 on a five-point Likert scale. Regression analysis revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between administrative support and teacher transfer intentions ($R = 0.708$, $R^2 = 0.502$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.499$), with the model explaining 50.2 percent of the variance in transfer intentions. Analysis of Variance confirmed that the regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 158) = 159.109$, $p < .001$, while the coefficient results indicated that a one-unit increase in administrative support was associated with a 0.617-unit increase in transfer intentions ($\beta = 0.708$, $t = 12.614$, $p < .001$). Qualitative findings corroborated these results, revealing that teachers who felt excluded from decision-making, received inadequate feedback, and experienced unresponsive administration were more inclined to consider transferring. The study concludes that administrative support is a critical determinant of teacher transfer intentions and recommends that school administrations institutionalize genuine participatory structures, strengthen feedback mechanisms, and improve responsiveness to teacher concerns in order to enhance retention.

Keywords: ***Administrative support systems; teacher transfer intentions; school management practices; Social Exchange Theory; public day senior schools; Kenya***

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher transfer intentions represent one of the most persistent challenges confronting the management of public secondary education in Kenya, with far-reaching consequences for instructional continuity, institutional memory, and the financial sustainability of schools. In Bungoma West Sub-County, this challenge has assumed a particularly acute character: between 2019 and 2022 the sub-county recorded an average annual teacher attrition rate of approximately 8.7 percent, a figure that substantially exceeds the county average of 6.4 percent and the national

average of 5.8 percent. Of the 42 public day senior schools in the sub-county, 34 had experienced teacher departures, and roughly a quarter of resultant vacancies remained unfilled for extended periods, forcing schools to rely on temporary or under-qualified substitutes. The downstream effects include declining performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education, reduced student engagement, increased disciplinary problems, and mounting recruitment and training costs that strain already limited school budgets.

School management practices, comprising administrative support systems, leadership styles, and working conditions, are theorized to be central determinants of teachers' decisions to remain in or seek transfer from their current stations. Among these, administrative support systems, understood as the structured mechanisms through which school leadership provides instructional guidance, allocates teaching resources, resolves workplace conflict, and communicates policy, occupy a particularly important position because they represent the most immediate and frequent point of contact between teachers and the institution. Despite this centrality, the specific contribution of administrative support to transfer intentions has not been systematically examined within the Kenyan rural school context, where principals often operate with limited specialized training in instructional leadership and where resource constraints may shape the form that administrative support takes. Most of the empirical literature on this relationship originates from well-resourced urban school systems in North America, Europe, and Australasia, leaving a considerable gap in understanding of how administrative support functions, and how strongly it predicts transfer intentions, in resource-constrained, rural, Sub-Saharan African settings such as Bungoma West Sub-County.

It was against this background that the present study set out to analyze the influence of administrative support systems on teacher transfer intentions in public day senior schools in Bungoma West Sub-County, Kenya. The study was guided by the following null hypothesis: there is no statistically significant relationship between administrative support systems and teacher transfer intentions in public day senior schools in Bungoma West Sub-County, Kenya. By combining quantitative regression analysis with qualitative interview, focus group, and document evidence, the study sought to generate empirically grounded, contextually relevant insights capable of informing school-level, county-level, and national policy interventions aimed at stabilizing the teaching workforce.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Social Exchange Theory, which conceptualizes the employment relationship as a reciprocal exchange in which employees calibrate their commitment and intention to remain according to the benefits they perceive themselves to be receiving from the organization relative to the costs they bear. Applied to the school context, administrative support constitutes a key organizational benefit: when teachers perceive that the administration provides adequate instructional guidance, teaching resources, fair grievance handling, and opportunities for participation in decision-making, they are inclined to reciprocate with loyalty and continued service. Conversely, when administrative support is perceived as inadequate or inconsistent, the exchange relationship is perceived as unbalanced, prompting teachers to develop intentions to

transfer as a means of restoring equity. Grissom (2011) demonstrated that administrative support explained a substantial proportion of variance in teachers' perceived exchange favorability, while Tschannen-Moran (2014) found that trust in leadership, a construct closely related to administrative responsiveness, explained over a third of the variance in retention intentions. Social Exchange Theory therefore provided a coherent theoretical lens for interpreting the relationship between administrative support and transfer intentions examined in this study.

2.2 Administrative Support Systems and Teacher Transfer Intentions

A substantial body of international research has established administrative support as one of the strongest predictors of teacher retention. Instructional leadership, understood as the principal's provision of regular instructional guidance and feedback, has been consistently linked to lower turnover. Kraft, Marinell, and Yee (2016), in a study of approximately 9,000 teachers across multiple districts, found that teachers receiving regular instructional guidance were substantially more likely to remain in their positions than those lacking such support, while Grissom, Bartanen, and Mitani (2019), analyzing longitudinal data from Tennessee, found markedly lower turnover rates in schools whose principals demonstrated strong instructional leadership relative to those whose principals focused primarily on administrative compliance. The quality and consistency of feedback appears to matter particularly for early-career teachers: Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, and Marinell (2017) found that novice teachers who received structured, growth-oriented feedback were considerably less likely to leave their schools within three years than those receiving generic or infrequent feedback.

Resource provision constitutes a second dimension of administrative support with demonstrated retention effects. Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas (2019) found that equitable distribution of instructional materials, technology, and classroom supplies was associated with markedly lower teacher turnover, a finding corroborated by Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, and Darling-Hammond (2016), who showed that schools providing comprehensive teaching resources retained teachers at higher rates than under-resourced schools. Conflict resolution capacity likewise shapes retention outcomes: Grissom and Bartanen (2019) found that administrators skilled in addressing interpersonal disputes and policy disagreements retained teachers at considerably higher rates than those lacking such skills, while García and Weiss (2019) reported that many teachers who left their positions cited unresponsive administration as a primary reason for departure. Communication effectiveness rounds out the construct: Will, Gonzalez-DeHass, and Doan (2019) found that principals maintaining open, transparent communication channels retained teachers at substantially higher rates than those with poor communication practices.

Within the Kenyan context specifically, Wekesa and Nyakundi (2019) examined administrative support primarily in urban schools, leaving rural and peri-urban settings such as Bungoma West Sub-County underexamined, while Makokha and Chemwei (2020) and Wafula and Kipkoech (2021) similarly pointed to gaps in the empirical understanding of how administrative practices function, and how strongly they predict transfer intentions, in resource-constrained rural school environments. Most existing studies also treat administrative support as a unified, undifferentiated construct rather than disaggregating its constituent dimensions, namely instructional guidance, resource allocation, conflict resolution, and participatory decision-

making, limiting understanding of which specific administrative practices matter most for retention in Sub-Saharan African contexts.

2.3 Research Gap

Taken together, the reviewed literature demonstrates a consistent, positive relationship between administrative support and teacher retention across diverse settings, yet reveals a persistent geographical, contextual, and methodological gap: the overwhelming majority of empirical studies were conducted in well-resourced urban school systems in developed countries, with rural, resource-constrained, Sub-Saharan African contexts substantially underrepresented. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019), in a systematic review of teacher retention studies, found that a large majority of the reviewed research examined urban or suburban contexts in developed countries, raising questions about the transferability of findings to settings such as Bungoma West Sub-County, where infrastructure limitations, resource constraints, and cultural factors may condition the relationship between administrative support and transfer intentions differently than in well-resourced urban environments. It was this gap that the present study sought to address.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a mixed-methods research design, specifically an explanatory sequential approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The quantitative phase used a correlational survey approach to examine the relationship between administrative support and teacher transfer intentions, while the subsequent qualitative phase employed case studies of selected schools to explain and elaborate on the quantitative findings.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Bungoma West Sub-County, located in the western region of Bungoma County, Kenya, approximately 380 kilometers northwest of Nairobi. The sub-county contains 42 public day senior schools categorized as national (1), extra-county (3), county (11), and sub-county (27) institutions, and experiences an annual teacher attrition rate of 8.7 percent, higher than both the county average of 6.4 percent and the national average of 5.8 percent, making it an appropriate context for investigating the relationship between administrative support and teacher transfer intentions.

3.3 Target Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Procedure

The target population comprised 835 educational professionals in public senior schools in Bungoma West Sub-County, including principals (42), deputy principals (38), heads of department (168), and teachers (587). Using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations ($n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$, with $N = 835$ and $e = 0.05$), a base sample of 270 was calculated; this was increased by 10 percent to account for potential non-response, yielding a final sample of 297 participants, representing 35.6 percent of the target population. A multi-stage sampling approach

was used: 30 of the 42 schools (71.4%) were selected through stratified random sampling across school categories and geographical locations; principals and deputy principals were selected purposively; heads of department were purposively selected at two per school; and 180 teachers were selected through systematic random sampling at six per school. For the qualitative phase, six schools were purposively selected based on documented retention patterns for in-depth case studies.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 180 teachers, capturing perceptions of administrative support across seven indicators measured on a five-point Likert scale. This was complemented by semi-structured interviews with all 30 sampled principals and 27 deputy principals, focus group discussions with heads of department in the six case-study schools, and an observational checklist used to review school documents such as staff meeting minutes and notice boards relating to administrative practice. Secondary data were drawn from school records on teacher transfers and management practices.

3.5 Reliability and Validity

Content and face validity of the instruments were established through expert review by five specialists in educational management, who evaluated whether items accurately reflected the intended constructs; ambiguous or irrelevant items were reworded or removed accordingly. Reliability of the teacher questionnaire was established using Cronbach's alpha following pilot testing with 30 teachers from non-participating schools, yielding a coefficient of 0.84, which exceeds the acceptable threshold of 0.70 and indicates satisfactory internal consistency. Reliability of the qualitative instruments was established through member checking, while the observational checklist achieved an inter-rater agreement of 92 percent between two independent raters, exceeding the recommended 90 percent threshold.

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data from the teacher questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS version 31. Descriptive statistics, comprising means and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondents' perceptions of administrative support. To determine whether administrative support significantly predicted teacher transfer intentions, simple linear regression analysis was conducted, with the coefficient of determination (R^2) used to assess the proportion of variance in transfer intentions explained by administrative support, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) used to test the overall statistical significance of the regression model. All statistical tests were conducted at a 95 percent confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$). Qualitative data from interviews, focus group discussions, and document review were analyzed thematically using NVivo software through open, axial, and selective coding, allowing themes to be triangulated against the quantitative findings.

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4. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive Results: Perceptions of Administrative Support

Respondents' perceptions of administrative support were assessed across seven indicators. As shown in Table 1, mean scores ranged narrowly from 3.56 to 3.60 on the five-point scale, indicating that teachers generally perceived administrative support as moderately adequate. The statement "The administration communicates school policies clearly to teachers" recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.60, SD = 1.64), while "My supervisor gives me regular feedback on my work" and "I have access to professional development opportunities" recorded the lowest mean scores (M = 3.56, SD = 1.64 and 1.65 respectively). Standard deviations above 1.6 across all items indicate considerable variation in respondents' experiences, suggesting that while many teachers perceived administrative support positively, a substantial minority held less favorable views.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Administrative Support Indicators (n = 160)

Indicator	Min	Max	Mean	SD
The administration provides adequate teaching resources	1.00	5.00	3.581	1.654
My supervisor gives me regular feedback on my work	1.00	5.00	3.556	1.644
The administration communicates school policies clearly	1.00	5.00	3.600	1.641
I receive support when facing classroom challenges	1.00	5.00	3.575	1.620
There is a fair system for handling teacher grievances	1.00	5.00	3.581	1.650
The administration involves teachers in decision making	1.00	5.00	3.581	1.635
I have access to professional development opportunities	1.00	5.00	3.556	1.655

Qualitative evidence corroborated the descriptive results. One principal observed: "We try to provide whatever support we can, but resources are limited. When teachers feel supported, they stay. I have seen teachers leave because they felt the administration did not care about their problems" (Principal, School 07). A head of department similarly noted: "The administration tries, but sometimes teachers come to me with issues that I cannot solve. They need teaching materials, they need feedback, they need someone to listen. When these things are not available, they start thinking about transferring" (HOD, School 12). These accounts align with the

observational data, which found that only 45 percent of schools had functional suggestion boxes and 60 percent maintained updated staff notice boards, and are consistent with García and Weiss (2019), who found that unresponsive administration was frequently cited by departing teachers as a primary reason for leaving.

4.2 Regression Results

To determine whether administrative support significantly influences teacher transfer intentions, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted, with administrative support as the predictor and teacher transfer intentions as the outcome variable. The model summary, ANOVA, and coefficient results are presented in Tables 2, 3, and 4 respectively.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.708	.502	.499	1.00936

Predictors: (Constant), Administrative Support.

4.3 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Table 3: ANOVA Results

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	162.100	1	162.100	159.109	.000
Residual	160.971	158	1.019		
Total	323.071	159			

Dependent Variable: Teacher Transfer Intentions. Predictors: (Constant), Administrative Support.

The ANOVA results were used to test whether the regression model was statistically significant and suitable for predicting teacher transfer intentions. The findings show that the regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 158) = 159.109$, $p < .001$. Since the significance value (.000) is below the conventional threshold of 0.05, the null hypothesis that administrative support has no significant influence on teacher transfer intentions is rejected. This confirms that the regression model provides a good fit for the data and can reliably be used to predict teacher transfer intentions based on levels of administrative support.

4.4 Regression Coefficients

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.036	.192		.188	.851
Administrative Support	.617	.049	.708	12.614	.000

Dependent Variable: Teacher Transfer Intentions.

The model summary results show a correlation coefficient of R = 0.708, indicating a strong relationship between administrative support and teacher transfer intentions. The coefficient of determination (R^2 = 0.502) reveals that administrative support accounts for 50.2 percent of the variation in teacher transfer intentions, while the adjusted R^2 of 0.499 confirms that, after adjusting for sample size, administrative support still explains approximately 49.9 percent of the variation. The standard error of estimate (1.00936) indicates that the model predicts the dependent variable with a reasonable degree of accuracy, while the remaining variance is attributable to factors outside the model, such as leadership styles and working conditions.

The coefficient results indicate that administrative support had a positive and statistically significant effect on teacher transfer intentions (β = 0.708, t = 12.614, $p < .001$). The unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.617) implies that a one-unit increase in administrative support is associated with a 0.617-unit change in the composite transfer intentions score, while the large t-value and highly significant p-value confirm that the observed relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance. Collectively, these results demonstrate that administrative support, encompassing effective communication, provision of teaching resources, professional support, participation in decision-making, and fair grievance handling, is a substantial and statistically robust predictor of teachers' transfer intentions in public day senior schools in Bungoma West Sub-County.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that administrative support systems exert a strong, positive, and statistically significant influence on teacher transfer intentions in public day senior schools in Bungoma West Sub-County, accounting for slightly over half of the variance in transfer intentions. This finding is consistent with the broader international literature, which has repeatedly identified administrative support as one of the strongest organizational predictors of teacher retention. It aligns closely with Kraft, Marinell, and Yee (2016), who found that regular instructional guidance and feedback substantially increased the likelihood that teachers would remain in their positions, and with Grissom, Bartanen, and Mitani (2019), whose Tennessee-based longitudinal analysis found markedly lower turnover in schools with strong instructional leadership. The magnitude of the relationship observed in this study, with administrative support explaining just over 50 percent of the variance, is notably larger than that reported in several Western studies, suggesting that administrative support may carry even greater weight in resource-constrained rural contexts, where teachers have fewer alternative sources of

professional support and where the administration's responsiveness may be the primary buffer against workplace frustration.

The qualitative evidence deepens this interpretation. Teachers' accounts of feeling unheard, receiving inconsistent feedback, and encountering unresponsive administration when raising classroom challenges echo García and Weiss's (2019) finding that unresponsive administration was frequently cited among departing teachers as a primary reason for leaving. The observation that only 45 percent of sampled schools maintained functional suggestion boxes points to a structural, rather than merely attitudinal, deficit in participatory mechanisms, corroborating Grissom and Bartanen's (2019) finding that conflict-resolution capacity meaningfully differentiates schools with higher and lower retention. Read through the lens of Social Exchange Theory, these findings suggest that teachers in Bungoma West Sub-County are engaged in an ongoing calculation of reciprocity: where administrative responsiveness, resource provision, and participatory decision-making are perceived as adequate, teachers reciprocate with continued commitment; where they are perceived as inadequate, teachers begin to view the employment relationship as unbalanced and develop intentions to transfer as a means of restoring equity.

The relatively uniform mean scores across the seven administrative-support indicators (ranging narrowly from 3.56 to 3.60) suggest that teachers do not sharply differentiate among specific administrative functions, such as feedback, resource provision, and grievance handling, but rather form a holistic impression of administrative quality that shapes their overall transfer calculus. This is consistent with the broader thesis finding that administrative support, leadership styles, and working conditions covary so closely (each independently explaining approximately 50 percent of variance in transfer intentions) that they may be understood as interconnected dimensions of a single underlying construct of school management quality, rather than as fully separable predictors. This has an important implication for policy and practice: interventions that strengthen administrative responsiveness are likely to have spillover benefits for teachers' perceptions of leadership and working conditions more broadly, and vice versa.

Nonetheless, the standard deviations exceeding 1.6 across all indicators point to considerable heterogeneity in teachers' experiences of administrative support, indicating that the moderately positive average conceals a meaningful subgroup of teachers who perceive administrative support as poor. This heterogeneity is consistent with the mixed picture emerging from the qualitative data, where some principals described genuine efforts to support teachers despite resource constraints, while some teachers and heads of department described unresolved grievances and limited feedback. This variation underscores the importance of school-level, rather than purely sub-county-level, interventions, since the adequacy of administrative support appears to vary meaningfully across individual school contexts.

6. CONCLUSION

This study set out to analyze the influence of administrative support systems on teacher transfer intentions in public day senior schools in Bungoma West Sub-County, Kenya. The findings provide strong empirical support for the conclusion that administrative support systems are a critical determinant of teacher transfer intentions. Teachers who perceive low levels of

administrative support, particularly with respect to decision-making involvement, regular feedback, and responsiveness to concerns, are significantly more likely to consider transferring from their current schools. The regression analysis demonstrated that administrative support alone accounts for 50.2 percent of the variance in transfer intentions, a statistically significant and practically substantial effect ($F(1, 158) = 159.109$, $p < .001$; $\beta = 0.708$). The positive direction of the relationship confirms that as administrative support strengthens, transfer intentions decline, and conversely, as it weakens, transfer intentions rise. This pattern is well explained by Social Exchange Theory: teachers who perceive an imbalance between the support they receive and the effort they contribute respond by developing intentions to exit the relationship. The study therefore concludes that administrative support is not a peripheral or merely administrative concern but a central pillar of teacher retention strategy in Kenya's public day senior schools.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made.

7.1 School Administrations

School administrations should move beyond token consultation to establish functional committees and regular forums through which teachers actively participate in decisions affecting resource allocation, policy implementation, and professional development. This recommendation is grounded in Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that when teachers perceive genuine organizational investment in their input and welfare, they reciprocate with commitment and loyalty, thereby reducing transfer intentions. At the policy level, schools should develop clear, documented frameworks for teacher participation that are monitored and evaluated as part of routine institutional governance.

7.2 School Principals

School principals should strengthen the consistency and quality of feedback provided to teachers and ensure that mechanisms for raising and resolving classroom-level challenges are functional and accessible, including reinstating or maintaining suggestion boxes and regularly updated notice boards. Principals should also prioritize transparent communication of school policies, building on the relative strength already observed in this indicator, while investing comparatively greater attention in the weaker areas of feedback provision and professional development access.

7.3 Ministry of Education and Teachers Service Commission

The Ministry of Education and the Teachers Service Commission should introduce targeted interventions addressing resource gaps in disadvantaged rural schools, including the provision of teaching materials and administrative capacity-building for principals in instructional leadership and conflict resolution. A comprehensive teacher retention framework should be developed linking resource allocation to retention outcomes, with clear accountability measures for school-level implementation and regular monitoring to ensure equitable distribution of administrative support capacity across schools of varying resource levels.

7.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies should explore longitudinal patterns linking administrative support to actual (rather than intended) teacher transfer behavior, track how changes in administrative practice over time affect retention outcomes, and undertake comparative studies between rural and urban schools to establish whether the strength of the administrative support-transfer intention relationship observed in this study generalizes across different resource and infrastructure contexts. In-depth qualitative studies employing life-history interviews could further illuminate the decision-making processes through which teachers weigh administrative support against other factors in arriving at transfer decisions.

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