



# INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' TRADE UNIONS ON TEACHERS' SATISFACTION IN ADDRESSING WORKING CONDITIONS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EMBU COUNTY, KENYA

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## ABSTRACT

Teachers' good working conditions help in enhancing service delivery and hence good performance. The study focused on the influence of trade unions membership on teachers' and principals' satisfaction with the working condition in Embu County, Kenya. Embu County has consistently performed posted poor results in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) The study employed a cross-sectional survey in design and implementation. A total of 203 teachers and 21 principals participated in the survey. The data were analyzed using frequency, percentages, mean, standard error of the mean, and simple linear regression. The study established that teachers (3.94) and principals (3.48) were satisfied trade unions efforts in bargaining for teachers' good working conditions. There was a positive association between union membership and teachers' and principals' satisfaction with working conditions. The study found a significant association between trade union membership and teachers' working conditions satisfaction. The findings implied that union membership among teachers and principals of teachers would significantly improve their satisfaction. The study recommended that trade unions should keep up their excellent work of agitating for better working conditions for their members and that ministry of education to join trade unions to campaign for more teachers to register with trade unions.

**Keywords:** Union Membership; Trade Unions, Working Conditions; Perceptions; Linear Regression, Kenya

## 1.0 Introduction

Teachers are faced with numerous challenges, both professional and personal, globally. Teaching was considered one of the least stressful occupations in the 1970s, but it is currently a stressful profession (Okebukola & Jegede, 2006). Teachers are forced to confront numerous challenges, including poor working conditions (Chireshe & Shumba, 2011). Poor working conditions lead to reduced productivity, poor performance, reduced morale, and reduced delivery. Therefore, effectively considering teachers' working conditions is essential for enhanced satisfaction and delivery.

Teachers' working conditions enhance high-quality education (Liston et al., 2008). To improve high-quality education, schools keep highly qualified, experienced, and talented teachers (Tehseen & Hadi., 2015). However, it reduces productivity when qualified and productive teachers are subjected to poor working conditions. Therefore, school administrations should factor in the teacher working conditions for enhanced performance. Schools that offer suitable working environments retain the best teachers, thus improving performance. Despite the need for school administration to provide adequate working conditions, this is not mainly the case. Therefore, trade unions are formed to champion the rights of teachers.

The Kenya National Union of Teachers (Knut) and the Kenya Union of Post Primary Education Teachers (KUPPET) in Kenya are the leading trade unions that advocate for the rights of teachers. The critical roles of Knut include uniting teachers, supporting improved working conditions, dispute resolution, and supporting programmes that improve teachers' welfare or socio-economic status (KNUT, 2015). Similarly, KUPPET plays a central role in uniting teachers, capacity development of teachers through seminars, and negotiating for the teachers with the employer. Therefore, Knut and KUPPET play a pivotal role in ensuring good working conditions for teachers. In addition to unionization, the socio-demographic factor could also influence teachers' satisfaction with working conditions.

Teachers' satisfaction with working conditions is essential for enhanced service delivery. It is noteworthy that teachers satisfied with working conditions are more likely to do better and enable learners to perform better (Nkengne, 2021). However, the satisfaction of the teachers with the working conditions could be influenced by different factors, including gender, experience, education, and workload (Kamau, 2020; Obungu., 2021; Sudibjo & Manihuruk, 2022). Additionally, teachers' satisfaction with working conditions could significantly differ between union members and non-union members. Therefore, a need to assess the influence of teachers' satisfaction with working conditions between the union and non-union teachers.

Despite the importance of unionization in teachers' satisfaction with working conditions, there is the dearth of information on the determinants and influence of teachers' unionization on working conditions perceptions in Embu County, Kenya. Against this backdrop, this study sought to investigate the determinants of satisfaction with working conditions among unionized and non-unionized teachers. The study's objective was to determine the influence of teachers' trade unions on teachers working conditions satisfaction among union members, teachers, and principals. The study hypothesized that i) Teachers' perceptions of satisfaction with teachers' working conditions significantly differed among union members and non-union participants and ii) different factors influence working conditions satisfaction for union and non-union teachers.

## 2.0 Methodology

### *Study Area Description*

The study was conducted in Embu North, Mbeere North, Embu East, Embu West, and Mbeere South sub-counties in Embu County, Eastern Kenya. It borders the following counties: Tharaka Nithi to the North, Kitui to the East, Machakos to the South, Murang'a to the South West, and Meru to the North West. There are about 205 public secondary schools in the entire Embu County. The County has 2400 teachers and 205 principals. The study concentrated on public secondary schools' teachers and principals.

### *Sampling Procedure and Sample Size*

A cross-sectional survey was employed to sample teachers and principals in Embu County. A multistage sampling procedure was used for the actual sampling. First, Embu county was purposely selected at the first stage because of the literature gap influence of unionization on working conditions satisfaction. Secondly, the whole sampling was employed to sample all the five sub-counties: Embu North, Mbeere North, Embu East, Embu West, and Mbeere South in Embu County. A proportionate to size sampling procedure was used to determine the number of teachers and principals sampled in every sub-county. Finally, an indiscriminate test group procedure was used to collect data from teachers and principals in Embu County. The study targeted 2400 teachers and 205 principals drawn from all the public secondary schools in Embu county. Following Kothari (2005), an ideal sample size should constitute 10-30% of the target population. Therefore, a sample of 240 teachers and 21 principals in the study was used, 10% of the population.

### *Data Collection Procedure*

A semi-structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Before the data collection, the questionnaire and interview schedules were pre-tested using ten randomly selected teachers and five principals. The questionnaires were analyzed for validity and consistency, and improvements were incorporated to generate the final questionnaire. The final questionnaires were administered to 240 teachers and 21 principals. The questionnaires captured questions on union membership, respondents' satisfaction with working conditions, gender, education, experience, age, workload, number of staff, and union members (Table 3.1). The study employed enumerators. The enumerators were trained on question interpretation and survey administration to teachers and principals. The respondents were requested to consent to the survey and notified that participation was voluntary.

### *Data Analysis Procedure*

The study analyzed its data using SPSS 23 software. The completed questionnaires and interview schedules were edited for completeness and consistency and to locate any omissions. Out of the 240 teachers' questionnaires, only 203 were complete. This leads to a response rate of 84.5%. Simple linear regression and descriptive were performed. The study subjected the respondent's perceptions of working conditions to Cronbach Alpha, as indicated by (Heo, 2015). The Cronbach Alpha test evaluates whether the data collection constructs consistently measure the anticipated outcome. The study calculated the weighted average index

(WAI) to rank perceptions of teachers and principals towards the working conditions as described in equation 1.

$$WAI = \frac{\sum sd+d+u+A+sa}{N} \quad (1)$$

Where WAI is the weighted average index, strongly disagree (sd), disagree (d), undecided (u), agree (a), and strongly agree (sa).

A simple linear regression was run to establish the relationship between union membership and teachers' satisfaction with working conditions in Embu County. The model is essential as it showed the strength of the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

The linear regression was based on Equation 2.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + e \quad (2)$$

Y is the dependent variable (working conditions),  $B_0$  is the intercept,  $B_1$  is the regression coefficient, x is the independent variable (union membership), e is the error of the estimate.

### 3.0 Results and Discussion

#### *Demographic outline of the sampled teachers and principals*

Union membership was determined to capture the number of respondents who belonged to the teacher unions. The demographic profile of sampled teachers and principals is presented in Table. Most of the respondents were union members, 159 (78.3%) out of 203 sampled teachers and 18 (85.7%) out of the 21 sampled principals. The findings indicated that most teachers and principals belonged to teachers' unions. Given that only a proportion of the teachers and principals belonged to unions, the survey captured both views of unionized and non-unionized teachers and principals.

On gender, 49.3% of the teachers were female, while 50.7% were male. On the other hand, 52.4 % of the principals were male, while 47.6% were female. The findings showed that both genders were represented in the survey.

On age, 45.3% of the teachers were between 21-and 30 years, 26.6% between 31 and 40 years, 16.7 % between 41 and 50%, and 11.3% Above 50 years. The findings indicated that all ages were represented, and the proportion of teachers decreased with age. The majority of the principals (47.7%) aged above 50 years, 33.3% aged between 31– 40 years, and the minority (9.5%) aged between 41 and 50 years and 21-30 years. The findings suggested the principals were well represented across ages in the study.

The results revealed that 71.9% of the teachers had a first degree, 19.7% had a master's degree, and 8.4% had a diploma. Further, 38.1% of the principals had a degree, 33.3% had a master's degree, and 28.6% had a diploma. The findings indicated that the teachers were highly educated, thus improving the credibility of the information.

Results revealed that 58.6% of the teachers had 21-30 lessons, 25.6% had 16-20 lessons, 11.8% had more than 30 lessons, and only 3.9% had 15 lessons and below. Most teachers had more than 20 lessons as the Teachers' service commissions require a secondary school teacher to have a minimum of 27 classes per week.

Table 3. 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Description	Teacher (N=203)		Principal (N=21)	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Union member	No	44	21.7	3	14.3
	Yes	159	78.3	18	85.7
Gender	Female	100	49.3	10	47.6
	Male	103	50.7	11	52.4
Age	21-30	92	45.3	2	9.5
	31-40	54	26.6	7	33.3
	41-50	34	16.7	2	9.5
	Above 50	23	11.3	10	47.7
Education	Diploma	17	8.4	6	28.6
	Degree	146	71.9	7	33.3
	Masters	40	19.7	8	38.1
Lessons per week	10-15	8	3.9		
	16-20	52	25.6		
	21-30	119	58.6		
	Above 30	24	11.8		
Continuous	Description	Continuous	Standard deviation	Continuous	Standard deviation
Experience*	Year	9.56	8.246	6.91	6.619
Male members of staff	Number			10.13	6.656
Female members of staff	Number			12.00	6.656
Male staff member of the union	Number			8.70	6.752
Female staff members of the union	Number			10.43	7.890

\*Experience teacher's experience and number of years a serving principal

On average, teachers have served in the teaching profession for 9.56 years. On average, the principals served 6.91 years as head of the school. This implied that most of the teachers and principals were experienced. Therefore, the information presented was based on the careful perception of the satisfaction of the teachers and principals for a more extended period.

The results revealed that the average number of male teachers was 10.13 while females were 12.00. Among the teachers, the average number of unionized was 8.70 for males and 10.43 for females. The result established that the schools were well represented in the number of teachers and union membership among female and male teachers.



**Teachers' union membership and non-membership**

Table 2 shows the reasons for union membership and non-membership among teachers in Embu County. The results showed that 44(21.6%) of the teachers were members by default, 40(19.6%) were forced, 39(19.1%) welfare of the teachers, 15(7.4%) benefits associated with union membership, 11(5.4%) membership was compulsory, and 10 (4.8%) were requested to do so. Of most principals, 10(43.5%) joined unions due to benefits associated with it, 6(26.1%) were forced to do so, and 2(8.7%) welfare of the teacher by default.

*Table 3 2 Reasons for union membership and non-membership among teachers and head teachers*

Variables	Teachers		Principal	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Membership</b>				
Forced	40	19.6	6	26.1
By default	44	21.6	2	8.7
Beneficial	15	7.4	10	43.5
Welfare of teachers	39	19.1	2	8.7
Compulsory	11	5.4	-	
Requested	10	4.8		
<b>Non-membership</b>				
Not a TSC employee	19	9.4	1	4.3
No membership chances	13	6.4	-	
No benefits	10	4.8	2	8.7
Personal	5	2.5	-	

The findings showed that teachers did not join trade unions due to being TSC employees 19 (9.4%), no membership chances 13 (6.4%), lack of benefits 10(4.8%), and personal reasons 5(2.5%). Among principals, the main reason for not joining a union was lack of benefits 2(8.7%) and not TSC employees 2(4.3%).

Teachers join trade unions due to numerous benefits associated with unionization. Membership in KUPPET and Knut is voluntary. The two trade unions have laid down elaborate procedures for the membership, including having a Teachers service commission (TSC) payslip and online registration (KNUT, 2015). Since trade union membership is voluntary, some teachers could decide not to. It is noteworthy that a teacher may choose not to join the trade union if they do not perceive any importance of unionization.

*Table 3 3: Perceived Importance of Union among Teachers and Principals*

Union Performance	Teacher		Principal	
	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)
Motivating teachers	52	25.6	9	39.1
Ensuring the right to no violence	121	59.6	10	43.5
Salary negotiation	30	14.8	4	17.4

Teachers and principals were asked to state the perceived importance of trade unions. The results showed that ensuring the right to no violence was the primary benefit of the trade unions 121(59.6%). The finding further revealed that teachers perceived motivation and salary negotiations at 52(25.6%) and 30(14.8%) as essential duties of trade unions (Table 3). The trend was similar among principals, were 10(43.5%) perceived ensuring the right to no violence was paramount to trade unions. Motivating teachers and salary negotiations

were essential duties of trade unions at 9(39.1%) and 4(17.4%), respectively. The main motivations for teachers to join trade unions in Kenya include solidarity, salary negotiations, job protection, and health safety (Ngotho et al., 2019).

### *The perceptions of teachers' working conditions*

Before analysis, you should always test reliability to ensure the data is accurate. The reliability analysis demonstrates how well the research instruments capture respondents' opinions and attitudes (Taber, 2018; Amirrudin, 2021). To adequately characterize the concepts, Cronbach's Alpha value must be greater than 0.7. (Panayides, 2013). To gauge educators' and administrators' contentment with these things, a survey was conducted for this research. Results showed that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for teachers was 0.823, and for principals, it was 0.770. (Table 3 4). This conclusion provides evidence that the employed constructs were valid and accurate measures of teachers' working environments.

*Table 3.4: Reliability Statistics*

Sample	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Teachers	0.823	4
Principals	0.770	4

Teachers and principals were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the role of unions in enhancing the teachers working conditions. The study employed a 5 Likert scale to determine satisfaction among teachers and principals (Nybuti, 2014).

*Table 3.5: Satisfaction in the Working Conditions*

Variable	Teacher		Principal	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation
Salary and allowances paid to teachers	3.93	1.299	3.17	1.267
Professional autonomy	3.96	1.82	3.57	1.308
Number of lessons per week	3.92	1.204	3.61	1.340
Teachers' rights and obligations	3.98	1.169	3.57	1.273
Teachers' working conditions	3.94	0.983	3.48	0.879

Regarding teachers working conditions, most of the teachers were satisfied with their working conditions (3.94), Table 5). The study revealed that teachers were satisfied with the salary and allowances paid to them (3.93), professional autonomy (3.96), the number of lessons per week (3.92), and teachers' rights and obligations (3.98). The principals were satisfied with professional autonomy (3.57), the number of lessons per week (3.61), and teachers' rights and obligations (3.57), Table 5). However, the principals were moderately satisfied with the teachers' salaries and allowances (3.17). Principals showed moderate satisfaction with teacher working conditions (3.48). The findings indicated that teachers in Embu County were satisfied with teachers working conditions while principals were moderately satisfied.

The findings were in line with Bryson and Freeman (2013), who found that working conditions perceptions play a central role in the need for union representation. Similar to the study findings, Chirdan (2009) found

high job satisfaction among workers in Nigeria. Satisfaction in working conditions is essential in determining teachers' service delivery. Therefore, perceptions of working conditions could be vital in defining union membership. The study findings agreed with Fidan and Öztürk (2015), who reported that teachers join the union to enhance the protection of human rights, including improvement in working conditions.

### ***Relationship between union membership and satisfaction with employees' working conditions***

The study hypothesized that unionization influences teachers' satisfaction with working conditions. The hypothesis tested is union membership significantly influences employees' satisfaction. The hypothesis could be tested using different modeling approaches. The nature of the dependent influences the decision to select the appropriate model. This study employed a simple linear regression to show the association between union membership and employee satisfaction.

The R is the co-efficient value used to show the linear association among the independent and the dependent variables in the regression analysis. R-Squared is the coefficient of determination which tells us how trade union representation varied with job satisfaction. A High Pearson correlation coefficient indicates a correlation between dependent and independent variables (Schober 2018).

*Table 3.6: Model Summary*

Sample	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Teachers	0.508 <sup>a</sup>	0.258	0.255	0.84894
Principals	0.704 <sup>a</sup>	0.495	0.471	0.63905

a. Predictors: (Constant), Member of Union

The results in Table 6 show that R squares' values ranged between 0.258 and 0.495 among teachers and principals, respectively. This implied that the union membership explained 25.0% and 49.5% of the employees' satisfaction with working conditions. The remaining 75% and 50.5% were elucidated by other variables not incorporated in the specific study.

Linear regression models use analysis of variance to show whether there are statistical differences between the variables. The ANOVA was significantly different at  $p < 0.001$  among teachers and principals (Table 7).

*Table 3.7: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Results*

Sample		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teachers	Regression	50.471	1	50.471	70.032	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	144.859	201	.721		
	Total	195.330	202			
Principals	Regression	8.413	1	8.413	20.601	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	8.576	21	.408		
	Total	16.989	22			

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers' Working conditions

b. Predictors: (Constant), Member of Union



The findings of the ANOVA were statistically significant to predict the outcome in a good fit of the individual liners regression models. The study revealed that there was a positive association between union membership and teachers' job satisfaction with working conditions ( $B=1.210$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) for teachers and ( $B=1.796$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) for principals.

Table 3. 8: Coefficients Results

Sample	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Teachers	(Constant)	3.000	0.128		23.441	0.000
	Member of Union	1.210	0.145	0.508	8.369	0.000
Principals	(Constant)	1.917	0.369		5.195	0.000
	Member of Union	1.796	0.396	0.704	4.539	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers Working condition

The findings implied that union membership would increase job satisfaction in the units shown in working conditions (1.210) and (1.617) for teachers and principals, respectively. The findings were similar to Nyabuti (2014), who found a positive relationship between union membership and employees' satisfaction in terms of pay, benefits, opportunities for growth, level of oversight, management style, and responsibilities.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

This study's objective was to assess Teachers' trade unions' influence on teachers' working conditions satisfaction in Embu County. The teachers were satisfied with trade unions' role in improving working conditions and negotiations, while principals were moderately satisfied. The study also concludes with an optimistic and essential association between trade amalgamation membership and the gratification of teachers' working conditions. The findings implied that union membership among teachers and principals would significantly improve their satisfaction.

#### 5.0 Recommendations

Enhancing teachers working conditions are essential for effective performance. The study showed that unionization increased teachers' and principals' satisfaction with working conditions. The study recommends more teachers and principals join trade unions for benefits. Additionally, the trade union should have mechanisms for enhancing the teachers' satisfaction by agitating for better working conditions.

#### 6.0 References

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