

INFLUENCE OF WORKPLACE INCENTIVES ON TEACHERS' JOB SATISFACTION IN LOWER GRADE PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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International Academic Journal of Social Sciences and Education (IAJSSE) | ISSN 2518-2412

Received: 15th October 2025

Published: 4th November 2025

Full Length Research

Available Online at: https://iajournals.org/articles/iajsse_v2_i4_262_274.pdf

Citation: Nduku, M. L., Mugo, J. W. (2025). Influence of workplace incentives on teachers' job satisfaction in lower grade public primary schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya. *International Academic Journal of Social Sciences and Education (IAJSSE)*, 2(4), 262-274.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine influence of workplace incentives on teachers' job satisfaction in lower grade public primary schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Lower-grade primary schools' teachers worldwide, form a vital segment of educationists who impart basic knowledge, skills, and values to their young learners. Thus, they need to experience satisfaction in their job, in order to be productive. However, there have been cases that seem to point to teachers' job dissatisfaction (TJD), judging from the countless strikes when they down their tools worldwide. A good number of them have even abandoned teaching, owing to some negative perceptions surrounding the profession, but of concern in Kenya is that, most of those who have quit, were handling lower grade classes. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of (1959) served as the study's guiding compass due to its intrinsic/extrinsic aspects related to both job satisfaction and/ or dissatisfaction. The descriptive research design using mixed methodology was utilized in the present study that involved teachers handling Grade one to three in Westland's sub-county, of Nairobi City County, Kenya. Simple random sampling was used to select 9 (30%) out of the 30 public lower grade primary schools/ headteachers and 36 (30%) teachers out of 120 of them.

Questionnaires for teachers and interview schedules for headteachers were used to collect data. The pilot study was conducted in two schools to enhance validity and reliability of research instruments. Qualitative data collected was analyzed thematically using verbatim, while quantitative data was coded, then summarized using descriptive statistics like means, frequencies, and percentages. Additionally, a correlational analysis and ANOVA were used to test whether or not, any significant relationships existed between workplace incentives and teachers' job satisfaction. The results are presented in tables, bar graphs, and pie charts. The study's findings show that workplace incentives collectively influenced teachers' satisfaction levels, ultimately affecting their motivation, performance, and commitment to the teaching profession. The study recommended that headteachers should foster a collaborative and respectful work environment by promoting open communication, mentorship, and shared decision-making. Ensuring teachers feel supported, respected, and appreciated can go a long way in boosting morale.

INTRODUCTION

Background of study

According to Crisci et al. (2019) job satisfaction (JS), is a positive emotional state, resulting from a personal appreciation of one's own job or experience. Toropova et al (2021) in a related study in Sweden explored factors associated with Job satisfaction in eighth-grade mathematics teachers. The factors they observed included; working conditions, collegiality, workload, and students' behavior. The findings of the study pointed out that happier teachers tend to have happier students. Also, more satisfied teachers provided higher-quality teaching to their students. The study in Sweden however, focused on factors associated with JS of 8th grade mathematics teachers. The current study however focused on Kenyan lower grade public primary school teachers' perceptions, regarding the how work incentives impact job satisfaction.

In our neighboring country, Tanzania, Ngwale (2021) investigated teachers' job satisfaction in relation to their job performance in secondary schools, and found a significant contribution of TJS on teachers' job performance with job security having the highest significant contribution to TJS. Kyangwe (2023) also in a study involving Tanzanian secondary school teachers, found that a supportive work place, motivation, high teacher pay, among other factors were strategies employed to enhance TJS. Again in Tanzania, Palla (2019) reported that financial issues in relation to teachers in urban areas tended to be more rampant due to high cost of living, leading to dissatisfaction in their job or even quitting. Although the above three studies from Tanzania were relevant, they focused on teachers of older learners. The current research however, targeted public lower-grade primary school teachers in the urban city of Nairobi, Kenya.

In an associated review in Kenyans.co.ke on June 30, 2024, Okubasu (2024) revealed that a significant number of teachers who found it difficult to advance professionally, had left their jobs and the nation, in search of better-paying opportunities in United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK). The fact that most of them were primary school teachers in lower grades, who would have molded the next generation of learner in Kenya, is a concern (Nyaundi, 2019). Worse still, it appears that the Ministry of Education (MOE) has not addressed this issue as a main cause of teachers' strike in Kenya. This prompted the researcher to conduct the present study amongst lower grade primary school teachers in Kenya.

Additionally, Jumba, (2019) in Kenya, examined the relationship between pre-school teacher factors and job satisfaction in Mombasa County, and established that teachers' salaries paid influenced their level of job satisfaction. However, the study was concerned with pre-school teachers in Mombasa County while the current one targeted grades 1 - 3, in Nairobi City County, to explore teachers' perceptions on the influence of work incentives on teachers' job satisfaction. More specifically, studies on job satisfaction are scanty in lower grade primary schools and hence the need to focus on this school level.

More so, the Ministry of Education in Kenya, has been losing a number of teachers every day as a result of retirements, resignations, and deaths. This coupled with the number of

those who quit their job, presents a serious problem that the Ministry, needs to address because it loses the ability to maintain a competent teaching workforce while learners are deprived the opportunity to learn and progress in their educational endeavours.

The above problem prompted the researcher, to investigate workplace aspects possibly impacting public lower grade primary school TJS and particularly in Nairobi City County where related studies have been found to be scanty at this level. Furthermore, the study focused on Westlands Sub-County in Nairobi City County, Kenya which has many schools in luxurious areas but also hosts schools in shoddy environments. Most importantly, the current study sought to explore the perceptions of teachers on the impact of work place incentives on job satisfaction of teachers in lower-grade public primary schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Purpose of the Study

This purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between workplace incentives and teachers' job satisfaction in lower grade public primary schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research design was used and was suitable for the research since it ensured an in-depth analysis and description of the types of incentives that could influence their job satisfaction.

Study Location

The recent research was done in Westlands Sub-county of Nairobi City County, Kenya. The Westlands Sub-County is domiciled in Nairobi City County, which is the principal industrial center of Kenya with issues pertaining to high cost of living, which may influence TJS as (Palla, 2019) notes. In addition, the Sub-County hosts many categories of schools in posh areas, but also in shoddy environments, with large classes, deplorable school infrastructures and poor working conditions among other factors (Limboro, 2019), which could contribute to TJD.

Target population

The study focused on all the 30 public lower grade primary schools, their headteachers and 120 teachers of Grade 1 – 3 learners in Westlands sub-county of Nairobi City County Kenya.

Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling was used to select Westlands Sub-county, Nairobi City County. Random selection of 9 (30%) public lower grade primary schools out of 30 followed, whereby each school's name was written on a small piece of paper, using a list of the schools obtained from Westlands Sub-County Educational office. Thereafter, the pieces of papers were put in a basket, shuffled, and nine (9) of them out of 30 were fished out while blind folded. Headteachers were purposively selected by virtue of them being part of sampled schools and three lower grade primary school teachers were also randomly selected from the sampled schools. Additionally, this manner of selecting the sample size, provided efficiency, reliability, and flexibility (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019)

Sample Size

This section presents the sample size used for the study as Table 2 indicates.

Table 1 Sampling Frame

Respondents	Target Population	30% Sample size
Schools and Headteachers	30	9
Public lower grade primary school teachers	120	36

Source: Nairobi City County Education Department Data 2022

A 30% sample size consisting of nine (9) schools and headteachers were selected out of the 30 targeted, as well as 36 teachers of lower grade primary schools out of 120. According to Kothari (2014), a sample size of between 10% and 30% is adequate in descriptive studies

Instrumentation

Self-constructed questionnaire for lower-grade teachers and interview schedule for headteachers were used in the study. The primary data was gathered via questionnaires that were filled by the teachers to help elicit information for analysis upon which conclusions were drawn. Furthermore, both closed and open ended questions were used to solicit more information from the participating teachers. Questionnaires were appropriate because they collected information that was not directly observable including the feelings, attitudes, and experiences of the teachers under study (Kothari, 2014).

To counter check information gathered from teachers, interviews were conducted with headteachers on factors contributing to their JS, face to face. The research instrument fostered understanding, made the study's purpose as well as items' connotations obvious, and decreased ambiguity in the study items. Additionally, it provided specific information through probing, that a questionnaire would not be able to reveal.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The current study aimed to assess the impact of workplace incentives on lower-grade public primary school teachers' job satisfaction. These incentives are key components in shaping employee motivation, engagement, and retention, especially in public schools. Non-monetary factors often influence overall satisfaction. The level of rate of teachers' agreement relating to statements regarding work place incentives and their influence on the respondents' job satisfaction were therefore sought, based on a 1 – 4 key; 1-very great extent, 2-great extent, 3-low extent and 4-very low extent. Table 2 presents teachers' perspectives on how these incentives impact their job satisfaction, providing insights into institutional practices that promote teacher well-being and motivation.

Table 2 Work Place Incentives and Their Influence on Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Questionnaire Items on Work Place Aspects	1		2		3		4		Mean
	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	
Would you say you are comfortable with your salary ?	8	22.2	17	47.2	6	16.7	5	13.9	2.22
Does the school give teachers cash incentives?	10	27.8	16	44.4	5	13.9	4	11.1	2.03
Besides your salary, do you receive other financial benefits from the PTA?	6	16.7	19	52.8	9	25.0	2	5.6	2.19
Do you look forward to another well-paying teaching job or any other in future?	7	19.4	21	58.3	6	16.7	2	5.6	2.08
Does your headteacher supervise your work and offer advice where necessary?	9	25.0	17	47.2	4	11.1	6	16.7	2.19
Would you say you relate well with the school administration?	11	30.6	16	44.4	5	13.9	4	11.1	2.06
Is the school administration usually concerned and supportive of teacher's welfare?	8	22.2	18	50.0	8	22.2	2	5.6	2.11
Do you normally feel secure as you administer your duties in your school?	6	16.7	20	55.6	5	13.9	5	13.9	2.25
Do you feel appreciated and recognized by your schools' administration?	9	25.0	16	44.4	8	22.2	3	8.3	2.14
Does your school allow you at least one afternoon off during the week to attend to personal pressing concerns?	7	19.4	19	52.8	6	16.7	4	11.1	2.19

The findings from Table 2 offer valuable insights into teachers' views on workplace incentives and how these perceptions relate to their job satisfaction. The first statement reveals that *"Would you say you are comfortable with your salary?"* registered a moderate mean of 2.22. While 69.4% of the respondents indicated satisfaction 8 (22.2%) to a very great extent and 17 (47.2%) to a great extent, the remaining 11 (30.6%) expressed dissatisfaction to some extent. This reflects broader concerns in Kenya's public education sector where teacher remuneration is perceived as insufficient compared to their workload and cost of living (Ng'ang'a & Gathungu, 2021). Low salary satisfaction often contributes to high turnover intentions and demoralization, especially in urban settings like Nairobi where living expenses are high.

The statement *"Does the school give teachers cash incentives?"* had a mean of 2.03, with 26 (72.2%) of teachers responding positively. This suggests that some schools, possibly through support from Boards of Management (BoM) or Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), provide supplementary financial rewards. According to Otieno and Amollo (2020), such incentives are crucial in boosting teacher morale, especially where government

compensation lags. Although these incentives may be informal or inconsistent, they demonstrate recognition of teachers' efforts beyond the national pay structure.

Similarly, the statement *"Besides your salary, do you receive other financial benefits from the PTA?"* recorded a mean of 2.19, with 25 (69.5%) of the respondents' great extent. This indicates that PTAs play a significant role in supplementing teachers' income, especially in low-income schools where government funding is limited. Wanjiku and Kibe (2023) argue that PTA-funded bonuses enhance teachers' financial security and reward high performance, thus directly influencing job satisfaction.

Notably, the item *"Do you look forward to another well-paying teaching job or any other in future?"* had a mean of 2.08, with 28 (77.7%) indicating they do. While this suggests optimism, it may also reflect latent dissatisfaction with current compensation or working conditions. A desire to transition to better-paying jobs could signal potential turnover challenges in public schools if existing incentives remain inadequate (Koech & Ndung'u, 2021).

On supervisory support, the statement *"Does your headteacher supervise your work and offer advice where necessary?"* had a moderate mean of 2.19. Nearly three-quarters of the teachers 26 (72.2%) felt that headteachers provide constructive oversight. Supervision is crucial for professional growth, mentorship, and institutional cohesion. According to Mumo and Chepkorir (2022), effective school leadership fosters a culture of accountability and recognition, which in turn enhances job satisfaction.

In terms of relational dynamics, *"Would you say you relate well with the school administration?"* received a favorable mean of 2.06. About 27 (75%) of teachers indicated positive relationships with their administrators. Supportive interpersonal relationships at the workplace are critical to creating a psychologically safe environment where teachers feel valued (Barasa & Kiptoo, 2020). Similarly, the statement *"Is the school administration usually concerned and supportive of teacher's welfare?"* had a mean of 2.11, further underscoring the administrative role in promoting teacher satisfaction.

The aspect of job security was addressed in the item *"Do you normally feel secure as you administer your duties in your school?"*, which yielded a mean of 2.25. Although 16 (72.3%) felt secure, the 10 (27.7%) who did not reflect a significant concern. Perceived insecurity whether physical, emotional, or professional can diminish teachers' sense of belonging and productivity (Omondi & Mugambi, 2021).

Recognition also featured prominently, with the statement *"Do you feel appreciated and recognized by your school's administration?"* scoring a mean of 2.14. Recognition is a powerful non-financial incentive, and the positive feedback from 25 (69.4%) of respondents aligns with findings from Muchiri and Kariuki (2019), who observed that teachers' perceived value in the school community greatly influences retention and satisfaction.

Lastly, flexible working conditions were examined through the statement *“Does your school allow you at least one afternoon off during the week to attend to personal pressing concerns?”* This item had a mean of 2.19, suggesting that many schools acknowledge the need for work-life balance. Allowing flexibility within the work schedule can reduce burnout and improve job engagement (Chege & Irungu, 2022).

Most teachers emphasized that monetary incentives are a critical driver of job satisfaction. These include salaries, performance-based bonuses, travel allowances, hardship allowances, housing benefits, and cash rewards for extra duties. Teachers expressed that competitive and timely pay enhances their morale, reduces financial stress, and promotes long-term commitment to the profession. They also noted that insufficient or delayed payment is a major source of dissatisfaction, leading to low motivation, absenteeism, and even seeking alternative employment.

Several teachers mentioned that the current salary scale does not reflect the amount of work and emotional labor invested in early childhood education. Additionally, they pointed out that incentives like responsibility allowances or remuneration for extracurricular involvement were either absent or inconsistently applied. These findings align with research by Podgursky and Springer (2007), who argue that teachers are more motivated and less likely to exit the profession when financial rewards are clearly structured and performance-based. Wambui and Macharia (2021) found that improved financial incentives in public primary schools led to greater job commitment and a reduction in teacher attrition rates. When teachers receive fair compensation, they feel valued and are more likely to exert additional effort in lesson planning, innovation, and student mentorship.

While monetary rewards were viewed as fundamental, teachers also highlighted the importance of non-monetary incentives in shaping their job satisfaction. These included recognition by school leadership, career progression opportunities, supportive supervision, professional development, flexible work arrangements, and involvement in decision-making. Teachers explained that being appreciated publicly, even with a certificate or verbal praise, enhanced their sense of belonging and purpose.

Additionally, opportunities for further training, mentorship, and attending workshops were described as key in breaking monotony and promoting professional growth. Teachers valued school environments where their opinions were sought, roles clearly defined, and conflict handled respectfully. These perspectives are supported by Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory, which posits that job satisfaction is influenced not just by hygiene factors (like salary) but also by motivators such as recognition, autonomy, and growth opportunities (Herzberg, 1966). Non-monetary incentives also address intrinsic motivation. According to Ngari et al. (2020), teachers who are emotionally supported and socially integrated into their schools experience higher satisfaction and greater resilience. Various teachers appreciated being granted personal days, being trusted with leadership responsibilities, and receiving feedback from headteachers, all of which made them feel respected and empowered.

Regarding incentives, the headteachers noted that

Salaries and other monetary rewards, such as performance bonuses or travel allowances, are primary motivators. Timely and competitive compensation was viewed as crucial in retaining and motivating staff. Inadequate remuneration, however, often led to demoralization, absenteeism, and even resignation in search of better opportunities. (HIC 002)

The headteachers also noted that;

Non-monetary incentives such as recognition, awards, career progression opportunities, flexible schedules, and professional development were equally valued. Headteachers noted that gestures like “Teacher of the Month,” involvement in decision-making, and sponsored workshops significantly boosted morale and satisfaction. (HIC 006)

The present study aimed at establishing whether workplace incentives (monetary and non-monetary inducements) significantly impact job satisfaction levels of lower-grade primary school teachers, thus hypothesis 3 that states;

H01: There is no significant relationship between workplace incentives given and the level of lower grade primary school teachers’ job satisfaction at 0.05 level of significance-was tested using Pearson correlation and ANOVA, and the results are as Table 3 indicates.

Table 3Correlation Analysis Output

Correlations	Job Satisfaction	Workplace Incentives
Job Satisfaction	1.000	.612**
Workplace Incentives	.612**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	.000
N	36	36

The Pearson correlation coefficient between workplace incentives and teachers’ job satisfaction is $r = 0.612$, with a $p\text{-value} = 0.000$. This indicates a moderate to strong positive relationship that is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Therefore, as workplace incentives improve, teacher job satisfaction tends to increase.

Table 4 ANOVA Output

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	15.437	1	15.437	23.672	.000**
Residual	21.107	34	0.621		
Total	36.544	35			

a. Dependent Variable: Teacher Job Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Workplace Incentives

The F-statistic = 23.672 with a $p\text{-value} = 0.000$, which is less than 0.05, indicates that the regression model is statistically significant. This means that workplace incentives explain a

significant portion of the variance in teacher job satisfaction. Thus, the null hypothesis that stated,

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between workplace incentives given and the level of lower grade primary school teachers' job satisfaction, at 0.05 level of significance, was rejected at a 95% confidence level, in favour of the alternative hypothesis that states;

HA₁: There is a significant relationship between workplace incentives given and the level of lower grade primary school teachers' job satisfaction, at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, there is a significant relationship between workplace incentives and job satisfaction among lower-grade primary school teachers.

This finding agrees with Wanjala and Gichure's (2021) observations that incentives are important to urban teachers (particularly urban women teachers) have increasingly relied on supportive policies and family structures to make their professional and domestic responsibilities routinely manageable, and the impacts of incentives on job satisfaction are overshadowed. Murungi (2020) also concurs that the impact of cultural expectations of female teachers' caregiving roles in Kenya, sometimes resulting in incentives being poorly related to job satisfaction when institutional support is absent. Oyolla (2021) found that while financial incentive and program recognition can help to motivate a teacher, the effect of incentives on job satisfaction may depend on perceptions of fairness, transparency, and consistency. For example, where incentives are erratic or unfair, job satisfaction is less likely to be enhanced by the incentives. To the same effect, Othoo and Nekesa (2022) found that financial incentives did not guarantee higher job satisfaction in cases where they did not include good working environments, and assistance from school management.

Table 5 Independent Samples Test

Variable	Levene's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Work-life balance	.018	.894	.714	34	.481	.227	.318	-.419	.874
Classroom management	.412	.525	.913	34	.368	.298	.327	-.365	.961
Work relationships	.865	.359	.742	34	.463	.227	.306	-.394	.849
School attendance	.742	.395	.248	34	.806	.071	.287	-.512	.654
Punctuality	.956	.335	.582	34	.565	.182	.313	-.453	.817

- Equal variances assumed for all variables (Levene's test $p > .05$)
- Higher means indicate lower perceived influence of work experience
- 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference shown in Lower/Upper columns

The independent samples t-test was conducted to compare teachers' perceptions of the influence of work experience on different aspects of job satisfaction. The test results indicated in Table 4 indicate that Levene's test for equality of variances was not significant across all variables ($p > .05$), suggesting that the assumption of equal variances was met.

The results show that there were no statistically significant differences between the groups across all variables. For work-life balance, the difference was not significant ($t(34) = .714$, $p = .481$), with a mean difference of .227 and a 95% confidence interval ranging from $-.419$ to $.874$. Similarly, no significant differences were found in classroom management ($t(34) = .913$, $p = .368$), work relationships ($t(34) = .742$, $p = .463$), school attendance ($t(34) = .248$, $p = .806$), or punctuality ($t(34) = .582$, $p = .565$). In each case, the mean differences were small and the confidence intervals crossed zero, confirming that teachers generally held similar views irrespective of group classification.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, study concluded that teacher job satisfaction is intricately linked to workplace incentives. Workplace incentives were found to be the most influential factor in determining job satisfaction. Teachers emphasized the importance of both monetary and non-monetary rewards. While there were concerns over salary adequacy, the presence of other incentives such as administrative support, professional recognition, and personal flexibility greatly contributed to a positive workplace experience. These incentives provided a sense of value and appreciation, reinforcing the teachers' commitment to their roles despite financial limitations.

Recommendation of the Study

Headteachers should foster a collaborative and respectful work environment by promoting open communication, mentorship, and shared decision-making. Ensuring teachers feel supported, respected, and appreciated can go a long way in boosting morale. Headteachers should also advocate for and implement internal welfare programs that address teachers' psychosocial needs, including stress management and work-life balance.

Education policy makers should adopt a teacher-centered approach when formulating policies that affect the teaching profession. It is essential that teachers' voices be included in dialogues concerning work incentives. Policies should be crafted to ensure job security, fair treatment, and professional autonomy for teachers. Gender-sensitive policies should also be reinforced to ensure that both male and female teachers operate in environments that promote equity and mutual respect.

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