



*The Cradle of Knowledge: African Journal of  
Educational and Social Science Research  
AJESSR - ISSN 2304-2885-p, 2617-7315-e  
Volume 7, Issue No.2, 2019  
P.O. Box 555 (00202) Nairobi. Kenya  
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**SOCIETY OF  
EDUCATIONAL  
RESEARCH  
AND  
EVALUATION  
IN KENYA**

## **The Utilization of Experience in the Noble Leadership of Secondary Schools in Nandi County: A focus on Principal's Integrity**

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### **Abstract**

*Experience or what others consider as knowledge or mastery of events through involvement in or exposure in the course of time, is an important practical wisdom gained from encounters in school. Following cases of corruption and integrity concerns in Nandi Secondary schools, this study focused on the experience of the principal as an attribute of his religiosity and Leadership. How does experience affect a principal's religiosity and his/her leadership style? The study was anchored on Tony Bush's Leadership theory of Leadership and guided by ex- post facto research design. The target population was principals, teachers and student leaders of secondary schools in Nandi County. Stratified and simple random sampling was used to sample schools, teachers and prefects. The study used three data collection methods, questionnaire, interview schedule, and content analysis guide. Experts were consulted to determine the content validity of instruments. Reliability was determined by use of Cronbach's alpha that yielded 0.687. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using t-test and analysis of variance. To determine relationship between experience and both religiosity and leadership style, ANOVA tests was carried out. Experience was shown to have a positive effect on principal's religiousness and leadership styles. Good leadership and improved religiosity goes with long experience in the profession. Principals should meet a minimum requirement in experience (among other requirements) to be allowed to run a school. The findings of the study may assist in drafting a better principals' policy for appointment.*

**Key words:** *Leadership styles, Experience, Secondary Education Principal*

### **1. Introduction**

The education act emphasizes the need to ensure human dignity and integrity of persons engaged in the leadership of education in schools. The chief executive or leader of a school is the head master or principal. In his endeavor, he ought to be the best and most conscientious teacher shunning temptations of abusing the responsibility bestowed on him by his employer (Mbithi, 1980). Religiosity is the quality of being religious, in the applicability of divine attributes, such as honesty, transparency, goodness and industriousness. It is paying serious attention to responsibility and duty. It is commitment to the service and welfare of others. It is devotion to god and good, honest works, being pious, open and warm towards parents and other. The success of any school depends largely on effective administration and planning procedures by the principal. The necessity of principal stems from the fact that effective administration depends on sound leadership. No two principals are alike in the way that they administer their schools, but generally, inspired by their philosophy and personality characteristics, they may lead using any of the categories or styles of leadership that will be explained briefly in this section. Attributes of principals as leaders are more important than leadership skills (Miller, 2012). To maintain the high motivation in the school, the principal is constantly helping members to top up their skill base with new opportunities for education, new experiences and information. They need to feel involved, believe in the goals and their ability to achieve them. The more confident the principal and teachers become, the higher the ability to deliver.

Style or model of leadership has been defined in many ways but for the purpose of this study, (Mulwa 2010) will be used, that leadership is an art of organizing and mobilizing people to pursue and achieve school's goals. It is a collective action involving the principal and teachers. The school principal is the leader having the role of inspiring teachers, students and parents to achieve academic goals. It is upon the school leadership to adopt behavior patterns that will bring about success.

Every leader has his or her own style, but just about every leadership style falls under one of six major categories. Sometimes leadership style does not fit the situation or the leader is unable to adopt their style to the school's needs. In other cases, the leader and their styles are just what the school needed. A school is only strong as its leadership team. The right mixture of a competent leader and leadership style can assist a school to achieve all of its objectives. Dessler (2004) supported an order of leadership models from the most popular to the least.

Democratic style, also called participative, involves people in decision-making process, while the execution of the decision is from the principal after facilitating consensus in the group (Mulwa 2010). It has the objective of building commitment and consensus among the employees. This method is recommended for schools in order to avoid confrontation with students as they are part and parcel of decision making. The disadvantage of this method is that decisions are made at slow pace due to wide consultations and it demands a lot of supervision from the principal. It is not good when there is crisis.

Autocratic style, also called Directive is a 'top-down' decision making style, not recommended but at times, it is necessary. It is meant to obtain immediate compliance. It is 'do as I say' approach, keeping a close eye on employees and their every move (micromanagement). The principal places high value on discipline, motivating by delivering threats, ultimatums and orders. The principal dictates work methods, make unilateral decisions and ensures limited participation for all other (Harvis and Spillane, 2008). It hands down policies, directives, rules, instructions and orders to be followed without question. They dictate how decisions are to be carried out in very specific terms; others will give employees latitude on how they will execute their instructions.

Laissez – Faire Style is a French phrase meaning that people should be left to do what they want. Also called Delegative, the leaders are 'hands off' and allow members to make their own decisions leading to lowest productivity. It calls for very little guidance from the principals although they provide tools and resources needed. Members solve problems on their own. Power is handed over to followers and yet the managers still take the responsibility for decisions and actions. There are very few rules, the principal is tolerant allowing subordinates to report to work at their own time and do whatever they want. The principal has no authority, just symbolic. Everyone can volunteer to do something for the school whenever he feels inspired to do so (Stronge 1993).

Distributed style is where the principal calls for shared approach to his leadership, collegial and participative. It is more of a method than a style. It goes for the contribution of many stakeholders, interaction between everyone at school, irrespective of positions. It increases initiative, creativity and spontaneity; therefore, individuals have the power to influence events (McGath, 2000). Other staff is shielded both from the risks and rewards as accountability stays with principal. It needs a clear vision. Principal pools expertise, redistributes his responsibilities through delegation. He uses a pragmatists philosophy where people are given areas where they are good at., so that they can solve problems there on behalf of the school using what they think is the best means, (Woods, 2007).

The principal of entrepreneurial style uses creative utilization of external networks and resources to run the school. He is overly engaged in building partnerships with other schools and institutions exchanging physical and human resources. It is organizing a group of people to achieve a goal using entrepreneurial behavior. They take advantage of opportunities, risk, innovate, optimize, manage change and take personal responsibility. People use their creative potential to add value to school. The principal exercise leadership styles that develop the support staff to self-generate self-reflect and self-correct in their workplace, (McGrath, 2000).

Participatory style, also called affiliative, is a 'people come first' style. People are more important than their functions. It aims at creating a harmonious relationship in the workplace, particularly between the principal, heads of departments and other employees. The leader focuses on avoiding conflicts by encouraging good personal and professional relationships among the staff. He sees it that everyone is happy and satisfied. Here the principal encourages equality promoting interdependency and inclusion.

Structured style, also called authoritative, is visionary, generally very effective and has a long-term vision. The principal sets the vision, takes on a firm but fair stance and motivates support staff by using persuasion. Usually, the

principal has a high level of credibility. This is where the principal elevates himself to senior or chief principal and then allows several principals to run sections of the school such as junior section, senior section, the deaf section, the physically challenged section, marginalized groups and other.

Transformational leadership is composed of four components: intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, inspirational motivation and idealized influence. Principals challenge status quo, encourage creativity and ask staff to explore new ways of doing things and new opportunities to teach (Kendra, 2016). It involves offering support and encouragement to individual staff. It keeps lines of communication open so that staff feels free to share ideas. Transformational leadership can inspire positive change in those who follow. Principals are energetic, enthusiastic, passionate, involve themselves in the process and help members to succeed. Principals garner trust, respect and admiration from the staff. They recognize unique contributions of each member, and help them to develop passion and motivation by serving as role models for them (Kendra, 2016). Staff emulates and internalizes principal's ideals. Research evidence has shown that transformational principals have higher levels of performance, trust and integrity than the others, (Bass, 2008).

### **Principal's Experience and Religiosity**

A panel survey study by Day (2009) found that, other than classroom teaching, the school leadership experience, greatly influence the students' learning outcomes. Spearman's constant shows that leadership styles and long service play key role in setting the conditions to promote reform and academic improvements. Collectively, studies have identified a number of consistent facts which include clear vision and mission, display of high expectations and aspirations and leading by example. Day identified ten claims for a successful school principal: 1. Principals are the main source of leadership in school, 2. defining values, 3. raising expectations, 4 setting direction, 5. building trust, 6. reshaping conditions for learning, 7. reconstructing school, 8. enriching curriculum, 9. enhancing teacher quality and 10. building collaboration and strong relationships. In a recent trend survey on school performance and leadership titled "How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep 'Getting Better', by McKinsey (2014), it was found that to sustain quality learning outcomes, instructional leadership skills and experience must remain the primary focus for any principal.

A rapid assessment research conducted by Gamal (2014) at 15 schools in Tanzania to identify leadership styles and its relationship to academic achievement showed that leadership styles do affect student's achievement. These findings are supported by other researches such as those conducted by Girling (1991) in 16 secondary schools in California whereby heads with democratic leadership produced students who performed well. Studies done by Mirmir (2002), Maladiah (2008) and Rusli (2009) proved that leadership style do have a greater impact on students' achievement and the teaching- learning process of students. Additionally, a research done in Malaysia showed the same pattern.

Good leadership encompasses a religious attribute or function. Religion as aspects of human behavior has forces which keep it revolving and evolving to meet the dynamic needs of human life with survival and progress as its main dynamics. One common reality for all leaders is the yearning for a transcendental achievement or to satisfy a holy function. St Augustine captures this hunger thus; "man's heart was made for God and will remain forever restless until it rests in him", (Neal 1997). Until a principal executes his leadership duties in justice, fairness and holiness, consumers of educational institutions will always be dissatisfied.

This study explored on the religious characteristics of principals that drive them to run schools down or successfully. It is meant to provoke principals of schools to change their whole philosophy of leadership not only in style but in human perspective. It is intended to alert the Ministry of Education on the mandatory need to develop criteria of selection for all school principals up to and including primary and tertiary institutions. The implementation of recommendations from this study should restore the confidence of parents and other stakeholders in maintenance and improvement of resources in schools by head teachers.

### **Principal's Experience and Leadership Style**

The effectiveness of a school is largely defined by the academic performance of students in standardized national examinations (Holton, 2000). Academic excellence is an attribute of religiosity and a principal's ability and experience. Principals boast about their effectiveness by their positions in the national competition. This position may be determined by the number of A to B grades gained by their students in national examinations. Principals take pride of their leadership styles and other features that contribute to such success. An experimental research was done by Cyenze (2009) to find out the impact of principal's experience and leadership style on student performance in secondary schools in Rwanda. From three categories of schools, simple random sampling was used to select 58 schools out of 279 schools, 325 teachers and 58 principals took part in the study. A survey design was used and questionnaires and

interview schedules formed part of the instruments and used. Chi-square and ANOVA were used to test the null hypotheses. The findings showed a significant relationship between the style used and the overall student performance. The styles that featured prominently are Democratic, laissez-faire and a few cases of transformational style. There was a greater performance index for longer service and democratic and transformation style leadership by the principals. Where there was a general consensus on approaches to improve results and where the principal supports new techniques, the spirit of high performance was realized by all. This study used a survey design but the present study used *ex-post facto* design.

An *ex-post facto* study in US conducted by Morris (2010) to determine the relationship between principal's leadership style, gender and experience in public schools. 42 principals of middle level schools took part and results showed that the 18 female principals had a greater influence in schools growth rate compared to their male counterparts. In addition, school growth rate increased with years of service. Using Phi and Cramer's constant and t-test, findings also revealed that women are playing an increasing role in school headship. There was a higher index for more experienced principals compared to those who have less than 6 years in headship. The principals who appear to integrate leadership styles contribute more to expansion for schools. Whereas this study was done in US, the current study will be carried out in Kenya and specifically to relate principal's leadership style and his religious character.

Research studies conducted by Edmodus R, et al (2003) were meant to identify the principal's attributes that were responsible for vast development of their schools. Principals of high achieving schools were found to build on experience, school wide commitment to religious work ethic and instructional guidance for students. The ultimate success of a principal in the leadership of a school also stems from initial experiences in classroom management (a teacher's successful ability to oversee student behavior, interaction and learning activities in class). According to Yilmaz, 2008, classroom management is an important aspect of education, having direct influence on teacher's performance. It is a teacher's source of success and promotion or job-related stress.

In addition to transformational leadership, experience supported distributed leadership as well. According to Davis, 2011 Principalship is not just the province of individual heroes, given the complex fast-paced world, the burden would be great if leadership rested on the shoulders of one person. Everyone's intelligence and role is needed in a school leadership system. In modern times, more effort is carried out to replace individual leaders with distributed ones. This would comprise integrated departments and cultures within and across the school borders. It depends on interrelationships and connections (Davis, 2011). These styles that are common in schools strengthen math and science curricula and promote peace education and conflict prevention and resolution which are positive aspects in the implementation framework for CESA 2016-2025 and teacher development.

This study was guided by the following questions;

- i. Is there a relationship between the principal's religiosity and his/her working experience?
- ii. Is there a relationship between the principal's leadership style and his/her working experience?

The hypotheses arising from these questions are;

H<sub>3</sub> There is a relationship between principal's experience and religiosity

H<sub>6</sub> There is a relationship between principal's experience and leadership style

## **2. Methodology**

In this study, it was necessary to establish the level of religiosity of the principal. This was done by rating one against a likert scale of defined attributes. It was taken on the basis of two measures, self-definition by principals and a questionnaire to teachers, students and chaplains, on their opinions about the principals. The principal was rated along a continuum of four categories; very religious, religious, somewhat religious and not religious. The study used *ex-post facto* research design, anchored on Tony Bush's leadership theory. The target population encompassed all principals, teachers, student leaders, and chaplains of public secondary schools in Nandi County. Secondary school education was chosen because it is the researcher's contention that role modeling and behavior modification is critical at adolescent states of learners (at secondary level). Following the stratified and random sampling techniques used to obtain the schools, the researcher considered all the principals of the sampled schools to participate in the study. The principals fairly represented all the types of schools in the county. To provide equal representation for both male and female teachers, stratified sampling techniques were employed followed by simple random sampling to obtain 7 teachers from each school. A sample size of (7x37) that is 259 teachers participated in the study. However, some of the teachers did not return the questionnaires. To select student governors and chaplains, criterion sampling was used. This is a design based on choosing individuals or assigning proportions of people because of good evidence that they

meet some criteria (Gill, 2010). Student leaders meet the criteria of representing their classes. Five student leaders from form 2 and five from form 3 were sampled. Form two and three are chosen because these groups are well adjusted to the school culture and are most sensitive to social innovations, (Salkind, 2010). A total of 370 student leaders participated. All the chaplains of the sampled schools also participated in the study. In case the chaplain was not there, the priest or pastor, who prays for the students, took part. Some questionnaires were considered spoilt. In order to obtain the required information for the study, four types of research instruments were used namely; questionnaires, content analysis, interview schedule and checklists. A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. Each person is asked to respond to the same set of questions in a predetermined order (Salkind, 2010). Its use is a good way of collecting primary data. Secondary data is obtained from other sources for example internet or books. To ensure content validity of instruments results, two experts (an associate Professor and a senior lecturer) in the area of specialization, went through to see whether the questions are related to the research questions and whether they were appropriate to the target group. A lecturer, who is also an expert in measurement and evaluation also helped to validate. In addition, a senior principal of county school and a priest assessed the appropriateness of items in relation to the research questions on religiosity. Feedback was used to revise the items starting from those addressing each variable to those addressing the relationship between variables.

A pilot experiment was conducted two weeks earlier in a total of five schools, one from each sub county, but not those who formed part of the final sample. With assistance from the deputy principals of the schools, the questionnaires and checklists were issued to two schools in the first day and to three schools the following day. After three days, there was almost 100% script return, 5 principals, 5 chaplains, 35 teachers and 45 student leaders. However, responses from one school were non-usable (incomplete and misrepresenting), and so only four schools were used to pilot the instruments. A few adjustments on the teacher’s questionnaire were made as necessary. Consequently, the design of the full-scale project was adjusted as was necessary. The researcher did a stability test using the test-retest method on four sub-county schools. The test was administered twice to the same respondents and then the results from the first and those of the second tests were correlated using spearman’s correlation, which yielded 0.687 indicating that the questionnaire items were reliable.

**3. Findings and Discussions**

There are 235 secondary schools in Nandi County, 7 of which are private schools. Of the 228 remaining public secondary schools, 22 are new schools, some of which have not attained fourth form in their establishment and so, were not included in the sampling. Ultimately therefore, the sample was obtained from 206 schools composed of 150 mixed, 37 girls and 19 boys’ schools. Using random sampling, 4 boys schools, 9 girls schools and 17 mixed schools took part in the study. Earlier, 1boys, 1 girl and 2 mixed schools had featured in the pilot study. The schools were also categorized as shown in table.

**Category of Secondary Schools in Nandi**

National schools	Extra county	County	Sub County	Total
2	4	28	172	206

Source: DEO- Nandi County.

Majority of the schools sampled were sub county and county schools, which was good for this research because stakeholders have raised concern on the leadership by the principals. The distribution of schools and the teachers on duty (including principals) were found to be as shown in table shown;

**Distribution of Schools and Teachers on Duty**

Sub County	No. of Schools	Teachers on Duty
Nandi Central	57	532
Nandi North	66	432
Nandi East	30	180
Tindiret	32	227
Nandi South	50	326
Total	235	1697

Source: TSC. Unit Nandi County HQ.

The total number of teachers (including principals’) who took part in the research are (180 + 30). This means that research involved 1 in every 8 teachers. This was good because the teachers and the principals were the most essential target populations. The total respondents in the study were 510. In this study, the guidelines on research ethics as suggested by O’leavy (2010) were followed. The participants took part voluntarily; no harm to any respondent and to a big extent there was cooperation from schools. Anonymity was not all that secured since the researcher could easily identify certain responses to the respondent (interviews with principals).

**Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

The principals and teachers’ characteristics were measured with respect to experience and level of education. These attributes form the foundation for the assessment of their religiosities. Table shows the distributions.

**Demographic Composition of Principals and Teachers**

Profile	Rank	Principals		Teachers	
		F	%	F	%
Level of Education	Certificate	0	0.0	4	2.0
	Diploma	3	10.0	20	10.2
	Degree	17	56.7	165	84.2
	Masters	8	26.7	7	3.6
	Others	2	6.7	0	0.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Experience	0-5 years	6	20.0	117	59.7
	6-10 years	5	16.7	39	19.9
	11-15 years	12	40.0	15	7.7
	16-20 years	5	16.7	1	0.5
	Above 21 years	2	6.6	24	12.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The results show that most of the teachers 117(59.7%) are young in the field with experience of 0-5 years, while the bulk of principals 12(40.0%) have been in the field for between 11-15 years. Only 2 principals are above 21 years in the field. This means that majority of principals and teachers in Nandi County have an experience of between 0-20 years. Principals seem to be appointed regardless of experience which contradicts the findings of Trowler (2001), who found that experience was a factor to consider when appointing principals. A survey carried out in county and sub county schools by Ogula (2014) showed a persistent administrative and leadership challenges by principals raising concern on their qualifications and experience. As a consequence, these schools have problems of retention, completion and quality.

The results from the teachers and chaplains were more revealing. Student’s remarks also confirmed whether the principals were highly religious or not religious at all. In this research, religiosity is measured from the true characteristics of the principal as reflected from what he does every day, (Covey, 2001).

**Principals responses on religiosity**

School principals were asked to rate themselves on their level of religiosity. There were four levels and were scored as follows; Not religious (0), somewhat religious (1) fairly religious (2), quite religious (3) and very religious (4). Results were as illustrated in the table.

	Frequency	Percent
somewhat religious	1	3.3
fairly religious	6	20.0
quite religious	19	63.3
very religious	4	13.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Findings on principals religiosity level revealed that 1(3.3%) rated themselves somewhat religious, 6(20.0%) fairly religious, 19 (63.3%) quite religious and 4 (13.3) very religious.

### Teachers' Ratings of Principals' Religiosity

Teachers were asked to rate principals' level of religiosity on a scale of not religious, somewhat religious, religious and highly religious. The results were as presented in table.

#### Teachers' Ratings of Principals' Religiosity

	Frequency	Percent
not religious	15	1.5
Somewhat religious	108	65.3
Religious	55	28.1
Highly religious	18	5.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The bulk of the principals are somewhat religious 108 (65.3%) while many others 55 (28.1%) are religious. 18 (5.1%) are seen as highly religious while 15 (1.5%) are not religious at all. In all 123 (66.8%) of the principals in Nandi county have low rating in religiosity scale. How were such people appointed to the positions of the principal? The choice of a principal by TSC should be that of developing expert relationship between the best attributes of the principal and best school environment for the best student results. Results on principals' religiosity revealed that 3(1.5%) of teachers rated principals as not religious, 128 (65.3%) moderately religious, 55 (28.1%) highly religious and 10 (5.1%) rated principals are extremely religious. These findings implied that 98.5% of teachers believed that their principals are religious although the level of religiosity varies.

A comparison of the rating made by teachers with ratings made by the principals of themselves, seem particularly interesting as the principals appear to overrate themselves against every variable. Actually, in comparison with other instruments, the teachers' findings provided higher reliability and the principals the lowest reliability. Relationship between principal's rating and the other three ratings is so low that detailed treatment is not appropriate. It seemed to suggest little or no relationship existing between their self-perception and the way their teachers and other observers perceive. The group of principals in Nandi County displayed relatively little insight with respect to their behavioral and professional capabilities. It has emerged doubtful that self-rating can be developed into a satisfactory criterion (Lorri, 1985).

Ultimately, in respect of teacher, chaplain and student rating, the religiosity of most Principals is low for the 30 principals involved in the research in the sampled public secondary schools in Nandi County. The primary objective was to explore effects of principal's religiosity on their styles of management. By considering the religiosities of all these groups, a final religiosity standing is established as shown in table.

#### Final Religiosity Rating

Religiosity	Frequency
Highly religious	2
Religious	11
Somewhat religious	13
Not religious	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

#### Teachers' Responses on Principals' Leadership Styles

	Frequency	Percent
Autocratic	12	6.1
Democratic	60	30.6
transformative	38	19.4
lei-ssez-fare	17	8.7
Distributed	6	3.1
Participatory	45	23.0
Structured	12	6.1
entrepreneurial	1	.5
pace setter	5	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100.0</b>

According to the teachers, the greatest number of principals practice democratic, transformative and participatory styles while a sizable number 17 (8.7%) think that principals exercise laissez faire style. This imply that a proportion of schools operate without direction, control or supervision. Both autocratic and structured approach is seen by the same number 12 (6.1%) of teachers as styles used by principals. Since the teachers are far better placed in the understanding of the styles of leadership and what management is all about these results are much more representative and suggests that majority of the schools in Nandi county are ran well. However, some principals are not good leaders (about 15.0%). These results show a similar trend to those made by chaplains.

A policy implication of this research finding is that counties seeking to identify strong teachers for open principal positions may not only consider candidates’ religiosity, but also organizational management competencies such as those in budgeting, hiring and instructional evaluation. A strategy for increasing the performance of the county’s’ lowest achieving schools for example, could be to shift the principals with high level religiosity and the greatest leadership skills to those schools.

**Tests of Hypotheses**

Two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance and were presented with respect to the research questions. A hypothesis is a premise or claim that we want to test. It may be seen as a tentative solution to a problem.

**i. There is no Significant Relationship between Principal’s experience and level of religiosity**

Dessler (2009) noted in his research findings that, integrity and honest leadership by head teachers was the result of long service and interaction in schools. Experience has built teachers into more reliable and god-fearing individuals. In this study, the hypothesis was tested using ANOVA test to establish relationship between principals’ experience and level of religiosity. The F-ratio was statistically significant because the F-value (1.418) was far much greater than the critical value (0.257) needed to reject the null hypothesis. The results are shown below.

**Relationship between Principals’ experience and level of religiosity**

experience	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.288	4	.322	1.418	.257
Within Groups	5.679	25	.227		
Total	6.967	29			

Significant at 0.05 level, critical value 1.418>0.257

This indicated that there was a significant relationship between principals’ experience and level of religiosity. This implies that principal’s develop God fearing characteristics as they go through incidences, occurrences, events and other empirical knowledge that constitute experience (Hardy,2005). Research findings also showed that principals had more than two years working experience. The research findings did not support the hypothesis.

**ii. There is no Significant Relationship between Principal’s experience and leadership Style**

The hypothesis was tested using independent sample t-test to establish relationship between principals’ experience and management style. The t-test was statistically significant because the t-value (15.425) was far much greater than the critical value (0.000) needed to reject the null hypothesis. This indicated that there was a significant relationship between principals’ experience and management style. The results are shown in the table below.

**Relationship between Principals’ Experience and Leadership Style**

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
					Test Value = 0	
Experience	15.425	29	.000	1.267	1.10	1.43
Principals' management style	16.429	29	.000	3.933	3.44	4.42

Significant at 0.05 level, critical value 15.425>0.000

Previous studies such as those of Morris (2010) indicated that certain leadership styles such as autocratic structured and pace setting are adopted mainly by men after working for long, while others such as those of participatory and distributed are preferred by female teachers of long service. Experience appears to provide a road map to better styles and improved levels of religiousness for the principals' success in their work.

#### **4. Conclusions of the Study**

1. Majority of the principals in Nandi County have low level of religiosity, suggesting that they do not meet the character expected of a school principal. Four of the thirty principals did not deserve to be heads. 2. Most of the principals used a combination of leadership styles as dictated by prevailing circumstances at different times in schools. This way, they manage to run the schools fairly well. 3. There was a significant relationship between a principal's religiosity and experience. Similarly, there was a significant relationship between the principal's experience and leadership style used in school. Female principals learned more from experience than their male counterparts.

Whereas educational qualifications and experience are important considerations in the selection and appointment of principals of schools, the level of religiosity of the candidate is of greater importance in the ultimate success of the school. A principal characteristic must stand out of all requirements as he is the controller of school's internal environment management and discipline of school. Religious life skills such as honest discipline, humble, forgiving, kind and pleasant should be enhanced among students by being a good example.

The findings indicate that principals running schools in Nandi County were not well vetted in terms of character as indicated by chaplains and teachers. Leadership of schools is an important matter because it is through such engagement that quality education is realized. As results show good leadership goes with high level religiosity. There is need to strengthen this requirement in the procedures of appointment. Schools where principals have questionable characteristic, have high wastage, declining completion rate and poor performance.

#### **5. Recommendations**

Depending on the need and purpose of promotion or demotion Sylvia (2017), in her study, supported the idea of evaluating candidates in terms of experience, integrity and managerial skills acquired. A principal should not stay in one station for more than eight years. Principal transfers should be encouraged for their own exposure to different environments and experience. Also, as indicated earlier, to increase the performance of the counties' lowest achieving schools, the strategy could be to shift the principals with immense experience, high level religiosity and the greatest leadership skills to those schools.

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