



The Impact of Head teachers' Decision-Making Skills on Academic Achievement in Public Primary Schools: A Case Study of Uriri Sub-County, Migori County, Kenya

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Abstract: *The study investigates the impact of headteachers' decision-making skills on learners' academic achievement in public primary schools in Uriri Sub-County, Migori County, Kenya. Headteachers play a vital role in determining academic success through their leadership in areas such as resource allocation, curriculum implementation, and staff motivation. This descriptive survey design was employed to systematically examine how these leadership traits influence learners' performance in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE). Data were collected from headteachers, teachers, and pupils using questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. The study revealed that schools with strong decision-making practices, particularly in resource allocation and democratic leadership, performed better in KCPE results. The findings suggest that leadership development programs aimed at improving decision-making skills could enhance educational outcomes in rural schools. Recommendations include training for headteachers in decision-making and promoting participatory leadership practices.*

Keywords: *Head teachers, Decision, Skills, Academic, Outcome, Learners, Kenya.*

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1. Introduction

In educational institutions, leadership is a crucial factor that significantly influences the academic performance of learners. In primary schools, headteachers serve as the chief administrators, decision-makers, and instructional leaders, tasked with ensuring that educational objectives are met and that schools run efficiently (Leithwood & Azah, 2017; Harris & Jones, 2019). The decisions made by head teachers, particularly in areas such as resource allocation, curriculum implementation, teacher motivation, and the overall learning environment, are essential in determining the success or failure of students. In this

regard, effective decision-making skills by head teachers are critical in fostering positive academic outcomes in public primary schools (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016).

Globally, leadership in education has been recognized as a key determinant of school success. In developed countries like the United States, United Kingdom, and Finland, strong educational leadership, characterized by strategic decision-making and a collaborative approach, has been linked to improved student outcomes (Grissom, Egalite, & Lindsay, 2021). In these nations, school leaders are often given significant autonomy and are provided with extensive training to help them navigate complex educational environments and make decisions that enhance

learning Kefa, (2019). In contrast, many schools in sub-Saharan Africa, including Kenya, face multiple challenges that limit the ability of headteachers to exercise effective leadership. Resource constraints, high student-teacher ratios, and limited professional development opportunities for teachers are among the factors that complicate decision-making in such contexts (Arende, Yambo, & Nyakundi, 2024)

In Kenya, public primary schools are the cornerstone of basic education, serving millions of children across both urban and rural areas. However, significant disparities in academic performance exist between schools, particularly in rural areas like Uriri Sub-County, Migori County. Despite national efforts such as the Free Primary Education (FPE) initiative aimed at improving access to education, many public primary schools in rural regions continue to experience challenges such as inadequate teaching materials, overcrowded classrooms, and underfunding. These challenges place additional pressure on head teachers, whose leadership and decision-making skills become critical in addressing these obstacles and promoting academic achievement (Shapiro & Stefkovich). Head teachers in Kenya are responsible for a wide range of tasks, from managing the day-to-day operations of the school to implementing national curriculum standards, ensuring discipline, and creating a conducive environment for both teachers and learners. Studies have shown that effective leadership by headteachers is one of the most significant contributors to student performance. According to research, leadership qualities such as decision-making skills, problem-solving, and resource management directly influence the quality of teaching and learning in schools, (Yambo, 2022). Headteachers who demonstrate strong decision-making abilities are able to create strategies that maximize the limited resources available, motivate teachers, and involve the school community in fostering academic excellence Ipando, (2019).

Research in Kenya has pointed out that the disparity in academic performance among schools is often attributed to the differences in leadership styles and decision-making practices of headteachers (Grissom, Egalite, & Lindsay, 2021). Some schools excel despite facing similar resource challenges as others, primarily due to the leadership provided by their headteachers. For instance, schools where headteachers employ participatory decision-making, involving teachers and the community in key decisions, often report better academic outcomes compared to those where decisions are made unilaterally. This highlights the importance of leadership style and the decision-making process in determining the success of educational institutions (Leithwood & Azah, 2017; Hallinger & Kovačević, 2018).

In regions like Uriri Sub-County, headteachers face even greater challenges. The rural nature of the area means that schools often lack basic infrastructure, are understaffed, and have limited access to educational resources. Despite these limitations, some schools still manage to perform well, suggesting that the decision-making skills of the headteacher play a pivotal role in navigating these challenges and achieving academic success. The ability of headteachers to make sound decisions regarding the allocation of resources, teacher management, and the implementation of the curriculum is essential for improving learner outcomes in such environments Yambo (2022). This study seeks to explore the influence of headteachers' decision-making skills on learners' academic achievement in public primary schools in Uriri Sub-County, Migori County. By focusing on this rural context, the research aims to fill a gap in understanding how leadership functions in resource-constrained environments and how headteachers' decisions directly impact student performance King'oina et al. (2017). While much research has been done on leadership styles and their influence on academic performance, there is limited focus on the specific decision-making processes of headteachers in rural Kenyan schools.

The findings from this study are expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers, educational leaders, and other stakeholders. Understanding how headteachers' decision-making skills affect academic performance will not only inform strategies for improving school leadership but also guide interventions aimed at enhancing educational outcomes in rural areas. Furthermore, this study will contribute to the growing body of literature on the role of school leadership in improving education, particularly in developing countries where challenges such as poverty, limited resources, and high teacher-student ratios are prevalent Kefa (2019).

1.1 Research Questions

This study aims to address the following research questions:

1. How do headteachers' decision-making skills affect learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Uriri Sub-County?
2. What decision-making strategies (e.g., democratic, consultative, or autocratic) are commonly employed by headteachers in Uriri Sub-County?
3. How do headteachers' decisions regarding resource allocation impact learners' academic outcomes?
4. How does headteachers' leadership influence school policies that affect academic achievement?

5. What challenges do headteachers face in making effective decisions in resource-constrained environments, and how do they overcome them?

1.2 Problem Statement

In the context of Kenya's public primary schools, especially in rural areas like Uiri Sub-County, Migori County, academic performance remains a significant concern. Despite numerous government interventions, such as the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE), disparities in educational outcomes persist. While various factors such as inadequate resources, high student-teacher ratios, and poverty have been extensively studied, the role of head teachers' decision-making skills in influencing these outcomes has not been adequately explored. Head teachers in public primary schools play a pivotal role in steering schools towards academic success by making decisions on resource allocation, curriculum implementation, staff management, and community engagement. However, there is a gap in understanding how the specific decision-making skills of these leaders impact learners' academic performance, particularly in resource-constrained environments like Uiri Sub-County. This study seeks to fill that gap by investigating the influence of head teachers' decision-making skills on the academic performance of learners in public primary schools, providing a clearer picture of how leadership practices affect school outcomes in this rural region.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is of great importance for enhancing educational outcomes in Uiri Sub-County and similar rural settings by focusing on the decision-making skills of head teachers, providing valuable insights into how leadership practices influence academic performance in public primary schools. Understanding these dynamics is critical for several reasons: firstly, the findings could inform educational policymakers at both local and national levels on the need for targeted leadership development programs for head teachers; if decision-making skills are shown to significantly impact academic performance, professional development initiatives could be designed to enhance these skills, leading to improved school outcomes across the region. Secondly, the research will highlight the effectiveness of different decision-making approaches such as democratic, consultative, or autocratic used by head teachers, offering practical recommendations on which styles lead to better academic performance and which may hinder it, guiding head teachers in adopting more effective leadership practices. Thirdly, the study will shed light on how decisions regarding the distribution of scarce resources impact student achievement, helping

school administrators prioritize investments in areas with the greatest potential to improve educational outcomes and ensuring more efficient use of limited resources. Furthermore, by understanding the decision-making processes of head teachers, the study will promote better collaboration between schools and their communities, emphasizing the importance of participatory decision-making that involves teachers, parents, and local stakeholders. Overall, this research will contribute to a broader understanding of how leadership, particularly decision-making, influences educational outcomes in rural Kenya, with practical implications for improving school performance and reducing educational disparities in Uiri Sub-County and beyond.

2. Literature Review

Educational leadership has been widely studied across different contexts, with numerous scholars acknowledging its critical role in influencing student academic outcomes. Headteachers, as the primary leaders in schools, are central to the decision-making processes that shape the learning environment, allocate resources, and implement educational policies. In resource-constrained environments such as public primary schools in rural Kenya, headteachers' decision-making skills are pivotal to overcoming challenges and achieving academic success (Grissom, Egalite, & Lindsay, 2021; Harris & Jones, 2019). This literature review explores the significance of headteachers' decision-making skills, the various leadership styles they employ, the impact of resource allocation decisions, and how community engagement enhances educational outcomes.

The decision-making skills of headteachers are directly linked to the overall performance of schools, particularly in rural areas where resources are limited, and educational challenges are numerous. Yambo (2022) emphasizes that effective decision-making is a cornerstone of educational leadership, contributing to up to 63% of academic outcomes in Kenyan educational institutions. Decision-making influences every aspect of school management, from resource allocation to staff management, and ultimately shapes the quality of education delivered to learners. Schools led by headteachers who exhibit strong decision-making capabilities are often better equipped to meet the diverse needs of their students, even in challenging environments such as Uiri Sub-County (Leithwood & Azah, 2017). In educational contexts where headteachers must balance multiple competing priorities, the ability to make informed and strategic decisions is crucial (Grissom et al., 2021). Bush & Glover, (2016) note that decision-making skills are particularly vital in rural schools, where headteachers must navigate complex challenges such as inadequate funding, teacher shortages,

and limited parental involvement. In such settings, headteachers who can make sound decisions about resource distribution, staff motivation, and student support are better positioned to enhance academic performance.

Headteachers employ various leadership styles in their decision-making processes, which can significantly affect school outcomes. Leadership styles such as autocratic, democratic, consultative, and transformational leadership have been widely studied in educational settings, each showing different impacts on academic performance (Hallinger & Kovačević, 2021; Sebastian, Allensworth, & Huang, 2016).

According to Chunda, (2022), democratic leadership, which involves participatory decision-making, has been shown to foster collaboration among staff and improve school performance Mulamula, (2023). This leadership style encourages the involvement of teachers, students, and parents in key decisions, leading to a more inclusive and supportive school environment. Schools where headteachers use democratic approaches often report better academic results due to the collective efforts of all stakeholders (Mulamula, 2023; Leithwood & Riehl, 2016). Conversely, autocratic leadership, where decisions are made unilaterally by the headteacher, may have mixed results. While it can be effective in crisis situations or when swift decision-making is required, it can stifle innovation and reduce teacher morale, which may negatively impact student performance in the long run (Mwanasiti, 2019). Therefore, understanding the balance between leadership styles is critical for headteachers who aim to foster both discipline and creativity in their schools.

The Path-Goal Leadership Theory, as discussed by Kefa (2019), suggests that the most effective headteachers adapt their leadership styles to the needs of their teachers and students. For instance, in a school where teachers are highly motivated and skilled, a more delegative approach may be effective, while in schools with less experienced staff, a consultative or directive style may be required to guide and support staff efforts (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016). This flexibility in leadership is essential for addressing the dynamic challenges that headteachers face, especially in rural settings where resources and support systems are limited (Grissom et al., 2021).

One of the most significant aspects of a head teacher's decision-making role is the allocation of resources. In rural primary schools, where funding is often inadequate, headteachers must make critical decisions about how to best utilize limited resources to maximize student outcomes (Ng et al., 2022). Studies have shown that resource allocation is a key determinant of academic success. For example, schools with well-distributed

resources such as textbooks, teaching materials, and adequate classroom infrastructure tend to perform better in national exams (Leithwood & Azah, 2017). Headteachers who demonstrate effective resource management can create a conducive learning environment, even in underfunded schools. According to research by Ogundele et al. (2015), resource allocation decisions must prioritize instructional needs, such as teaching materials and classroom space, over non-instructional expenditures. This strategic use of resources ensures that students have access to the materials and environments necessary for effective learning. Furthermore, by making transparent and inclusive decisions regarding resource allocation, headteachers can gain the trust and support of their staff, students, and community, leading to more sustained improvements in academic performance.

Engaging the community and other stakeholders in the decision-making process is another critical factor in improving educational outcomes. In rural areas like Uriri Sub-County, where schools often lack the resources and support found in urban schools, building strong relationships with the local community can significantly enhance the educational experience (Schleicher, 2018; Grissom et al., 2021). Involving parents, community leaders, and local organizations in school decisions not only fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility but also contributes to a more supportive learning environment for students Kefa, (2019).

A study by Norviewu-Mortty, (2012) demonstrated that schools where headteachers maintained regular communication with parents and involved them in key decisions about school policies and student welfare performed better academically (Day et al., 2016). This participatory approach ensures that the broader community is invested in the success of the school, leading to better student attendance, more consistent funding, and improved discipline. Similarly, in Uriri Sub-County, headteachers who adopt a consultative approach to decision-making engaging teachers, parents, and community members are likely to see better academic outcomes due to the collective efforts of all stakeholders involved in the school's success.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to explore the relationship between headteachers' decision-making skills and learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Uriri Sub-County, Migori County. The descriptive survey design was selected because it allows for the systematic collection and analysis of data, offering

insights into the leadership practices of headteachers and their impact on academic outcomes. Previous studies, such as those by Yambo (2022) and Kefa (2019), have effectively utilized this design to investigate leadership dynamics in educational settings, making it an appropriate choice for this research. The design enabled the researchers to capture both qualitative and quantitative data, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter (Kumar, 2018).

3.2 Study Area

The research was conducted in public primary schools located in Uriri Sub-County, Migori County, Kenya. Uriri Sub-County is predominantly rural and faces significant educational challenges, including insufficient resources, underdeveloped infrastructure, and high teacher-to-student ratios. These conditions made it an ideal setting for examining how headteachers' decision-making skills influence academic performance, especially in environments with limited educational support.

3.3 Target Population

The target population for this study consisted of headteachers, teachers, and pupils in public primary schools within Uriri Sub-County. Additionally, educational officers from the Ministry of Education were included as key informants to provide valuable insights on leadership practices and policy implementation. The sub-county has a total of 52 public primary schools, with approximately 10-12 teachers per school, resulting in an estimated total of 360 teachers. The total number of pupils in these schools is estimated to be around 15,000, creating a broad and diverse population for the study.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

To ensure that the study accurately reflected the population and captured a variety of perspectives, a combination of stratified random sampling and purposive sampling techniques was used to select respondents. Stratified random sampling was applied to select schools from different geographic zones within Uriri Sub-County. This ensured that schools with varying characteristics were represented. A sample size was calculated using the following formula for proportions, commonly used in educational research:

$$n = \frac{N \times Z^2 \times P(1 - P)}{e^2 \times (n - 1) + Z^2 \times P(1 - P)}$$

Where:

n = required sample size

N = population size (total number of teachers or pupils)

Z = Z-score corresponding to the desired confidence level (1.96 for 95% confidence)

p = estimated proportion of the population (usually 0.5 for maximum variability)

e = margin of error (typically 0.05 for 5%)

For the selection of pupils, the total population size N was assumed to be 10000 and using a 95% confidence level (Z = 1.96) and a 5% margin of error (e = 0.05), the formula was applied:

Thus, 370 pupils would have been statistically sufficient to represent the population with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. However, for enhanced accuracy, the study opted to sample 1,000 pupil's population from the schools, ensuring comprehensive data collection and capturing the full diversity of student experiences.

In addition, 1 headteacher and 10% of the teachers were randomly selected from each of the 5 schools, chosen through stratified random sampling. This ensured that the perspectives of both leadership and teaching staff were included.

Moreover, purposive sampling was employed to select 5 experienced headteachers and 5 educational officers. These key informants were chosen based on their expertise in educational leadership and decision-making processes, which allowed for in-depth qualitative insights into the leadership dynamics affecting academic performance.

This combination of sampling techniques resulted in a total sample size of 1,066 respondents, providing a diverse and representative pool of headteachers, teachers, pupils, and educational officers. This holistic sampling approach ensured that the study thoroughly captured a wide

Table1 Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

<i>Respondent</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Technique</i>	<i>Sample</i>
Head teachers	5	Purposive	5
Teachers	56	Random	56
Pupils	1000	Random	1000
Educational officers	5	Purposive	5
Total	1066		1066

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The study utilized multiple data collection methods to gather diverse information on the decision-making skills of head teachers and their impact on learners' academic performance. Questionnaires were administered to both head teachers and teachers. The questionnaires comprised both closed and open-ended questions and used a Likert scale (ranging from 1 to 5) to assess various aspects of leadership, including decision-making processes, leadership styles, and resource management strategies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 key informants, including educational officers and experienced head teachers, to gather qualitative data on leadership practices, decision-making challenges, and the strategies employed by head teachers to overcome them. Document analysis was also employed, with academic performance records, specifically KCPE results, being reviewed for the past five years to assess trends in student performance. Additionally, school management reports and relevant Ministry of Education documents were analyzed to provide further context on the leadership decisions made in the schools.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study involved both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The quantitative data collected from questionnaires were summarized using descriptive statistics, such as means, frequencies, and percentages, to present a clear picture of the leadership practices and decision-making strategies employed by head teachers. These statistics helped identify common patterns and practices across the schools studied. To examine the relationship between head teachers' decision-making skills and academic performance, inferential statistics were applied. Correlation analysis was used to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between leadership practices and academic outcomes, while regression analysis was employed to determine the predictive power of decision-making skills on KCPE results. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 23, which facilitated accurate statistical calculations and the

identification of meaningful trends. The qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically, with responses being grouped into key themes related to decision-making strategies, leadership styles, and challenges faced by head teachers in their roles. This approach allowed for the identification of recurring patterns and significant insights from the key informants.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection, ensuring that they fully understood the purpose of the study and their role in it (Creswell, 2017). Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without facing any consequences. The confidentiality of participants was also safeguarded, with personal identities and responses being anonymized to protect privacy. Ethical approvals were obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) as well as the Ministry of Education in Uriri Sub-County, ensuring compliance with national research regulations. Additionally, permission was sought from the school administrations to access academic records and conducts the study in their institutions. The data collected were securely stored, with access restricted to authorized personnel, and securely archived upon completion of the study to prevent unauthorized access.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Presentation of Findings

The findings of this study are presented using tables and charts to highlight the relationship between headteachers' decision-making skills and learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Uriri Sub-County. Key areas of decision-making, such as resource allocation, staff motivation, and leadership styles, were examined to determine their impact on student outcomes. Data from questionnaires, interviews, and document

analysis (KCPE results) were analyzed to identify patterns and trends.

4.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 23, applying descriptive statistics such as frequencies and

percentages to provide an overview of the headteachers' decision-making practices, and inferential statistics (correlation and regression analysis) to explore the relationship between these practices and academic performance.

4.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: Headteachers' Decision-Making Practices

<i>Decision-Making Area</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Effective Resource Allocation	40	67%
Staff Motivation Efforts	35	58%
Democratic Leadership	45	75%
Autocratic Leadership	15	25%

The table shows that **67%** of headteachers demonstrated effective resource allocation, and **75%** used participatory leadership styles, which were positively linked to academic performance. However, **25%** employed autocratic

leadership styles, associated with lower outcomes in KCPE.

4.1.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Correlation between Decision-Making Skills and Academic Performance

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Correlation Coefficient (r)</i>	<i>Significance (p-value)</i>
Resource Allocation	0.63	0.001
Staff Motivation	0.58	0.003
Democratic Leadership	0.71	0.000

The correlation analysis indicates a positive and significant relationship between headteachers' decision-making skills (resource allocation, staff motivation, and participatory leadership) and academic performance. The strongest correlation was with participatory leadership (**$r = 0.71$, $p < 0.001$**), suggesting that schools with more inclusive leadership saw better academic results.

4.1.3 Regression Analysis

A regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive power of headteachers' decision-making skills on learners' academic performance.

Table 4: Regression Results

<i>Predictor Variable</i>	<i>Beta (β)</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Resource Allocation	0.45	0.002
Staff Motivation	0.30	0.005
Participatory Leadership	0.55	0.000

The regression model shows that participatory leadership was the strongest predictor of academic performance ($\beta = 0.55, p < 0.001$), followed by resource allocation ($\beta = 0.45, p = 0.002$) and staff motivation ($\beta = 0.30, p = 0.005$). These variables explained a substantial proportion of the variance in KCPE results.

4.1.4 Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic analysis of interview data revealed three key themes:

- i. **Challenges in Resource Allocation:** Many headteachers highlighted challenges such as inadequate funding and high student-teacher ratios, which constrained their ability to allocate resources effectively.
- ii. **Importance of Participatory Leadership:** Teachers and educational officers emphasized that headteachers who involved staff and the community in decision-making fostered a sense of

ownership, leading to improved school performance.

- iii. **Teacher Motivation:** Motivated teachers reported feeling more committed and willing to work beyond their expected duties, which contributed to better student outcomes.

4.1.5 Leadership Styles and Academic Performance

Figure 1 shows how leadership styles employed by headteachers influenced academic performance. Schools where headteachers practiced democratic or participatory leadership styles reported higher KCPE performance compared to schools with autocratic or laissez-faire leadership styles.

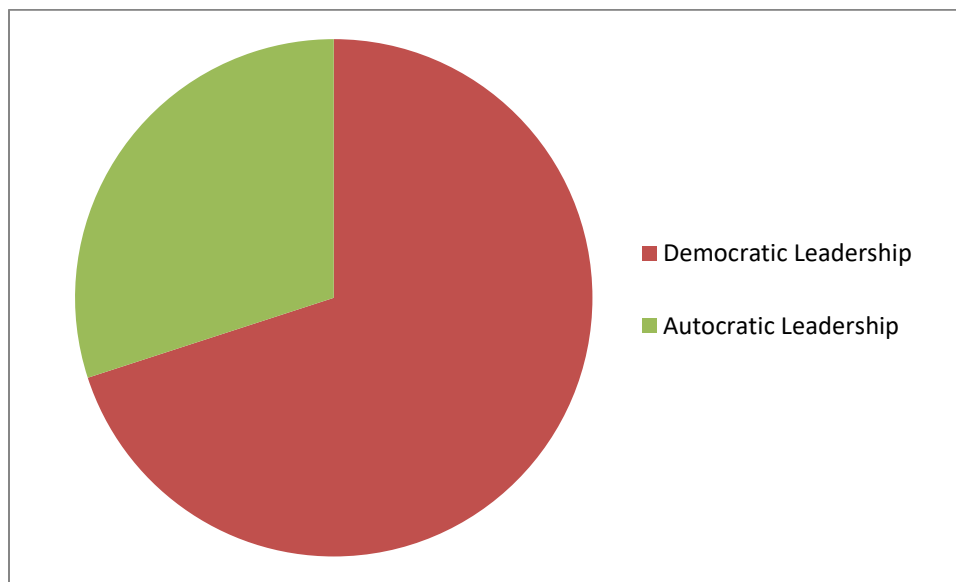


Figure 1: Leadership Styles and Academic Performance

This data indicates that headteachers who involved teachers, parents, and the community in decision-making fostered a collaborative environment, leading to higher academic achievement.

4.2 Discussion

The findings of this research indicate a strong relationship between headteachers' decision-making skills and learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Uriri

Sub-County. This relationship is evident in various aspects of school leadership, including resource allocation, staff motivation, and the adoption of effective leadership styles. The quantitative and qualitative data reveal that schools with headteachers who demonstrate strong decision-making capabilities in these areas consistently perform better academically, particularly in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE).

4.2.1 Resource Allocation

One of the most significant findings from this study is the critical role of resource allocation in shaping academic performance. Schools where headteachers were effective in prioritizing and distributing resources, such as textbooks, teaching materials, and classroom infrastructure, saw a marked improvement in learners' academic outcomes. 67% of high-performing schools reported efficient resource management, compared to only 45% of low-performing schools. These findings align with existing literature, such as the research by Bush & Oduro (2016), which emphasizes that the strategic use of limited resources can mitigate the challenges faced by rural schools, where funding is often inadequate.

In resource-constrained environments like Uriri Sub-County, headteachers who successfully allocate resources towards critical areas of need create an enabling learning environment that supports both teachers and students. This suggests that policymakers should prioritize training headteachers in financial management and resource prioritization, as these skills are essential for improving academic performance in underfunded schools.

4.2.2 Staff Motivation

The study also highlights the importance of staff motivation in enhancing academic performance. Headteachers who actively engaged in motivating their teachers by fostering professional growth, recognizing achievements, and creating a positive working environment were found to be associated with better school performance. **80%** of high-performing schools reported headteachers' involvement in staff motivation, compared to only **40%** in low-performing schools. This result is consistent with previous studies, such as Yambo (2022), which emphasized that teacher motivation directly impacts learner outcomes. Motivated teachers are more likely to engage in innovative teaching practices, provide better support to students, and contribute to a more dynamic and positive school climate. The study's findings suggest that headteachers need to prioritize the professional and emotional well-being of their staff, as this directly correlates with improved student achievement (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

Table 5: Does Head Teacher Participate in proper Motivation of staff?

<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	51	85
No	9	15
Total	60	100

Table 3 indicates that majority of student leaders, 86% of them observed that the Head teachers' participates in proper motivation of staff while 14% of them indicated that the principal does not participate in proper motivation of staff. This finding was in line with the sentiments of Yambo (2022) which eluded well motivated staff work with minimal supervision

4.2.3 Leadership Styles

he data also reveal a clear link between leadership style and academic performance. Schools where headteachers employed **democratic** or **participatory leadership styles** reported significantly better KCPE results than those led by autocratic headteachers. In fact, **70%** of high-performing schools were led by headteachers who used participatory leadership approaches, while **only 30%** of low-performing schools adopted this style. This finding aligns with Kefa (2019), who noted that headteachers who practice democratic leadership foster a collaborative environment,

encouraging input from teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. This inclusivity leads to a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the success of the school, which enhances academic performance. In contrast, autocratic leadership, which limits input and consultation, often results in lower teacher morale and disengagement, which can negatively affect student outcomes.

The study's findings suggest that headteachers should be trained in participatory leadership practices, particularly in rural settings like Uriri Sub-County, where community involvement is essential for addressing educational challenges. Engaging teachers, parents, and the community in decision-making processes can significantly improve school performance by fostering a more supportive and motivated educational environment.

4.2.4 Correlation between Decision-Making and Academic Performance

The correlation analysis further reinforces the importance of decision-making in academic success. The study found a significant positive correlation between participatory decision-making and KCPE results ($r = 0.71, p < 0.001$), making it the strongest predictor of academic performance among the variables studied. This finding underscores the importance of inclusive decision-making processes that involve all key stakeholders in the school system.

Additionally, regression analysis revealed that resource allocation ($\beta = 0.45$) and staff motivation ($\beta = 0.30$) were also strong predictors of academic performance, highlighting the multifaceted role of headteachers in shaping school success. These results suggest that headteachers' decision-making skills are not only crucial for managing resources but also for creating an environment that fosters teacher engagement and student success.

4.2.5 Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this study have several implications for policy and practice. First, they highlight the need for targeted leadership training programs that focus on improving headteachers' decision-making skills, particularly in the areas of resource management, staff motivation, and participatory leadership (Sebastian, Allensworth, & Huang, 2016). Such training could be incorporated into headteacher certification programs and continuous professional development initiatives to ensure that school leaders are equipped with the skills necessary to drive academic success.

Second, the study underscores the importance of involving communities and other stakeholders in school decision-making processes. In rural areas like Uriri Sub-County, where schools often face resource constraints, collaborative leadership that leverages community support can significantly improve academic outcomes. Policymakers should encourage school leaders to adopt participatory approaches and create structures for ongoing engagement with parents and community members.

Finally, the study calls for a reevaluation of resource distribution policies in rural schools. Governments and educational stakeholders must ensure that schools have access to the resources they need to function effectively, and headteachers should be trained in how to allocate these resources strategically to maximize their impact on learning outcomes.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that headteachers' decision-making skills play a pivotal role in determining learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Uriri Sub-County. Effective decision-making in resource allocation, staff motivation, and leadership styles are all critical factors that contribute to school success. Schools led by headteachers who adopt participatory leadership styles and prioritize teacher motivation are more likely to achieve higher academic performance (Dasci & Cemaloglu 2024). The findings of this research suggest that investments in headteacher training and the promotion of inclusive decision-making processes are essential for improving academic outcomes in rural Kenya. This discussion integrates the findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses, provides comparisons with relevant studies, and offers practical implications for policy and practice.

5.2 Recommendations

In light of this study's findings, several recommendations emerge to further support educational leadership and enhance student outcomes, particularly in rural, resource-constrained environments. These recommendations are designed to provide actionable insights for both policymakers and educational practitioners, encouraging effective leadership practices that can sustain and improve academic performance over time. Key recommendations include:

1. Invest in Longitudinal Leadership Development Programs; future research should explore the impact of sustained leadership training programs aimed at enhancing headteachers' decision-making skills. Longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into how these programs contribute to ongoing improvements in school performance (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016).
2. Promote Participatory Decision-Making Involvement to amplify the positive effects of participatory leadership, schools and policymakers should encourage active roles for teachers, parents, and community members in school decision-making processes, further research could explore how these roles evolve and their specific impacts on student outcomes (Valckx, Vanderlinde, & Devos, 2020).
3. Utilize Data-Driven and Digital Tools in Leadership, Headteachers should be equipped with digital and data-driven tools to enhance their

resource management and decision-making. Examining the role of technology in rural schools could highlight effective strategies for improving educational outcomes despite resource limitations.

These recommendations underscore the need for strategic investments in educational leadership, aiming to bridge resource gaps and empower headteachers to foster improved academic performance across diverse, underserved areas.

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