



Inspirational Motivation and Teachers' Work Performance in Public Junior Schools in Turkana County, Kenya: Evidence from a Convergent Mixed Methods Study

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ABSTRACT

Teachers' work performance is the proximate determinant of the quality of instruction that learners receive, and it is shaped in large measure by the leadership exercised by the head of institution. Kenya's junior schools, created by the Competency Based Education reform in 2023, operate under new curricular demands, and in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands such as Turkana County they do so under acute shortages of teachers, materials and infrastructure. Inspirational motivation, the transformational leadership behaviour through which a leader articulates a compelling vision, communicates high expectations and expresses confidence in staff, has rarely been examined against the full range of teachers' work performance indicators in such a setting. This article, drawn from a larger study of transformational leadership in the county, reports the evidence on one question only: how the head of institution's inspirational motivation influences teachers' work performance in public junior schools in Turkana County. The study employed a convergent design in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed separately and merged at the interpretation stage. Questionnaires were administered to a stratified random sample of teachers drawn from schools sampled across all 11 sub counties, a structured guide was used to observe one lesson in each participating school, and in-depth interviews were held with heads of institutions, Curriculum Support Officers, Board of Management chairpersons and Sub County Directors of Education. Of those sampled, 261 teachers, 141 heads of institutions, 19 Curriculum Support Officers, 138 Board of Management chairpersons and 10 Sub County Directors of Education took part. Quantitative data were analyzed in SPSS Version 25 using descriptive statistics and multiple regression at the 0.05 level of significance; qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Teachers rated inspirational motivation at a composite mean of 3.42 (SD = 0.87), with 54.4 percent agreement, a moderate level. The strongest behaviours were the provision of a clear vision for the school's future (mean 3.61, 61.3 percent) and the head's own performance as a benchmark (mean 3.52, 57.9 percent); the weakest were reassurance during difficult periods (mean 3.24, 46.4 percent) and the perception of the head's support as a source of inspiration (mean 3.29, 48.7 percent). In the regression model, inspirational motivation exerted a positive and statistically significant influence on teachers' work performance ($B = 0.173$, $t = 2.98$, $p = .003$), and the first null hypothesis was rejected. The qualitative strand converged with these results and qualified them: heads of institutions described sharing the school vision every term while teachers remained demoralized by delayed hardship allowances, a teacher observed that motivation is hard to sustain where there are no textbooks or even chalk, supervisory officers located the constraint in the county's staffing establishment and in insecure, unhoused postings, and Board of Management chairpersons pressed for recognition and reward systems alongside infrastructure. The study concludes that inspirational motivation significantly raises teachers' work performance in these schools, but that its motivational force is conditional on at least minimally adequate welfare and material support. Practically, heads of institutions should sustain vision setting and deliberately strengthen reassurance and encouragement during difficult periods, a behaviour that carries no financial cost, while the employer and the ministry address the welfare and staffing conditions on which the effect of that messaging depends.

Keywords: Inspirational motivation; transformational leadership; teachers' work performance; heads of institutions; junior schools; Turkana County; Kenya

Background to the Study

The quality of education that a school delivers is bounded by the quality of the work its teachers actually perform. Teachers' work performance refers to the manner in which a teacher executes the core professional tasks of teaching, namely lesson preparation and planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, assessment and feedback, professional conduct and learner engagement, and the extent to which these practices enable learners to reach their potential (Awe, 2025). Because these tasks are performed daily and largely out of public view, they depend heavily on discretionary effort, and discretionary effort is precisely what school leadership is able to influence (Thomas, 2024; Li & Liu, 2022).

Transformational leadership, first articulated by Burns (1978) and developed by Bass (1985), describes a leadership style in which the leader raises followers' motivation and performance rather than concentrating on routine day-to-day exchanges. The style is conventionally analyzed through four dimensions, namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation. This article concerns one of them. Inspirational motivation refers to the process observed when a school leader articulates a clear and compelling vision for the future of the school, communicates high expectations and expresses confidence in the staff, thereby building shared enthusiasm and commitment among teachers. The other three dimensions are named here only to situate the construct within the theory; they are not the subject of this article, and the findings reported below concern inspirational motivation alone.

The relevance of inspirational motivation to teachers' work performance lies in the mechanism through which it operates, which is purpose. A vision that is communicated repeatedly, together with expressed confidence in teachers' ability, sustains effort in lesson preparation and delivery through periods of difficulty, and it aligns individual effort with institutional goals so that teachers acquire a shared sense of direction (King et al., 2021; Park et al., 2022). International evidence supports this expectation. Studies conducted in the United States report that the school climate created by transformational leaders mediates the relationship between leadership and teacher productivity (McCarley et al., 2016), while evidence from India indicates that leadership efforts to build trust and teacher autonomy raise teachers' work performance substantially (Khan, 2023). In Ethiopia, transformational leadership was found to be moderately but significantly related to teacher job satisfaction (Tesfaw & Koros, 2024), and in Uganda headteachers' transformational leadership was found to have a positive and significant effect on school academic performance (Sengendo & Eduan, 2024).

Kenya provides a demanding setting in which to examine this relationship. The country is consolidating Competency Based Education, and the junior school level, introduced in 2023, has placed unprecedented demands on school leadership in respect of curriculum transition, teacher specialization and resourcing (M'mboga Akala, 2021; Nzambimana et al., 2024). Junior schools were staffed largely through the deployment of serving teachers rather than through fresh graduate recruitment alone, and many of their heads assumed office during the transition, so that leadership in this cadre is still consolidating (Njugia et al., 2024). Where heads of institutions have adopted transformational habits, observable increases in staff morale and school success have been reported (Tagne & Sylvain, 2024), but the evidence base remains concentrated at the secondary and primary levels.

Turkana County sharpens the question further. It is Kenya's largest county, covering roughly 77,000 square kilometres and administered through 11 sub counties, and its schools operate amid poor infrastructure, severe teacher shortages, insecurity in remote locations and pastoralist livelihoods that make learner attendance seasonal (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology [MoEST], 2022; Kiminza et al., 2021). The county records some of the highest teacher vacancy rates and poorest teacher retention in the country, and local education officials have expressed concern that heads of institutions may lack the specialized leadership preparation required to sustain teacher commitment in such conditions (MoEST, 2022; Njugia et al., 2024). These conditions enlarge teachers' workload, reduce instructional time and depress morale, and they simultaneously limit what a head of institution can achieve through leadership alone. Whether a leadership behaviour that costs nothing to enact, such as vision setting and encouragement, retains its influence on teachers' work performance under conditions of this severity is therefore not a settled question but an empirical one.

Statement of the Problem

Contemporary studies in educational leadership identify transformational leadership as a primary catalyst for elevating teaching standards and driving progress within schools (Thomas, 2024; Li & Liu, 2022). Ideally, heads of institutions should be able to inspire, motivate and support teachers so as to secure high levels of professional performance, particularly in a period of continuous curriculum change and evolving pedagogical requirements. International scholarship consistently demonstrates that schools led by transformational leaders report increases in teacher motivation, professional commitment, instructional delivery and learner outcomes (Li & Liu, 2022; McCarley et al., 2016; Sengendo & Eduan, 2024).

While inspirational leadership is vital for educator success, Kenyan junior schools continue to struggle with deep-seated performance issues. Many administrators still favour traditional, transactional management styles that do not address the new professional demands brought on by the Competency Based Education reform (Nzambimana et al., 2024; Njugia et al., 2024). This creates a clear point of friction: the reform framework demands high levels of commitment and collaboration, while many leadership practices remain anchored in older and more rigid administrative habits (M'mboga Akala, 2021). Beyond these national trends, Turkana County faces its own environmental and logistical difficulties. Schools in the county contend with severe teacher shortages and a lack of essential instructional materials, and the county records the highest teacher vacancy rates and the poorest teacher retention in the country (MoEST, 2022). Local education officials and support officers accordingly worry that school leaders may not be equipped with the specialized training required to maintain teacher commitment in such a demanding setting (Kiminza et al., 2021; Njugia et al., 2024).

Indicators of teachers' work performance in the county therefore remain a matter of concern, with schools contending with heavy workloads, disrupted classroom stability and difficulty attracting and retaining qualified teachers, all of which depress teachers' work performance (MoEST, 2022). If this problem is not addressed, teachers' work performance in public junior schools in Turkana County will continue to be below expectation. A specific gap compounds the difficulty. Research on inspirational leadership has concentrated on innovative and technology-related teacher behaviour in well-resourced systems, and it has rarely been examined in relation to the full spectrum of teachers' work performance indicators, including lesson preparation, classroom management and professional conduct, in a resource-constrained Arid and Semi-Arid Lands setting. Kenyan evidence on transformational leadership is largely quantitative, is drawn from secondary and primary schools in counties outside the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands, and does not disaggregate the transformational dimensions in relation to teachers' work performance at the junior school level (Stanley et al., 2023; Arusei,

2023; Njugia et al., 2024). It is not therefore established whether, or how strongly, the inspirational dimension of the head of institution's leadership influences teachers' work performance in these schools, and it is this problem that the present article addresses.

Research Question and Hypothesis

The study is guided by a single research question:

How does the Head of Institution's inspirational motivation influence teachers' work performance in public junior schools in Turkana County?

The corresponding null hypothesis, tested at the 0.05 level of significance, is:

H₀: There is no statistically significant influence of the Head of Institution's inspirational motivation on teachers' work performance in public junior schools in Turkana County.

The purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is accordingly to establish the level at which inspirational motivation is practised in these schools, to test its influence on teachers' work performance, and to explain that influence using the accounts of the participants themselves. No other research question or hypothesis of the parent study is examined here.

Significance of the Study

The evidence reported here carries theoretical, practical and policy significance for educational leadership in public junior schools in Turkana County and in comparable settings. As Kenya consolidates Competency Based Education, school leadership is central to shaping teaching practice and teacher commitment, and the article documents whether one specific, low-cost leadership behaviour makes a measurable difference to teachers' work performance under severe resource constraints.

Heads of institutions are the most immediate beneficiaries. The findings identify, with statistical evidence, whether inspirational motivation carries a return on effort in a resource-poor school, and which of its component behaviours can be strengthened at no financial cost. A head of institution can therefore decide where to concentrate attention, for example on the regular articulation of the school vision, on the communication of institutional objectives, and on reassurance and encouragement during difficult periods. Teachers stand to benefit because the article makes explicit the form of leadership support that they themselves report as least available and most needed, namely reassurance at moments when conditions are hardest. Where heads of institutions act on this evidence, teachers should experience clearer expectations and more sustained encouragement, both of which bear on lesson preparation, instructional delivery and assessment practice.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology may find the evidence useful in designing leadership preparation and in-service programmes for junior school heads, and in targeting capitation and instructional materials to Arid and Semi-Arid Lands, since the article identifies the material deficits that suppress the effect of inspirational leadership. The Teachers Service Commission may use the evidence on staffing, teacher turnover and welfare to inform recruitment, equitable deployment, hardship support and retention. The Turkana County Government and the county education offices, including Sub County Directors of Education and Curriculum Support Officers, may use the findings to focus their supervisory attention during school support visits on the inspirational practices that this evidence links to teacher performance, and to prioritize security arrangements, teacher housing and community sensitization. Boards of Management may likewise direct their resource mobilization, oversight and staff recognition roles towards the deficits that teachers themselves identify as most constraining.

Learners and the communities surrounding the schools stand to benefit indirectly but substantially, because teachers' work performance was measured through observable classroom behaviour, so that any improvement in these behaviours translates into better quality teaching. For scholarship, the article contributes county-level evidence from a marginalised context that is under-represented in the literature on transformational leadership, and it supplies future researchers with a documented procedure for examining a single leadership dimension using converging quantitative, observational and interview evidence in a geographically dispersed county.

Review of related Literature

Inspirational Motivation and Teacher's work performance

Inspirational motivation is one of the four dimensions of transformational leadership, and it is the dimension with which this article is concerned. It denotes the leader's capacity to express a clear and positive vision, to establish high aspirations and to engage staff in the collective pursuit of these goals with devoted interest and enthusiasm (Park et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2025). Through the communication of vision, the use of symbols and the modelling of appropriate behaviours, the head of institution shares the vision of the organisation, motivates teachers and builds confidence among them. Its value for research on teachers' work performance lies in the fact that it names observable behaviours that can be cultivated, practised and measured rather than an abstract quality of the leader (Ladkin & Patrick, 2022; Park et al., 2022). Three components of the behaviour recur in the literature and

structure the empirical work reported below: the articulation of an inspirational vision, the communication of institutional goals and expectations, and encouragement expressed as confidence in teachers' ability, particularly during difficulty.

The first component, inspirational vision, is the most institutionalised of the three in African school systems, because strategic planning requirements and appraisal instruments oblige heads of institutions to state and restate school goals (Sengendo & Eduan, 2024; Bush et al., 2022). The second, the communication of institutional goals, has acquired new urgency under Competency Based Education, which has compelled school leaders to explain unfamiliar curricular expectations repeatedly to their staff (M'mboga Akala, 2021; Nzambimana et al., 2024). Both components bear on teachers' work performance because they convert institutional purpose into instructional expectations that teachers can act upon in planning, delivery and assessment, and because a vision that is restated consistently gives a shared direction to effort that would otherwise be dispersed across competing demands (King et al., 2021).

The third component, encouragement and reassurance, is the least procedurally mandated and the most dependent on the leader's own disposition, and it is therefore the component most likely to vary between schools. It is also the component that the literature associates most directly with discretionary effort, since expressed confidence in a teacher's ability sustains lesson preparation, marking and remedial teaching through periods when conditions are difficult (Lawrason et al., 2023; Ahmad & Rochimah, 2021). Regional evidence supports this emphasis. In Tanzania, teachers were more satisfied and performed better where the school head supported them closely and showed concern for their well-being (Nyenyebe et al., 2021), while in South Africa schools whose leadership failed to sustain support of this kind recorded lower teacher morale and greater institutional instability (Ndwandwe, 2024).

The route by which inspirational motivation reaches teachers' work performance runs through commitment rather than compliance. Where the vision of the school is communicated consistently, teachers acquire a shared sense of purpose that aligns individual effort with institutional goals, and where individual contribution is recognised, professional support becomes visible and is reciprocated with effort (King et al., 2021; Ahmad & Rochimah, 2021). Inspirational leadership has correspondingly been associated with reduced turnover, on the reasoning that staff who hold the vision clearly in mind are more likely to feel that they belong and to remain (Booker-Dw et al., 2023), and continuity of staffing is itself a condition of the planning, assessment and accumulated knowledge of learners on which work performance depends.

Teacher motivation is therefore the proximate variable through which the inspirational dimension operates, and it is also the point at which its effect can be lost. Even where the head of institution articulates a vision and expresses confidence in the staff, teachers' work performance may remain low if motivation is depressed by unpaid allowances, harsh working conditions in remote schools, heavy workload or the absence of recognition. Conversely, motivated teachers respond more strongly to inspirational leadership behaviour, and the return on that behaviour in instructional practice is correspondingly larger (King et al., 2021; Yu & Jang, 2024).

A parallel line of argument holds that inspirational rhetoric must be coupled with tangible follower support if it is to influence performance, since motivational language that is not matched by conditions in which teachers can act on it produces cynicism rather than effort (Lawrason et al., 2023; Tesfaw & Koros, 2024). Two conditions recur. The first is the availability of teaching and learning resources, because a vision of improved instruction cannot be enacted where the school lacks textbooks, curriculum materials, desks and classroom space, so that the same inspirational message yields different returns in differently resourced schools (MoEST, 2022; Kiminza et al., 2021). The second is teacher professional competence, since teachers who command their subject matter and their assessment tools are better placed to translate an inspirational expectation into changed classroom practice than those who are not (Awe, 2025). Both conditions are pertinent to the setting examined here, and both are tested against the evidence reported below.

Empirical Evidence on Inspirational Motivation and Teachers' Work Performance

Empirical work bearing on the inspirational dimension and teachers' work performance is uneven in its coverage. In the United States, the school climate created by transformational leaders was found to mediate the relationship between leadership and teacher productivity, which locates the effect in the motivational atmosphere of the school rather than in administrative control (McCarley et al., 2016). In India, leadership efforts to build trust and teacher autonomy were found to raise teachers' work performance substantially, with teachers' confidence in the principal operating as the mediating mechanism (Khan, 2023). Both studies measured transformational leadership as a whole rather than isolating its inspirational dimension, so they establish the direction of the relationship without showing how much of it the inspirational behaviours themselves carry.

African evidence points in the same direction. In Uganda, headteachers' transformational leadership positively and significantly influenced academic performance in public secondary schools, in a system in which the articulation of a school vision is among the most institutionalised of the practices examined (Sengendo & Eduan, 2024). In Ethiopia, transformational leadership was moderately but significantly related to teacher job satisfaction, and the moderate magnitude of that association suggests that the leadership effect operates within, rather than over, the working conditions teachers face (Tefaw & Koros, 2024). What the regional literature adds is a qualification that matters for the present study: education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa contend with teacher shortages, insufficient professional development, poor infrastructure and weak incentives, so that inspirational behaviours are exercised within a structural envelope that leadership alone cannot enlarge (Bush et al., 2022).

Kenyan evidence is consistent in direction while leaving the junior school level unexamined. In the Lower Eastern region, a positive association was reported between the transformational leadership tenets of principals and institutional performance in public secondary schools (Stanley et al., 2023), and in Nandi County the management practices of headteachers were found to influence teachers' job satisfaction in public primary schools (Arusei, 2023). Evidence generated within Turkana County itself remains confined to other variables, such as the influence of parental involvement on learner

discipline (Njugia et al., 2024). Studies of inspirational leadership elsewhere have concentrated on innovative and technology-related teacher behaviour in well-resourced European systems. Two gaps follow. Inspirational motivation has rarely been examined in relation to the full spectrum of teachers' work performance indicators, including lesson preparation, classroom management and professional conduct, in the resource-constrained conditions of an Arid and Semi-Arid Lands county; and it has rarely been separated from the other transformational dimensions so that its independent contribution can be read. It is these gaps that the present article addresses.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the Transformational Leadership Theory, introduced by Burns (1978) and later developed and operationalized by Bass (1985). The theory stipulates that a transformational leader empowers followers to transcend their self-interest for the collective good, developing them into future leaders, encouraging innovative work behaviour, inspiring and motivating them, and mentoring and supporting them to realize the shared vision of the organization (Ladkin & Patrick, 2022). Within this process, leaders interact with followers in ways that enhance their creativity, motivation and commitment to organizational goals, which is why the theory has been linked consistently to job satisfaction, organizational culture and innovation (Ahmad & Rochimah, 2021). Bass further specified that the theory operates through four measurable tenets, of which inspirational motivation is the tenet examined here.

The theory explains the relationship between inspirational motivation and teachers' work performance through a chain of three steps. First, the leader articulates a vision and expresses confidence in the staff. Second, teachers who receive that message acquire a shared sense of purpose and raised expectations of themselves, which converts institutional goals into personal ones. Third, that internalized purpose is expended as discretionary effort in the tasks that constitute work performance, namely the preparation of lessons, the delivery of instruction, the management of the classroom, the assessment of learners and the maintenance of professional conduct (Park et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2025). The theory therefore predicts a positive influence of inspirational motivation on teachers' work performance, and it locates the mechanism in follower perception rather than in leader intention, which is why the analyses reported below are based on teachers' ratings of their heads of institutions.

The theory has documented limitations, among them the risk that intense personal identification with a leader fosters uncritical loyalty, and the difficulty of judging the ethical merit of the vision towards which followers are being moved (Ndwandwe, 2024). The parent study addressed these limitations in three ways that also govern the present article: ethical conduct was assessed as part of the leadership measurement rather than charisma alone; evidence was triangulated across teachers, heads of institutions, Curriculum Support Officers, Board of Management chairpersons and Sub County Directors of Education so that no single source determined the findings; and the Path-Goal Theory of leadership was retained as a supplementary lens, since it addresses the situational and motivational dimensions that Transformational Leadership Theory does not fully capture. The Path-Goal insight is directly pertinent here: leaders raise follower motivation by clarifying goals and by removing obstacles from followers' paths, so that motivation converts into performance only when the path is passable (Northouse, 2021; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). This proposition proves central to the interpretation of the findings reported below, and no theory beyond those already adopted by the parent study has been introduced.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a diagram or story map that shows how the important variables in a study are related to one another and how the research is conducted, allowing the reader to see how the independent variable influences the dependent variable and how intervening or moderating factors may bear on that relationship (Salawu et al., 2023). Figure 1 presents the framework that guides this article. It is the conceptual framework of the parent study, narrowed to the single path examined here.

The independent variable is the inspirational motivation of the head of institution, understood as the process observed when a school leader articulates a clear and compelling vision for the future of the school, communicates high expectations and expresses confidence in the staff, thereby building shared enthusiasm and commitment among teachers, which in turn results in better professional performance throughout the school. Its indicators are the articulation of a clear vision for the school's future, the communication of the institution's primary objectives, encouragement to excel in professional duties, expressed confidence that builds professional self-assurance, reassurance during difficult periods, and the head's own performance serving as a benchmark that challenges teachers to improve.

The dependent variable is teachers' work performance, understood as the manner in which a teacher executes the core professional tasks of teaching in order to address each learner's learning needs, and the extent to which these practices enable learners to reach their full potential. Its indicators are lesson preparation and planning, instructional delivery and pedagogy, classroom management, assessment and feedback, professional conduct and ethics, and learner engagement and support. The framework posits a direct effect running from the inspirational motivation of the head of institution to these performance behaviours.

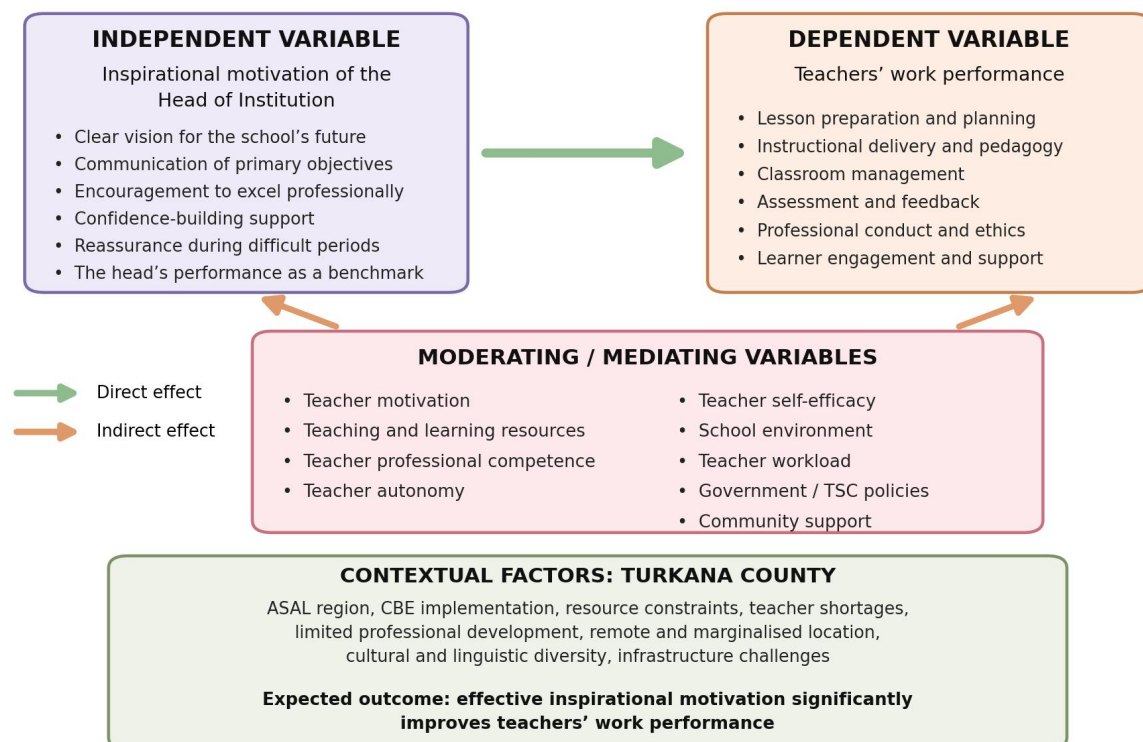
The framework further specifies moderating and mediating variables that condition the strength of that direct effect. Teacher motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, plays a powerful mediating role: even where the head of institution provides inspirational leadership, teachers' work performance may remain low if motivation is depressed by low salaries or the absence of allowances, harsh working conditions in remote schools, delayed promotions, heavy workload or the absence of recognition, while motivated teachers respond more positively to inspirational leadership behaviour. The availability of teaching and learning resources operates in the same way, because even the most inspiring leader may fail to raise teachers' work performance where the school lacks textbooks and curriculum materials, digital devices and connectivity, laboratory equipment, desks and classroom space, whereas

adequate resources allow inspirational leadership to exert stronger positive effects. Teacher professional competence, comprising subject mastery, pedagogical skill, understanding of the curricular competencies and the ability to use assessment tools, likewise conditions the relationship, since highly competent teachers respond better to leadership guidance and support while low competence weakens the influence of leadership on work performance. Teacher autonomy, teacher self-efficacy, the school environment, teacher workload, government and Teachers Service Commission policies, and community support complete the set of intervening influences.

The framework finally locates the whole relationship within the contextual factors of Turkana County, namely its Arid and Semi-Arid Lands status, the implementation of Competency Based Education, resource constraints, teacher shortages, limited professional development, a remote and marginalised location, cultural and linguistic diversity and infrastructure challenges. The expected outcome expressed by the framework is that effective inspirational motivation by the head of institution significantly improves teachers' work performance. It is this expectation that the quantitative and qualitative evidence reported below is used to test and to qualify.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the Relationship between Inspirational Motivation and Teachers' Work Performance



Source: Researcher, 2026. Adapted from the conceptual framework of the parent study to show only the path examined in this article.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a convergent design, in which quantitative and qualitative data are collected during the same phase of the enquiry, analyzed separately, and then merged so that the two sets of results can be compared and interpreted together (Poth, 2023; Feters & Tajima, 2022). The design was appropriate because leadership and performance are complex social phenomena that require both numeric evidence of magnitude and narrative evidence of meaning if they are to be understood adequately. Within the design, the quantitative strand took the form of a cross-sectional survey of teachers and heads of institutions together with structured classroom observation, while the qualitative strand drew on phenomenological in-depth interviewing of heads of institutions, Curriculum Support Officers, Board of Management chairpersons and Sub County Directors of Education (Calderón-Zamora et al., 2024; Dubey & Kothari, 2022).

Study Location

The study was set in the public junior schools of Turkana County, Kenya's largest county, which covers roughly 77,000 square kilometres and is administered through 11 sub counties, all of which were covered by the study. The county faces poor infrastructure, severe teacher shortages and the particular demands of pastoralist communities, and the rollout of Competency Based Education has left schools in a period of flux in which steady

guidance from administrators matters more than ever (MoEST, 2022). Turkana therefore serves as a marginalized setting in which the effectiveness of school leadership can be assessed under conditions of genuine constraint.

Target Population, Sampling and Sample Size

Records from the county education office indicate that Turkana County has 247 public junior schools distributed across its 11 sub counties, headed by 247 heads of institutions and staffed by 1,030 teachers. The target population additionally comprised all 22 Curriculum Support Officers and all 11 Sub County Directors of Education serving in the county, together with the Board of Management chairpersons of the public junior schools. The supervisory and governance categories were included because each occupies a vantage point that neither teachers nor heads of institutions can supply: Curriculum Support Officers observe leadership practice comparatively across several schools, Sub County Directors of Education hold the staffing and accountability overview for an entire sub county, and Board of Management chairpersons carry governance responsibility for the conditions under which the head of institution operates.

The study combined probability and non-probability sampling because its respondent categories differ greatly in size. Sample sizes for the two large populations were determined using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations at a 95 percent confidence level and a margin of error of 0.05, giving 153 schools and 288 teachers. The 11 sub counties were adopted as strata; the school sample was allocated to strata in proportion to the number of junior schools each contained, and schools were then drawn within each stratum by simple random sampling. Teachers were selected within the sampled schools by simple random sampling from the staff list supplied by the head of institution, in numbers proportional to each school's teaching establishment (Saunders et al., 2019; Etikan et al., 2016). A census was used for the remaining categories: the heads of institutions and the Board of Management chairpersons of the 153 sampled schools, all 22 Curriculum Support Officers and all 11 Sub County Directors of Education, because each of these groups is small and each member occupies a unique institutional position.

Of those included, 141 schools participated, 261 teachers returned duly completed questionnaires, 141 heads of institutions responded, 19 Curriculum Support Officers were interviewed, 138 Board of Management chairpersons took part and 10 Sub County Directors of Education were reached, giving response rates of 92.2, 90.6, 92.2, 86.4, 90.2 and 90.9 percent respectively. All these rates exceed the conventional threshold for very good survey response, and the near-census participation of the Curriculum Support Officers and Sub County Directors of Education means that the qualitative strand captured almost the entire supervisory voice of the county (Hirose & Creswell, 2023; Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Data Collection Instruments

Three types of instrument were used. A questionnaire administered to teachers collected biographical data in its first section and addressed the study variables in its second; Part A of that section measured inspirational motivation through items capturing the degree to which the head of institution articulates a compelling vision for the school, communicates high expectations and inspires enthusiasm and confidence among teachers. A parallel questionnaire administered to heads of institutions carried a corresponding Part A on inspirational motivation for self-assessment. Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Interview guides were used to gather qualitative data from heads of institutions, Curriculum Support Officers, Board of Management chairpersons and Sub County Directors of Education. Each guide contained a dedicated part on the inspirational motivation of the head of institution and its influence on teachers' work performance, and the interviews were in-depth and flexible, with the researcher probing and clarifying as required (Creswell, 2025). A structured observation guide measured the dependent variable directly in the classroom. It comprised nineteen observable performance indicators distributed across six domains, namely lesson preparation and planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, assessment and feedback, professional conduct, and learner engagement and support, each rated on a five-point scale, with a concluding item recording the overall effectiveness of the lesson. One lesson was observed in each participating school, giving 141 observed lessons (Fix et al., 2022; Cohen et al., 2018).

Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness

Content and face validity were established through expert review by supervisors and field experts, whose input was incorporated to improve the accuracy and clarity of the items. Construct validity was pursued by basing every questionnaire item on established transformational leadership models and proven performance metrics, and criterion validity by comparing questionnaire items with the indicators evaluated in the structured classroom observation guide. The instruments were pilot tested in two public junior schools in Turkana County that did not form part of the study sample, one in an urbanizing Centre and one in a remote location, and the feedback obtained was used to reword ambiguous items, separate double-barreled items, correct section labelling and shorten the observation checklist so that it could be completed within a single lesson.

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha computed in SPSS Version 25, with a coefficient of 0.70 or above treated as acceptable (Nunnally, 1978; Taber, 2018). A test-retest procedure was applied during the pilot, the same questionnaire being administered twice one week apart and the Pearson correlation computed between the two sets of scores, and inter-rater reliability was established for the observation guide using Cohen's Kappa, with 0.70 set as the threshold for acceptable agreement (Cohen et al., 2018). For the qualitative strand, trustworthiness was established through the four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability: credibility through data triangulation, member checking and extended field engagement; transferability through thick description of the setting; dependability through an audit trail and consistent interviewing procedures; and confirmability through a reflexive journal maintained throughout data collection and analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were coded, entered and analyzed in SPSS Version 25. Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were computed for all Likert-scale items, and multiple linear regression was used at the 0.05 level of significance to test the null hypothesis, with teachers' work performance as the dependent variable. Inspirational motivation was entered together with the other three transformational leadership dimensions as predictors, so that the coefficient reported for inspirational motivation is its independent contribution with the remaining dimensions held constant. Qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed through content analysis, involving the organization, sorting, coding and categorization of the material and the identification of themes and subthemes, and the results were reported as descriptive narratives supported by direct verbatim quotation in the participants' own words (Creswell, 2025). Consistent with the convergent design, the two strands were merged at the interpretation stage: for the research question addressed here, the statistical results were placed alongside the interview themes and the classroom observation data in order to establish where the strands converged, where they diverged and where one explained the other (Fetters & Tajima, 2022; Poth, 2023).

Ethical Considerations

The proposal was reviewed and approved by the university, a research permit was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, and an introductory letter was obtained from the county education authorities before any school was entered. Every respondent gave informed consent before completing a questionnaire or taking part in an interview or a lesson observation; participation was voluntary, no inducement was offered, and respondents were free to decline any item, to decline recording or to withdraw at any stage without penalty. No respondent was required to write a name or other personal identifier on an instrument, and in reporting, schools and participants are identified by role-based codes and by sub county rather than by name. Teachers were assured that their ratings of their heads of institutions would not be disclosed to the school administration or to any other authority, and classroom observation was conducted unobtrusively so that no teacher was exposed to embarrassment before learners. All instruments, recordings and transcripts were kept in the sole custody of the researcher, with electronic files stored in password-protected form (Okkonen et al., 2021; Cohen et al., 2018).

Findings of the study

Teachers' Perceptions of Inspirational Motivation

Teachers responded to eight items measuring the extent to which their heads of institutions articulate a compelling vision, communicate high expectations and inspire confidence and enthusiasm. The composite mean for the dimension was 3.42 (SD = 0.87), with 54.4 percent of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing across the items, which places inspirational motivation at a moderate level overall. Table 1 presents the item-level results.

Table 1

Teachers' Responses on the Inspirational Motivation of the Head of Institution (n = 261)

Item	Mean	SD	% Agree/SA
The HoI provides a clear vision for the school's future	3.61	0.92	61.3
The HoI effectively communicates the institution's primary objectives	3.48	0.89	56.7
I am encouraged to excel in my professional duties by the HoI	3.35	0.94	52.1
I find the support offered by the HoI to be a significant source of inspiration	3.29	0.91	48.7
The leadership behaviors of the HoI positively influence my motivation	3.51	0.86	58.2
The HoI's support increases my professional self-assurance	3.38	0.88	53.6
During difficult periods, the HoI provides reassurance	3.24	0.96	46.4
The HoI's performance serves as a benchmark that challenges me to improve	3.52	0.85	57.9
Composite Score	3.42	0.87	54.4

Source: Field data, 2026.

The strongest item in the dimension was the provision of a clear vision for the school's future, with a mean of 3.61 and 61.3 percent agreement, followed by the head of institution's own performance serving as a benchmark that challenges teachers to improve, at a mean of 3.52 and 57.9 percent agreement. Vision articulation and exemplary performance are therefore the inspirational behaviours that teachers most readily recognise in their leaders.

The weakest items were the provision of reassurance during difficult periods, at a mean of 3.24 and 46.4 percent agreement, and the perception of the head's support as a significant source of inspiration, at a mean of 3.29 and 48.7 percent agreement. Fewer than half of the teachers therefore experienced their leaders as sources of emotional reassurance and inspiration at precisely the moments when conditions were hardest, which is a substantive weakness in a county where difficult periods are frequent.

The heads of institutions rated their own practice of the dimension considerably higher, at a mean of 4.01 (SD = 0.63), which is in the high band. The gap of roughly 0.6 scale points between the two sets of ratings is noted here because it bears on the interpretation of the qualitative accounts that follow, in which heads of institutions describe inspirational effort that their teachers did not fully experience as such.

The Influence of Inspirational Motivation on Teachers' Work Performance

Teachers' work performance was independently observed in 141 lessons, one in each participating school. The concluding item of the observation guide, recording the overall effectiveness of the lesson observed, returned a mean of 2.96 (SD = 0.99), interpreted as fair to good. Moderate leadership practice therefore coexists with fair-to-good teachers' work performance in the county's junior schools.

The multiple regression model was statistically significant, $F(4, 256) = 39.61$, $p < .001$, with a multiple correlation coefficient of $R = 0.618$, and it explained 38.2 percent of the variance in teachers' work performance ($R^2 = 0.382$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.372$). Within this model, inspirational motivation exerted a positive and statistically significant influence on teachers' work performance ($B = 0.173$, $t = 2.98$, $p = .003$), with a variance inflation factor of 1.84, well below the conventional threshold of concern. Table 2 presents the coefficient for the dimension.

Table 2

Regression Coefficient for Inspirational Motivation on Teachers' Work Performance

Predictor	B	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	VIF
(Constant)	0.847	0.214	3.96	<0.001	-
Inspirational Motivation	0.173	0.058	2.98	0.003	1.84

Note. Dependent variable: Teachers' Work Performance. The model also contained the remaining three transformational leadership dimensions as predictors; their coefficients fall outside the scope of this article and are not reported here.

Source: Field data, 2026.

Because the p-value of .003 is below the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant influence of the head of institution's inspirational motivation on teachers' work performance was rejected. The study therefore concludes that inspirational motivation exerts a statistically significant positive influence on teachers' work performance in public junior schools in Turkana County. The practical reading of the coefficient is that a one-point rise in teachers' rating of their head's inspirational motivation is associated with a rise of 0.173 of a point in teachers' work performance, with the other transformational behaviours held constant.

Qualitative Findings on Inspirational Motivation

The qualitative strand illuminates the mechanism behind the pattern in the numbers, and it does so from four independent vantage points, namely those of the heads of institutions who practise the behaviour, the teachers who receive it, the supervisory officers who observe it comparatively across schools, and the governance organ that is accountable for the conditions in which it is exercised. Participants are identified by role-based code and, where relevant to interpretation, by sub county.

Heads of institutions.

The heads of institutions described a practice of routine vision setting that runs into a wall of welfare conditions they cannot control. One head of institution explained:

"We normally share the school vision with teachers every term and remind them of what we want to achieve. However, sometimes it becomes difficult to keep teachers motivated because some welfare issues, including delayed or unpaid hardship allowances, continue to affect their morale." (Head of Institution 1)

The account confirms both halves of the quantitative pattern. The inspirational behaviour that teachers rated most highly, the regular articulation of a shared vision, is described as routine practice, while the weakness teachers identified in reassurance during difficult periods, at a mean of 3.24 and 46.4 percent agreement, is traced by the head of institution to welfare conditions that lie outside the school's control rather than to any absence of

inspirational effort. A head of institution in Turkana East reported the same sequence, describing the sharing of the school vision every term during staff meetings even though teachers were demoralised because many had not been paid their hardship allowance for months.

Teachers.

The teachers described the receiving end of the same exchange. A teacher in Lodwar explained that the head of institution tries to motivate the staff, but that when there are no textbooks or even chalk it is hard to stay inspired. The account locates the limit of inspirational messaging precisely: the message is delivered and is recognised as an attempt, but it cannot be converted into effort where the materials that effort requires are absent.

Curriculum Support Officers.

The Curriculum Support Officers approached the question from outside the individual school. A Curriculum Support Officer speaking for the county identified teacher shortage as the biggest challenge, citing 1,762 primary teacher vacancies in Turkana County and observing that junior schools are even worse off, with many schools having only one or two teachers for all grades. A Curriculum Support Officer in Turkana Central observed that teachers are encouraged to use ICT although most classrooms have no electricity, let alone computers or projectors, an observation that illustrates in concrete terms how exhortation outruns provision in the county's junior schools. Because these officers move between schools and compare them with one another, their accounts place the reassurance deficit recorded by teachers within a staffing and facilities environment in which encouragement is repeatedly offered into conditions that cannot carry it.

Sub County Directors of Education.

The Sub County Directors of Education gave the same account from the level of the sub county. A Sub County Director of Education in Turkana South explained that some schools are in very remote areas where teachers fear to come because of insecurity and lack of housing, and that those who do come leave within a year. Read against the findings on inspirational motivation, this account identifies the conditions under which the reassurance behaviours that teachers rated weakest are hardest to sustain, since a head of institution who must repeatedly rebuild morale among staff who arrive apprehensive and depart within a year has little continuity on which inspirational leadership can accumulate. The directors therefore located the limits of inspirational motivation in the staffing establishment and in the conditions of service rather than in the conduct of individual heads of institutions.

Board of Management chairpersons.

The Board of Management chairpersons addressed the question from the governance side of the school. Their emphasis fell on what a board can itself mobilize at school level, that is classrooms, desks, water and the local recognition of good teaching, and among the measures they supported were improved infrastructure, recognition and reward systems for teachers, and community sensitization on the importance of education in pastoralist areas. The emphasis on recognition and reward is directly pertinent to the question addressed here, because it names the tangible reinforcement that the teacher ratings show to be the missing complement of inspirational messaging, and it indicates that the governance organ of the school reads the motivation problem in the same terms as the teachers who rated reassurance and inspiration lowest.

Convergence across the strands.

The five sets of accounts converge on a single proposition: inspirational messaging is present in the county's junior schools, is recognised by teachers as an attempt, and is drained of force where welfare and material conditions are dire. That proposition is consistent with the numbers, in which the vision-related items stand at the top of the dimension and the reassurance-related items at the bottom, and with the significant but modest regression coefficient, which shows the behaviour working without being able to work fully. The agreement of teachers, heads of institutions, supervisory officers and governance representatives, each reporting from an independent position, is the triangulation the convergent design was intended to achieve, and it establishes that the pattern is not an artefact of school-level self-report.

Discussion

The findings answer the research question in two parts. Inspirational motivation is practised at a moderate level in public junior schools in Turkana County, and it exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on teachers' work performance. The finding aligns with international evidence that transformational vision and encouragement lift teacher motivation and performance (King et al., 2021; Lawrason et al., 2023), and with regional evidence from Uganda that headteachers' transformational leadership significantly affects school performance (Sengendo & Eduan, 2024) and from Ethiopia that transformational leadership is moderately but significantly related to teacher job satisfaction (Tesfaw & Koros, 2024). The magnitude of the effect observed here, a coefficient of 0.173 with the other transformational behaviours held constant, is likewise moderate rather than large, which is consistent with the Ethiopian pattern and suggests that the strength of the association reported in better-resourced systems does not simply transfer to conditions of deprivation.

The more interesting result is the internal structure of the dimension. Teachers recognised the vision-related behaviours most readily and the reassurance-related behaviours least, and the two groups of items are separated by roughly 0.37 of a scale point and by nearly 15 percentage points of agreement. This asymmetry has an institutional explanation. Vision articulation is procedurally embedded in African school systems through strategic planning requirements and appraisal instruments (Sengendo & Eduan, 2024; Bush et al., 2022), and it has been further reinforced in Kenya by Competency Based Education, which has obliged heads of institutions to communicate new curricular goals repeatedly to their staff (M'mboga Akala, 2021; Nzambimana et al., 2024). Reassurance during difficulty, by contrast, is mandated by nothing and is generated only by the leader's own

attentiveness. The study therefore finds the procedurally required half of inspirational motivation to be well established and the discretionary half to be comparatively neglected, which is a pattern that leadership development in comparable settings can act upon directly.

The qualitative evidence supplies the contextual condition that the quantitative result alone does not reveal. Inspirational messaging in these schools is offered into an environment of missing textbooks and chalk, unpaid hardship allowances, one or two teachers for all grades, and postings that teachers leave within a year. Under such conditions the message is heard as an aspiration rather than as a resource, and its motivational force is discounted accordingly. This finding extends rather than contradicts the international literature. The literature already holds that transformational rhetoric must be coupled with tangible follower support if it is to influence performance (Lawrason et al., 2023; Tesfaw & Koros, 2024); the present study specifies what that support consists of in a marginalized setting, namely staffing, instructional materials, allowances, security and housing, and it shows that the deficit is recognized identically by teachers, by the leaders themselves, by supervisory officers and by school governance.

The result is best interpreted through the Path-Goal proposition retained as the study's supplementary lens. Leaders raise motivation by clarifying goals and by removing obstacles from followers' paths, and motivation converts into performance only when the path is passable (Northouse, 2021; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). In Turkana County the goals are being clarified, which is why the effect of inspirational motivation is significant; the obstacles are not being removed, which is why the effect is moderate rather than large and why the reassurance items sit at the bottom of the dimension. The theoretical implication is that Transformational Leadership Theory holds in marginalised contexts but operates on a foundation of unmet basic needs, so that the inspirational dimension should be modelled as conditional upon a minimum threshold of welfare and material provision rather than as freely available to any leader willing to exercise it.

Two further observations qualify the interpretation. The first is the gap between heads of institutions' self-ratings on the dimension (4.01) and their teachers' ratings of them (3.42). Discrepancies of this kind are well documented in the literature on self-other rating agreement, in which leaders commonly overestimate their own behaviour because they evaluate their intentions while followers evaluate observable actions (Dutta & Sahney, 2022; Ali Alshuhumi et al., 2025). In a resource-constrained setting the gap can widen further, because a leader may genuinely attempt an inspirational behaviour that contextual barriers prevent teachers from experiencing as meaningful support, which is precisely the dynamic the interview accounts describe. The second is that the effect reported here is an association observed in cross-sectional data, and the regression model as a whole left the majority of the variance in teachers' work performance unexplained, which is consistent with the account given by every respondent group that the binding constraints are structural rather than dispositional (Li & Liu, 2022; Bush et al., 2022).

Conclusion

The study concludes that the head of institution's inspirational motivation is present at a moderate level in the public junior schools of Turkana County and that it significantly improves teachers' work performance. Heads of institutions who sustain visible vision setting, high expectations and encouragement obtain measurably better teachers' work performance, but the motivational force of such messaging is conditional on at least minimally adequate welfare and material support. Teachers most readily recognise vision articulation and the head's own performance as a benchmark, and least experience reassurance during difficult periods; the qualitative evidence from heads of institutions, teachers, Curriculum Support Officers, Board of Management chairpersons and Sub County Directors of Education converges on the same explanation, namely that inspirational messaging is drained of force where welfare and material conditions are dire. The answer to the research question is therefore that inspirational motivation does raise teachers' work performance in these schools, but that it does so on a foundation of unmet basic needs.

Recommendations and Implications

To heads of institutions, the study recommends that the discretionary half of inspirational motivation be deliberately strengthened. Vision setting and the communication of institutional goals are already established practice and should be sustained, but reassurance and encouragement during difficult periods, which teachers rated lowest in the dimension, should be treated as a scheduled leadership routine rather than as an occasional gesture. This is the recommendation with the highest return on effort in a resource-poor school, because it costs nothing to enact and addresses the weakest behaviour recorded in the dimension. Heads of institutions should additionally adopt structured feedback from their own teachers on the dimension, since the gap between self-rating and teacher rating documented here means that leaders who believe they are already performing highly have weak incentives to change.

To Boards of Management, the study recommends the establishment of school-level recognition and reward schemes for outstanding teachers, a measure that the chairpersons themselves supported and that supplies the tangible reinforcement which the teacher ratings identify as the missing complement of inspirational messaging. Boards should also exercise transparent financial oversight and pursue active resource mobilisation on behalf of their schools, since the interview evidence indicates that motivational messaging is discounted by teachers where basic provision is absent.

To the Teachers Service Commission and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the study recommends action on the welfare conditions on which the effect of inspirational motivation depends. Hardship allowances should be paid promptly, and teacher housing and security arrangements should be provided or facilitated in remote stations, since delayed allowances and insecure, unhoused postings were named by heads of institutions, teachers and supervisory officers alike as the conditions under which inspirational effort fails to convert into performance. Ring-fenced provision of teaching and learning materials is a further priority on the same reasoning, given the account of teachers for whom motivational talk cannot compensate for missing textbooks and chalk.

To county education offices, including Sub County Directors of Education and Curriculum Support Officers, the study recommends that supervisory attention during school support visits include the inspirational practice of heads of institutions, and specifically the encouragement and reassurance behaviours that are weakest, since these officers are already positioned to observe leadership practice comparatively across schools and to feed that comparison back to individual heads. The wider implication for leadership preparation in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands is that programmes should treat inspirational motivation not as an exhortation to communicate a vision, which heads of institutions already do, but as the harder discipline of sustaining teacher morale under conditions the school leader cannot itself repair.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Four limitations bound the claims made here. First, the design was cross-sectional and the evidence is therefore associational; the significant coefficient obtained for inspirational motivation establishes covariation with teachers' work performance under the conditions observed, not causation. Second, the leadership measure rests on teachers' perceptions, which is theoretically appropriate because transformational leadership operates through follower perception, but it means that the ratings capture what teachers experienced rather than what leaders enacted; the gap between the self-ratings of heads of institutions and the ratings given by their teachers is a direct expression of this limitation. Third, the study was conducted in a single county whose staffing, security and infrastructural profile is distinctive, so that the contextual qualification attached to the finding may not transfer to better-resourced settings. Fourth, the dependent variable was teachers' work performance rather than learner achievement, so the study cannot speak to whether the effect documented here transmits to learner outcomes.

Four directions for further research follow. First, replication in other Arid and Semi-Arid counties and in non-Arid and Semi-Arid counties would establish whether the conditionality identified here, namely that inspirational messaging is drained of force where welfare and material provision are absent, is general or specific to Turkana County. Second, a longitudinal design tracking junior schools as staffing and welfare investments arrive would permit causal inference about whether relief of the structural constraints strengthens the effect of inspirational motivation, an inference the present cross-sectional design cannot support (Poth, 2023; Creswell, 2025). Third, the systematic gap between the self-ratings of heads of institutions and the ratings given by their teachers on this dimension merits study in its own right, including examination of whether structured feedback interventions narrow the gap and improve practice (Dutta & Sahney, 2022; Ali Alshuhumi et al., 2025). Fourth, future work should extend the dependent variable beyond teachers' work performance to learner outcomes in junior schools, testing whether the inspirational effect documented here transmits to achievement under Competency Based Education (Sengendo & Eduan, 2024; M'mboga Akala, 2021).

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