



INFLUENCE OF TEACHER MOTIVATION DYNAMICS ON LEARNER COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN TANA RIVER SUB-COUNTY, TANA RIVER COUNTY, KENYA

Rodney Odinga Chuga¹ⁱ,

Beatrice Ndiga²,

Lydia Kimanzi³

¹Master's Student,
Tangaza University,
Kenya

²Lecturer, Dr.,
School of Education,
Tangaza University,
Kenya

³Lecturer, Dr.,
School of Education,
Tangaza University,
Kenya

Abstract:

This study examined the influence of teacher motivation factors on learner competency development in public primary schools in Tana River Sub-County, Kenya. The objectives were to find out the influence of teacher job security on learner competency development and to find out the influence of teacher working environment on learner competency development. The study was anchored on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. The target population comprised 30 public primary schools, 30 head teachers, 250 teachers, 1,300 learners, and 2 Sub-County Education Officers. Twenty schools were selected through simple random sampling, while proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select 154 teachers and 306 learners. Twenty head teachers and two Sub-County Education Officers were purposively selected. Out of the intended 482 respondents, 454 participated, giving an overall response rate of 94.2%. Data were collected using questionnaires for teachers and learners and semi-structured interview guides for head teachers and the Education Officers. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically and integrated with the quantitative findings during interpretation. The findings showed that all four teacher motivation factors were perceived to influence learner competency development positively. Teacher job security recorded mean scores of 3.15 for teachers and 3.38 for

ⁱ Correspondence: email chugaodingo@gmail.com

learners, with the main contribution being associated with teacher continuity and stability of instruction. The working environment recorded the highest and most consistent scores, with means of 3.44 for teachers and 3.43 for learners, highlighting the importance of adequate resources, supportive school management, safe working conditions, and manageable class sizes. Teacher recognition recorded mean scores of 3.34 among teachers and 3.42 among learners, indicating that appreciation and acknowledgement were associated with stronger teacher morale and instructional engagement. Financial incentives recorded mean scores of 3.20 for teachers and 3.34 for learners, suggesting that remuneration and rewards supported teacher motivation and commitment, which in turn enhanced learning experiences. The study recommended an integrated approach to teacher motivation through improved working conditions, transparent recognition practices, instructional continuity, adequate staffing and resources, and fair financial support.

Keywords: Kenya, teacher, motivation, dynamics, learner, competency, development

1. Introduction

Improving the quality of education and developing learners with competencies required for lifelong learning, employment and responsible citizenship have become major priorities in education systems worldwide. Contemporary educational reforms increasingly emphasize learners' ability to apply knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in real-life situations rather than merely reproduce subject content in examinations. This shift has placed teachers at the Centre of educational reform because curriculum intentions are ultimately translated into learning experiences through classroom instruction. Competency-based education, in particular, requires teachers to employ learner-centered pedagogies, continuous assessment, practical learning activities, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, problem solving and individualized learner support. These increased professional expectations have drawn attention to teacher motivation as an important condition influencing teachers' commitment, instructional effectiveness and, ultimately, learner development.

At the global level, research increasingly presents teacher motivation as a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by financial, professional and organizational factors. Sahito et al. (2025), in a synthesis of teacher-motivation studies conducted across countries including the United States, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Germany, Israel, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania and South Africa, found that salary, financial incentives, professional autonomy, opportunities for development, conducive working conditions and effective performance-management systems contributed positively to teacher motivation. Conversely, low remuneration, excessive workload, inadequate resources and unfavorable organizational policies were associated with teacher demotivation. Their findings indicate that teacher motivation cannot adequately be understood in terms of salary alone.

Similarly, Zhou et al. (2024), in an international meta-analysis of 173 studies involving 89,876 participants, found that teachers' well-being was associated with motivation, psychological resources, professional competence and workplace experiences. Their findings are relevant to educational quality because teachers who experience positive professional and psychological conditions are more likely to remain actively engaged in their work. Lazarides et al. (2025) further reviewed empirical studies from different international contexts and established that teacher motivation contributes to instructional quality through professional engagement, self-efficacy, goal orientation and teachers' emotional experiences. This suggests that teacher motivation influences learners principally through the way it shapes teachers' classroom practices.

International evidence from the OECD provides further support for this multidimensional understanding. Based on data collected from approximately 280,000 teachers and school leaders across 55 education systems, OECD (2025) found that teachers' career decisions and professional satisfaction were influenced not only by remuneration but also by contract stability, working conditions and other conditions of employment. Workload, learner diversity, classroom discipline and accountability demands were also associated with teacher stress and job satisfaction. These findings show that teacher motivation develops within a broader professional environment involving job security, working conditions, recognition, workload and financial rewards. The global literature therefore suggests that teachers are more likely to remain motivated when their employment is reasonably stable, their working environment is supportive, their professional contribution is acknowledged, and their financial welfare is adequately addressed. However, much of the international literature has focused on teacher well-being, retention, job satisfaction, teaching behavior and general learner achievement. Comparatively less attention has been given to the relationship between specific teacher-motivation factors and learner competency development, especially within education systems implementing competency-based curricula.

At the regional level, teacher motivation is particularly significant in Sub-Saharan Africa, where many education systems continue to experience shortages and uneven distribution of teachers, rapidly increasing enrolment, overcrowded classrooms and inadequate educational resources. UNESCO and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2024) estimate that Sub-Saharan Africa will require approximately 15 million additional teachers by 2030 to meet universal primary and secondary education targets. The report emphasizes the importance of improving teachers' working conditions, professional development, participation in educational decision-making and systems for attracting and retaining teachers. Such conditions are especially relevant to competency-based education because effective implementation requires teachers to provide sustained learner participation, assessment, feedback and individualized support.

Studies conducted within African countries similarly show that teacher motivation is connected to professional conditions and educational delivery. In Uganda, Aacha (2010) investigated motivation and performance among primary-school teachers in

Kimaanya-Kyabakuza Division, Masaka District. The study established positive relationships between both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and teacher performance and recommended improved salaries, accommodation, supervision and rewards for good performance. Although the study preceded the recent expansion of competency-based reforms, it demonstrated that both financial and non-financial conditions shape teachers' willingness to perform their duties effectively.

In Rwanda and Zimbabwe, Mutseekwa and Maeresera (2025) reviewed the implementation of competency-based curricula and established that successful implementation depended on the interaction between curriculum policy, institutional conditions, educational resources and teacher capacity. Their findings show that competency-based reform cannot succeed through curriculum design alone; teachers also require supportive conditions that enable them to translate curriculum expectations into effective classroom practices. In Rwanda, Chari et al. (2025) similarly reviewed competency-based curriculum implementation in Teacher Training Colleges and found that although significant policy and institutional support had been established, implementation continued to face challenges relating to curriculum flexibility, language and institutional capacity.

In Tanzania, Ndaula et al. (2025) investigated the influence of educational funding on quality education delivery in public secondary schools. Their findings showed that inadequate funding affected instructional resources, infrastructure and aspects of teacher motivation. They further observed that inadequate teaching materials and poor working environments could weaken teacher morale and constrain effective educational delivery. These regional findings suggest that teacher motivation, resources, professional support and institutional conditions are closely connected. However, much of the African literature has concentrated on teacher performance and competency-based curriculum implementation, rather than the direct development of competencies among learners. The regional literature reviewed in the original draft similarly emphasized remuneration, resources and institutional support as recurring concerns.

At the national level, Kenya's transition from the 8-4-4 curriculum to competency-based education significantly changed expectations regarding teaching and learning. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD, 2019) identifies seven core competencies to be developed progressively among learners: communication and collaboration, self-efficacy, critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and imagination, citizenship, digital literacy and learning to learn. The competency-based approach requires teachers to organize learner-centered activities, facilitate practical experiences, conduct continuous and formative assessment, monitor individual learner progress and provide appropriate feedback. Consequently, teachers require not only professional knowledge and skills but also motivation and supportive conditions that allow them to implement these responsibilities effectively.

Recent empirical studies in Kenya provide evidence of the relationship between teacher motivation and educational outcomes. In Mombasa County, Dindia and Mbirihi (2025) investigated teacher motivation and academic performance in public primary

schools. Their findings indicated that fair remuneration, professional-development opportunities and incentive structures were associated with teacher performance and learner outcomes. Recognition, salary reviews and goal setting were also identified as important in strengthening teacher commitment. Although the study confirms the importance of motivational factors, its main outcome was conventional academic performance rather than learner competency development.

In Kuresoi South Sub-County, Nakuru County, Nyang'ara and Anne (2024) examined teachers' working conditions and pupils' academic performance in public primary schools. They established a statistically significant positive relationship between teachers' working conditions and pupil performance. Workload, classroom conditions, management support, housing, school accessibility and instructional resources emerged as important aspects of the teachers' working environment. These findings demonstrate that teachers' capacity to perform effectively is shaped partly by the conditions within which they work.

More directly related to competency-based education, Macharia et al. (2026) investigated teacher motivation as a determinant of competency-based education implementation in Grade Three classrooms in Kajiado County, Kenya. They established a significant positive relationship between teacher motivation and competency-based education implementation. Financial and non-financial incentives, instructional support, adequate resources, appreciation of teachers' work and professional-development opportunities emerged as important motivational factors. Their findings bring the literature closer to the present study by showing that teacher motivation is relevant to competency-oriented education. However, the study concentrated on curriculum implementation rather than directly examining learner competency development.

The Kenyan literature therefore demonstrates that teacher motivation affects teacher performance, academic achievement and implementation of competency-based education. Nevertheless, the studies reviewed have largely examined individual dimensions of teacher motivation or outcomes such as academic performance and curriculum implementation. Limited evidence exists on how job security, working environment, recognition and financial incentives together relate to learner competency development in public primary schools.

At the local level, studies conducted in Tana River County show that teacher motivation and professional conditions have been longstanding educational concerns. In the former Tana River District, Musyoka (2011) examined the effects of teacher motivation on KCSE performance in public secondary schools. The study found dissatisfaction among teachers regarding workload and remuneration and identified instances of teachers leaving the profession in search of better opportunities. Musyoka recommended improved salaries, allowances, teacher accommodation, career advancement and greater appreciation of teachers' professional efforts. Although directly concerned with teacher motivation, the study was conducted within the previous curriculum system and focused on examination performance in secondary schools.

In Tana River County, Kiilu (2015) investigated the influence of Board of Management governance practices on teachers' job satisfaction in secondary schools. The study considered teacher participation in decision-making, management practices, recognition and the provision of a conducive working environment. The findings are relevant to the present study because recognition and working environment constitute important dimensions of teacher motivation. However, Kiilu's study focused on teacher job satisfaction rather than learner outcomes and was conducted in secondary schools.

Kiongo (2020), also studying Tana River County, examined determinants of career change among teachers working in rural public primary and secondary schools. The study found that environmental, organizational and individual factors influenced teachers' decisions concerning whether to remain in the teaching profession. About 55% of the respondents indicated an intention to change careers later in life, illustrating continuing concerns relating to teacher retention within rural educational settings. The findings suggest that conditions surrounding teachers' professional lives may influence employment continuity, an issue closely related to teacher job security and stability.

More recently, Yussuf et al. (2025) investigated head teacher leadership style and teacher satisfaction in public junior schools in Bangale Sub-County, Tana River County. Their findings showed that leadership practices were related to teacher satisfaction and highlighted the importance of participation, administrative support and the school organizational environment. This suggests that teacher motivation within Tana River is partly shaped by the quality of professional relationships and school-level support.

Very recent evidence from the actual geographical setting of the present study was provided by Gekonge et al. (2026), who conducted research in Tana River Sub-County, Kenya. They examined principals' democratic leadership styles and students' academic performance in public senior schools and found that shared decision-making, open communication, teamwork and collective problem-solving enhanced teacher participation and commitment and were associated with academic performance. Although geographically relevant, the study focused on leadership and academic performance in senior schools rather than teacher motivation and learner competency development in public primary schools. The existing local research thus focuses predominantly on job satisfaction, career change, leadership and examination performance rather than competency development.

The educational context of the area further strengthens the need for investigation. The County Government of Tana River (2023) reported a primary-school teacher-pupil ratio of approximately 1:55 and identified the need for additional teachers, expanded educational infrastructure and improvement of existing facilities. Such staffing and infrastructural pressures may have implications for teacher workload, availability of individual learner support and effective implementation of competency-oriented teaching. These figures represent the county generally and therefore provide contextual rather than school-specific evidence for Tana River Sub-County.

The literature reviewed from global, regional, national and local contexts therefore demonstrates that teacher motivation matters for teaching and learning, while also

revealing a clear gap. Global research largely examines teacher well-being, motivation, retention and instructional behavior. Regional African literature concentrates on teacher performance, resources and competency-based curriculum implementation. Kenyan studies have increasingly linked teacher motivation with academic achievement and competency-based education implementation. Locally, studies in Tana River have investigated teacher motivation, job satisfaction, teacher retention, leadership and academic performance. However, limited empirical evidence exists on how the four specific factors of teacher job security, teacher working environment, teacher recognition and teacher financial incentives jointly influence learner competency development in public primary schools in Tana River Sub-County. This constitutes an empirical, contextual and outcome gap that the present study sought to address.

2. Statement of the Problem

Kenya's competency-based education seeks to develop learners who possess and can apply competencies such as communication and collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and imagination, citizenship, digital literacy, learning to learn and self-efficacy (KICD, 2019). Achievement of these competencies requires teachers who can consistently provide learner-centered instruction, practical learning experiences, continuous assessment, feedback and individualized support. However, studies conducted in Kenya indicate that teachers continue to experience challenges relating to workload, instructional resources, working conditions, professional recognition and financial motivation (Nyang'ara & Anne, 2024; Dindia & Mbirithi, 2025; Macharia et al., 2026). These challenges may affect teachers' commitment and the quality of instructional experiences through which learner competencies are developed.

The concern is particularly relevant in Tana River Sub-County, where schools operate within the wider ASAL context of Tana River County. County planning data indicate staffing and infrastructural pressures, including a reported primary-school teacher-pupil ratio of approximately 1:55 and the need for additional teachers and improved school facilities (County Government of Tana River, 2023). Local studies by Musyoka (2011), Kiilu (2015), Kiongo (2020), Yussuf et al. (2025) and Gekonge et al. (2026) have examined teacher motivation, job satisfaction, retention, leadership and academic performance in Tana River. However, these studies have largely focused on secondary, junior or senior schools and on outcomes such as examination performance, teacher satisfaction or career intentions rather than learner competency development in public primary schools.

Consequently, although previous studies demonstrate that teacher motivation is important to teaching, teacher performance and curriculum implementation, limited empirical evidence exists on how teacher job security, working environment, recognition and financial incentives collectively influence learner competency development in public primary schools in Tana River Sub-County. This constitutes an empirical gap because the four motivational dimensions have rarely been examined together, a contextual gap

because evidence from public primary schools in the ASAL setting of Tana River Sub-County remains limited, and an outcome gap because previous studies have concentrated predominantly on academic achievement or teacher-related outcomes rather than learner competencies. The study therefore examined the influence of these four teacher motivation factors on learner competency development in public primary schools in Tana River Sub-County, Kenya, with a view to generating evidence to inform educational practice and policy.

2.1 Research Objectives

- 1) To determine the influence of teacher job security on learner competency development in public primary schools in Tana River Sub-County, Kenya.
- 2) To assess the influence of teacher working environment on learner competency development in public primary schools in Tana River Sub-County, Kenya.

3. Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation, developed by Frederick Herzberg and his colleagues in 1959. The theory explains employee motivation and job satisfaction in terms of two broad categories of factors: hygiene factors and motivator factors. It provided an appropriate framework for understanding how conditions surrounding teachers' employment and professional experiences could influence their motivation and, consequently, their instructional engagement and support for learner competency development.

According to Herzberg's theory, hygiene factors include salary, job security, organizational policies, supervision, interpersonal relationships, and physical working conditions. These factors do not necessarily create high levels of motivation when they are adequately provided, but their inadequacy may produce dissatisfaction, low morale, absenteeism, or reduced professional commitment. Within public primary schools, inadequate instructional resources, poor working conditions, unsatisfactory remuneration, or uncertainty regarding employment may therefore affect teachers' ability or willingness to sustain effective teaching.

Motivator factors, on the other hand, include achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, and opportunities for professional growth. These factors are associated with job satisfaction and stronger internal motivation. When teachers experience meaningful recognition, professional responsibility, opportunities for advancement, and a sense of achievement, they may demonstrate greater enthusiasm, creativity, commitment, and engagement in classroom instruction.

Herzberg's theory proposes that organizations should maintain adequate hygiene conditions while simultaneously strengthening motivator factors. Applied to education, the theory suggests that schools and education authorities should address teachers' working conditions, employment stability, and financial welfare while also providing

recognition, professional responsibility, opportunities for development, and meaningful achievement.

The theory was particularly relevant to the present study because the four independent variables could be related to Herzberg's two categories. Job security, working environment, and financial incentives were mainly associated with hygiene factors, while teacher recognition represented a motivator factor. The theory therefore provided a useful framework for examining how both extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions of teacher motivation related to learner competency development.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Influence of Teacher Job Security on Learner Competency Development

Teacher job security refers to the assurance of continued employment without fear of unjust dismissal, consistent income, and stability in the teaching profession (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021). It is a critical component of teacher motivation, as it influences teachers' psychological well-being, commitment, and effectiveness in delivering instruction. When teachers feel secure in their jobs, they are more likely to invest time and effort in instructional planning, learner engagement, and continuous professional development, which enhances learner competency development. Learner competency development involves the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that enable learners to apply what they have learned in real-life situations, consistent with the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). Studies have shown that secure and motivated teachers create stable learning environments that support the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical skills among learners.

Globally, several studies have examined the relationship between teacher job security and learner competency development. For instance, Ingersoll (2018) conducted a quantitative longitudinal study in the United States to examine the impact of teacher job stability on learner competency development in public schools. The study involved a large national sample of teachers drawn from multiple states, with data collected through teacher surveys and learner competency development records, and analyzed using regression and longitudinal modeling techniques. The findings indicated that teachers with higher job security demonstrated greater commitment and instructional consistency, which positively influenced learner competency development. However, the study focused primarily on general academic indicators rather than specific competency development aligned with competency-based curricula, limiting its relevance to CBC contexts.

Additionally, the study relied heavily on quantitative data and surveys, which may introduce response bias and limit in-depth understanding of how job security influences classroom practices. The study was also conducted in a developed context, which differs significantly from developing regions such as Kenya. Therefore, the present study sought to address these gaps by focusing specifically on learner competency

development in public primary schools within Tana River Sub-County, Kenya, while incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

Similarly, Johnson and Birkeland (2019) conducted a qualitative study in the United States to examine how job security influences teacher commitment and classroom effectiveness. The study involved a sample of 50 teachers selected through purposive sampling, with data collected through in-depth interviews and classroom observations. The findings revealed that teachers who felt secure in their employment were more innovative, engaged, and committed to improving learner competency development. However, the study was limited by its small sample size and qualitative design, which limits generalizability. It also focused on teacher experiences without directly linking job security to measurable learner competency development. Furthermore, the study did not incorporate quantitative measures or multiple stakeholders. Therefore, the current study addressed these gaps by using a larger sample size, incorporating multiple stakeholders, and linking teacher job security directly to learner competency development using both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

In Asia, Liu and Onwuegbuzie (2020) conducted a quantitative descriptive survey study in China to examine the relationship between teacher job security and learner competency development in secondary schools. The study involved 400 teachers selected through stratified random sampling, with data collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings showed that job security significantly influenced teacher motivation and instructional effectiveness, which in turn improved learner competency development. However, the descriptive survey design limits the ability to establish causality. The study also relied solely on questionnaires, which may introduce bias, and excluded key stakeholders such as learners and school administrators. Additionally, the study was conducted in a different cultural and administrative context, limiting its applicability to Kenya. The present study therefore sought to address these gaps by focusing on competency development, incorporating multiple stakeholders, and using diverse data collection methods in a Kenyan context.

In Africa, several studies have also examined the influence of teacher job security on learner competency development. For example, Bennell and Akyeampong (2018) conducted a mixed-methods study across several Sub-Saharan African countries to investigate teacher motivation and its impact on educational quality. The study involved a large sample of teachers selected through both random and purposive sampling, with data collected using questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. The findings revealed that lack of job security contributed to low teacher morale, absenteeism, and reduced instructional quality, which negatively affected learner competency development. However, the study examined teacher motivation broadly without isolating job security as an independent variable. It also focused on general educational quality rather than specific learner competency development outcomes. Additionally, the multi-country scope limited context-specific analysis. Therefore, the present study addressed these gaps by focusing specifically on teacher job security as a key variable

and examining its direct influence on learner competency development within a specific local context.

Similarly, Mushemeza (2016) conducted a quantitative correlational study in Uganda to examine the relationship between teacher motivation factors, including job security, and learner competency development in secondary schools. The study involved 156 teachers selected through simple random sampling, with data collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using correlation and regression analysis. The findings indicated that job security had a strong positive relationship with teacher performance and learner competency development. However, the correlational design limits causal interpretation, and the study relied solely on teacher responses, excluding other stakeholders such as learners and school administrators. Therefore, the present study addressed these limitations by incorporating multiple stakeholders, using diverse data collection methods, and focusing specifically on learner competency development.

In Kenya, several studies have examined teacher motivation and job security, though with limited focus on learner competency development. For instance, Nyakundi (2020) conducted a descriptive survey study in Kisii County to examine the influence of job security on teacher retention in public primary schools. The study involved 120 teachers selected through stratified sampling, with data collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings indicated that job security significantly influenced teacher retention and commitment. However, the study focused on teacher retention rather than learner competency development and did not establish a direct relationship between job security and competency outcomes. The use of a descriptive design also limits causal interpretation, and reliance on questionnaires may introduce bias. The present study addressed these gaps by linking teacher job security directly to learner competency development and incorporating multiple sources of data.

Similarly, Wanjala and Murungi (2022) conducted a correlational study in Bungoma County to examine the relationship between teacher motivation and learner competency development in public primary schools. The study involved a sample of 200 teachers selected through random sampling, with data collected using questionnaires and learner competency development records. The findings showed that motivated teachers, including those with secure employment, contributed to improved learner competency development. However, the study examined motivation broadly without isolating job security as a specific factor. It also relied heavily on quantitative data and did not incorporate multiple stakeholders. Therefore, the present study sought to address these gaps by focusing specifically on job security and learner competency development, while incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods.

4.2 Teacher Working Environment and Learner Competency Development

Teacher working environment refers to the conditions under which teachers carry out their professional duties, including physical facilities, availability of teaching and learning resources, administrative support, workload, and overall school climate

(Toropova et al., 2021). Teacher working environment is widely recognized as a critical determinant of instructional effectiveness and learner competency development. A supportive working environment encompasses adequate teaching and learning resources, manageable workloads, administrative support, positive collegial relationships, safe school infrastructure, and opportunities for professional growth. Existing literature consistently suggests that teachers who work in conducive environments are more motivated, committed, and better able to facilitate learner-centered instruction. However, previous studies differ in their conceptualization of working environment, research designs, and outcome measures, creating conceptual, methodological, contextual, and theoretical gaps that justify further investigation.

Evidence from developed countries generally demonstrates a positive relationship between supportive working environments and learner outcomes. For example, Ingersoll (2018), using a longitudinal quantitative design in the United States, found that schools characterized by adequate instructional resources, supportive leadership, and collaborative professional cultures recorded higher teacher effectiveness and improved learner outcomes. Similarly, Johnson (2019), through a qualitative study involving interviews and classroom observations, reported that teachers working in supportive school environments exhibited higher professional commitment and instructional effectiveness. While both studies agree that working conditions influence teaching quality, they differ methodologically. Ingersoll relied on large-scale quantitative data capable of identifying statistical relationships, whereas Johnson provided rich contextual insights into teachers' experiences but with limited generalizability. Moreover, both studies examined learner achievement broadly rather than competency development within a Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), creating a conceptual gap that limits their relevance to competency-based education.

Studies conducted in Asia report similar findings while highlighting the importance of organizational support in enhancing instructional practices. Liu and Hallinger (2020), using a descriptive survey among secondary school teachers in China, established that favorable working conditions significantly enhanced teacher motivation and instructional effectiveness, which subsequently improved learner outcomes. More recent studies conducted within competency-based education contexts have also shown that school climate, resource availability, and leadership support positively influence learner competencies. However, most Asian studies rely heavily on questionnaire data and cross-sectional designs, limiting their ability to establish causal relationships between working environment and learner competency development. Furthermore, these studies are situated within educational systems whose administrative structures and policy contexts differ substantially from Kenya's CBC implementation, thereby limiting external validity.

Research conducted in Africa equally supports the view that poor working conditions undermine instructional quality. Bennell and Akyeampong (2018), in a mixed-methods study across several Sub-Saharan African countries, concluded that inadequate teaching resources, overcrowded classrooms, and weak administrative support reduced

teacher morale and instructional effectiveness. Likewise, Mushemeza (2016) found a significant positive relationship between favorable working conditions and teacher performance in Ugandan secondary schools. Although these studies consistently demonstrate the importance of working environment, they differ in scope and focus. Bennell and Akyeampong examined teacher motivation broadly across multiple countries, making it difficult to isolate the specific influence of working environment, while Mushemeza's correlational design did not permit causal interpretation. In addition, neither study examined learner competency development as defined within competency-based education frameworks, highlighting both conceptual and contextual gaps.

Kenyan studies similarly indicate that favorable working environments contribute positively to teacher motivation and school effectiveness, although few have directly examined learner competency development. Nyakundi (2020) found that improved working conditions enhanced teacher retention and job satisfaction in public primary schools in Kisii County. Likewise, Wanjala and Murungi (2022) reported that motivated teachers working in supportive school environments demonstrated greater instructional effectiveness and better learner outcomes. These findings are consistent with international evidence that supportive school environments enhance teacher performance. However, the Kenyan studies largely conceptualize learner outcomes in terms of academic performance, teacher retention, or teacher motivation rather than competency acquisition, practical skills, learner participation, and continuous assessment outcomes emphasized under the CBC. In addition, most employed descriptive or correlational designs and relied primarily on teachers' questionnaire responses, thereby limiting triangulation and reducing the depth of understanding regarding how working environment influences competency development.

Although there is broad consensus across global, regional, and local literature that supportive working environments enhance teacher effectiveness and learner outcomes, important gaps remain. Conceptually, many studies measure learner achievement using examination performance instead of learner competency development as envisaged under Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum. Methodologically, previous research relies predominantly on descriptive surveys, correlational designs, and self-reported questionnaire data, with limited use of mixed-methods approaches that integrate quantitative and qualitative evidence. Contextually, most international studies were conducted in developed countries or educational systems whose policy environments differ considerably from Kenya, while African studies often examine teacher motivation generally rather than working environment specifically. Theoretically, many studies establish statistical relationships without adequately explaining the mechanisms through which working environment influences learner competency development. Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence examining the direct relationship between teacher working environment and learner competency development in public primary schools implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum in Tana River Sub-County, Kenya.

This study sought to address these gaps by examining teacher working environment as an independent variable influencing learner competency development

within the context of public primary schools implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum in Tana River Sub-County. Unlike many previous studies, the study adopts a mixed-methods approach involving multiple stakeholders, thereby generating comprehensive evidence that is both contextually relevant and methodologically robust.

5. Research Methodology

The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the same phase of the study, analyzed separately and subsequently integrated during interpretation. According to Creswell and Creswell (2023), mixed-methods research integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem than either approach could provide independently.

The quantitative component employed a descriptive survey design to collect numerical information on teacher motivation factors, namely job security, working environment, recognition and financial incentives, and their perceived influence on learner competency development. The design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to describe prevailing conditions and perceptions without manipulating the study variables.

The qualitative component employed a qualitative descriptive approach to obtain detailed accounts from head teachers and Sub-County Education Officers concerning teacher motivation and learner competency development. Qualitative information was also obtained from open-ended questionnaire responses from teachers and learners. This approach provided context-rich descriptions of participants' experiences and perceptions without requiring the deeper interpretive orientation associated with phenomenological inquiry.

The convergent parallel mixed-methods design was considered appropriate because quantitative and qualitative evidence complemented each other. The quantitative findings provided measurable patterns in the responses of teachers and learners, while the qualitative findings provided explanations and contextual understanding from head teachers and education officers. The two datasets were integrated during interpretation to provide a comprehensive understanding of teacher motivation and learner competency development in public primary schools in Tana River Sub-County, Kenya.

6. Research Findings

The study sought information from Sub-County director of education officers, head teachers, teachers and learners in Grades 4–9. From the sample of 482 participants, a total of 454 participants successfully took part in the study, resulting in an overall response rate of 94.2%.

It was noted that all the two education officers participated in the study, giving a response rate of 100%. Among the head teachers, 18 out of the expected 20 participated, representing a response rate of 90.0%. Similarly, 145 out of 154 teachers responded, giving a response rate of 94.2%, while 289 out of 306 learners participated, representing a response rate of 94.4%. Overall, 454 out of the sampled 482 participants took part in the study, translating to a response rate of 94.2%.

The overall response rate was considered adequate for the study since the majority of the sampled participants provided the required information. The consistently high response rates across the different categories also ensured that views from education administrators, school managers, teachers and learners were sufficiently represented. This provided a strong basis for analyzing the influence of teacher motivation factors on learner competency development in public primary schools in Tana River Sub-County.

The few cases of non-participation were mainly associated with practical circumstances encountered during data collection. Some head teachers and teachers were unavailable due to official duties, school meetings, professional engagements or absence from their schools at the time of data collection. In some instances, questionnaires were not returned within the stipulated period, while a few were incomplete and could not be included in the final analysis. Among learners, some were absent from school during the data collection period, while a few questionnaires were inadequately completed and were therefore excluded from the analysis. These cases of non-participation were relatively few and did not significantly reduce the overall response rate. The achieved response rate of 94.2% was therefore considered sufficient to support the presentation, interpretation and discussion of the study findings.

6.1 Teacher Job Security on Learner Competency Development

The first objective of the study was to determine the influence of teacher job security on learner competency development in public primary schools in Tana River Sub-County, Kenya. Quantitative data were obtained from 145 teachers and 289 learners using a five-point Likert scale, while qualitative data were obtained through interviews with head teachers and County Education Officers. The quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated to provide a deeper understanding of the extent to which teacher job security and stability influenced teaching practices and learner competency development.

Table 4							
<i>Teachers' and Learners' Responses on Teacher Job Security and Learner Competency Development</i>							
Respondents	Statement	SD f (%)	D f (%)	NS f (%)	A f (%)	SA f (%)	Mean
Teachers (n=145)	I feel secure in my teaching position in this school.	28 (19.3)	31 (21.4)	25 (17.2)	34 (23.4)	27 (18.6)	3.01
	Assurance of continuous employment motivates me to improve student learning.	18 (12.4)	25 (17.2)	23 (15.9)	42 (29.0)	37 (25.5)	3.38
	Job security encourages teachers to plan lessons more effectively.	21 (14.5)	29 (20.0)	24 (16.6)	39 (26.9)	32 (22.1)	3.22
	I am less stressed at work due to job stability, improving learner outcomes.	33 (22.8)	34 (23.4)	26 (17.9)	29 (20.0)	23 (15.9)	2.83
	Job security positively influences students' competency development.	19 (13.1)	27 (18.6)	25 (17.2)	40 (27.6)	34 (23.4)	3.30
Learners (n=289)	I learn better when the same teacher teaches us for a long period.	36 (12.5)	49 (17.0)	43 (14.9)	89 (30.8)	72 (24.9)	3.39
	Frequent changes of teachers make it difficult for me to understand lessons.	31 (10.7)	42 (14.5)	39 (13.5)	91 (31.5)	86 (29.8)	3.55
	Teachers who stay in the school for a long time understand learners' needs better.	42 (14.5)	55 (19.0)	48 (16.6)	79 (27.3)	65 (22.5)	3.24
	Having a stable teacher helps me improve my skills and competencies.	29 (10.0)	43 (14.9)	41 (14.2)	91 (31.5)	85 (29.4)	3.55
	I participate more actively in class when I am taught by a teacher I know well.	47 (16.3)	53 (18.3)	51 (17.6)	77 (26.6)	61 (21.1)	3.18
Overall Mean	Teachers						3.15
	Learners						3.38

Source: Field Data, 2026.

As presented in Table 4, teachers recorded an overall mean of 3.15, while learners recorded a comparatively higher overall mean of 3.38. Since a mean score of 3.00 represented the neutral point on the five-point scale, both groups demonstrated a moderate tendency towards agreement that teacher job security and stability were related to learner competency development. The higher mean among learners suggests that learners perceived the consequences of teacher stability somewhat more strongly than teachers perceived the motivational effects of their own job security.

Regarding whether teachers felt secure in their current teaching positions, 28 teachers (19.3%) strongly disagreed and 31 (21.4%) disagreed, while 34 (23.4%) agreed and 27 (18.6%) strongly agreed. A further 25 teachers (17.2%) were unsure. The mean of 3.01 reflected an almost neutral position, with 42.0% expressing a sense of security compared with 40.7% who expressed some degree of insecurity. The findings indicate that the experience of job security was not uniform among teachers.

The interviews with head teachers provided further insight into this finding. The school administrators associated teachers' perceptions of security with continued

employment, stability of deployment, opportunities for advancement and confidence in their professional future. The recurring view among head teachers was captured during the interviews. Majority stated, *"Teachers concentrate better on their work when they have confidence that their employment is stable and that they have a future in the profession."* The County Education Officers similarly indicated that employment security needed to be understood within the broader career environment of teachers. According to the officer, stability provides teachers with an opportunity to plan their careers and concentrate on their professional responsibilities. This interpretation is consistent with the OECD's analysis of TALIS 2024, which examines job stability and satisfaction with employment conditions as important aspects of teachers' career intentions and retention (OECD, 2025).

A stronger positive pattern emerged when teachers were asked whether assurance of continuous employment motivated them to improve student learning. A total of 42 teachers (29.0%) agreed and 37 (25.5%) strongly agreed, giving a combined positive response of 54.5%. Only 29.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 15.9% remained uncertain. The mean score of 3.38 was the highest among the teacher items. This indicates that confidence in employment continuity was associated with greater willingness to invest effort in improving learner outcomes.

During interviews, head teachers reported that teachers who perceived greater employment stability tended to demonstrate stronger commitment to their classes, learners and school programs. One recurring position among the head teachers was that *"When teachers know that they are likely to remain in the school, they take greater responsibility for the progress of the learners entrusted to them."* The County Education Officers likewise associated stable staffing with sustained curriculum implementation and professional commitment. One officer explained:

"Teacher stability gives schools an opportunity to maintain continuity in teaching. When teachers are confident about their employment and remain in the school for a reasonable period, they can plan their work, follow learner progress, participate in school programs and develop stronger professional relationships with the school community. Constant uncertainty can make this long-term commitment more difficult." (County Education Officer 2, 2nd July 2026).

These findings are supported by Dindia and Mbirihi (2025), whose study of public primary schools in Mombasa County found that motivational factors, including remuneration, professional development and incentives, significantly influenced teacher performance and student outcomes. The authors further reported that motivation initiatives strengthened teacher commitment and academic achievement. The present study extends this understanding by suggesting that assurance of employment continuity forms part of the wider motivational environment within which teachers work.

Teachers also expressed moderate agreement that job security encouraged effective lesson planning. A total of 39 teachers (26.9%) agreed and 32 (22.1%) strongly

agreed, resulting in a combined agreement level of 49.0%. In comparison, 34.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 16.6% were unsure. The mean of 3.22 indicates a modest positive perception.

The interviews with head teachers supported this finding while adding an important qualification. They indicated that teachers who remained within the same school environment for a reasonable period were better positioned to understand the progress of their classes and plan learning activities accordingly. At the same time, head teachers emphasized that employment security alone could not guarantee professional effectiveness. One head teacher explained that permanent employment gives a teacher stability, but effective teaching still requires commitment. According to the head teacher, a teacher must prepare lessons, assess learners, use the available resources well and respond to individual learner needs. The head teacher continued to say that job security creates confidence, but professional responsibility, supervision and a supportive school environment are also necessary for effective teaching.

This qualification is important because the quantitative responses did not overwhelmingly support the proposition that job security automatically improved lesson preparation. The finding is also consistent with Cameron et al. (2024), who found that contract teachers with less stable employment conditions performed comparably with government teachers on several teaching-practice indicators. Their results caution against treating contractual security as the sole determinant of instructional quality.

The findings concerning teacher stress presented a somewhat different picture. The statement that teachers were less stressed because of job stability, thereby improving learner outcomes, recorded the lowest mean of 2.83. A total of 33 teachers (22.8%) strongly disagreed and 34 (23.4%) disagreed, giving a combined negative response of 46.2%. Only 35.9% agreed or strongly agreed, while 17.9% were uncertain. The qualitative findings helped explain this result. Head teachers indicated that teachers may enjoy employment security while continuing to experience pressure arising from workload, large classes, shortage of teaching and learning materials, curriculum demands, administrative responsibilities and personal financial obligations. A repeated view from the interviews was that *“Having a permanent job gives security, but it does not remove the daily pressures that teachers experience in school.”* The issue was elaborated further by the County Education Officers:

“A teacher may be permanently employed and still experience considerable stress. Some teachers have large classes, many lessons, additional responsibilities and limited instructional resources. Others may be working in difficult locations or dealing with personal financial demands. Job security gives stability, but teacher motivation also depends on the conditions under which the teacher performs the work.” (County Education Officer 1, 2nd July 2026).

This finding demonstrates that job security should not be viewed in isolation from the wider working environment. OECD’s TALIS 2024 analysis similarly identifies

workload, classroom discipline, diverse learner needs, accountability requirements and educational reforms among important sources of teacher stress (OECD, 2025). UNESCO and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2024) also emphasize the need to recruit, support and retain teachers within education systems that provide favorable professional conditions.

When teachers were asked directly whether job security positively influenced learner competency development, 40 teachers (27.6%) agreed and 34 (23.4%) strongly agreed, giving a combined positive response of 51.0%. In comparison, 31.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 17.2% remained uncertain. The resulting mean of 3.30 indicated moderate agreement. The finding suggests that teachers perceived professional security as relevant to learner development, while recognizing that competency development depends on several interacting conditions. The learner responses provided additional evidence regarding the practical consequences of teacher stability. A total of 89 learners (30.8%) agreed and 72 (24.9%) strongly agreed that they learned better when the same teacher taught them for a long period, giving a combined positive response of 55.7% and a mean of 3.39. Only 29.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Head teachers supported this finding by explaining that continuity enables teachers to acquire a deeper understanding of learners. A teacher who remains with learners over time becomes familiar with their strengths, learning difficulties, behavior and progress. According to majority of head teachers who were interviewed, teacher who stays with learners for some time comes to know where each child is progressing and where additional support is needed. The County Education Officers similarly emphasized that sustained teacher-learner interaction assists in monitoring learning over time. According to the officer, learner competency develops gradually, so teachers need time to observe learners, identify their strengths and weaknesses, provide feedback and follow up on areas that require improvement. The officer continued to say that, when there is continuity, the teacher is able to see development over time and respond appropriately to the individual needs of learners.

The strongest learner evidence concerned frequent teacher changes. A total of 91 learners (31.5%) agreed and 86 (29.8%) strongly agreed that frequent changes of teachers made it difficult for them to understand lessons, resulting in a combined agreement level of 61.3%. The statement recorded a mean of 3.55, one of the highest means under the objective.

The interview findings strongly converged with this result. Head teachers associated frequent transfers, departures and replacement of teachers with interruptions in instructional continuity. One commonly expressed position was that *“When teachers change frequently, learners have to adjust repeatedly to new teaching approaches, and this can interrupt their learning.”* The County Education Officers offered a wider administrative explanation:

“When a teacher leaves a class, the incoming teacher must first understand what has been covered, what the learners have mastered and the areas in which they still require support.”

Where replacement takes time, the interruption becomes greater. Even when replacement is immediate, the new teacher needs time to understand the learners and establish continuity in the learning process.” (County Education Officer 2, 2nd July 2026).

This finding provides an important explanation of the mechanism through which teacher job security may affect learner competency development. The effect is not simply that a secure teacher feels better about employment; security can contribute to teacher retention and instructional continuity, thereby reducing repeated disruptions in the learning process. Cameron et al. (2024) found that contract teachers experienced higher job dissatisfaction, which the authors associated partly with lower salaries and less stable job conditions. Their study also reported differences in learner outcomes between contract and government teachers, although the authors appropriately cautioned that the findings did not establish causality because contractual groups worked in different contexts. The current findings similarly suggest that stability matters while avoiding the conclusion that employment status alone determines learner outcomes.

The learners further demonstrated strong agreement that having a stable teacher supported their competency development. A total of 91 learners (31.5%) agreed, and 85 (29.4%) strongly agreed that having a stable teacher helped them improve their skills and competencies, resulting in a combined positive response of 60.9% and a mean of 3.55. This finding relates directly to the dependent variable of the study. Competency development requires sustained opportunities to practice, apply knowledge, receive feedback, correct mistakes and demonstrate progress. Teacher continuity facilitates this process by enabling teachers to monitor learner development across time rather than dealing only with isolated learning episodes.

The head teachers associated teacher stability with continuous assessment and follow-up. During the interviews, one head teacher stated that *“Stable teachers are better able to follow learners from one stage to another and identify competencies that still require attention.”* Another one similarly emphasized the cumulative nature of competency development by noting that:

“Competencies are developed progressively. The teacher needs to observe what the learner can already do, what still requires improvement and what support should come next. When teaching is continuous, it becomes easier to link one learning experience to another and monitor whether the learner is actually developing the expected competencies.” (Head teacher 3, 5th July 2026)

The learner findings were more moderate regarding whether long-serving teachers understood their needs better. Although 79 learners (27.3%) agreed and 65 (22.5%) strongly agreed, representing 49.8%, 33.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 16.6% were uncertain. The mean was 3.24. This finding indicates that remaining in a school for a long period may enable a teacher to become familiar with learners, although length of service alone does not guarantee responsiveness to learner needs. The interview

evidence supported this more nuanced interpretation. Head teachers acknowledged that longevity becomes valuable when accompanied by professional commitment and learner-centered teaching. Familiarity with a school does not automatically translate into effective learner support unless the teacher deliberately observes learners, provides feedback and responds to individual differences.

A similar pattern occurred regarding learner participation. A combined 47.7% of learners agreed or strongly agreed that they participated more actively when taught by a teacher they knew well, while 34.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 17.6% were unsure. The mean of 3.18 indicates moderate agreement. Familiarity with the teacher may therefore provide confidence and predictability for some learners, while participation also depends on teaching methods, classroom relationships, learner personality and the wider learning environment.

When the quantitative and qualitative findings are considered together, a coherent pattern emerges. Teachers recorded an overall mean of 3.15, whereas learners recorded 3.38. Learners therefore expressed a somewhat stronger perception of the benefits of teacher stability than teachers expressed regarding the motivational effect of job security. This difference may be explained by the distinct perspectives of the two respondent groups. Teachers experience job security through employment conditions, transfers, career progression, workload and professional expectations. Learners experience its practical consequences through teacher continuity, sustained classroom relationships, consistent instructional approaches and uninterrupted monitoring of their progress. The interviews with head teachers and County Education Officers provide the bridge between these two perspectives by showing how teacher employment stability can translate into retention and continuity within schools.

The findings broadly agree with Dindia and Mbirithi (2025), who found that teacher motivation influenced teacher performance and student outcomes in Kenyan public primary schools. They are also consistent with UNESCO and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2024), which stresses that education systems need to recruit, support and retain teachers under conditions that allow them to perform effectively. OECD (2025) similarly reports that job stability, satisfaction with employment terms and other working conditions are relevant to teachers' career intentions and retention.

The findings nevertheless provide an important qualification. Job security did not remove teacher stress, guarantee lesson preparation or automatically ensure effective classroom practice. Cameron et al. (2024) similarly demonstrate that teachers working under less secure contracts can perform comparably with more securely employed teachers on several instructional indicators. This suggests that job security operates alongside professional competence, working conditions, school leadership, recognition, remuneration and access to instructional resources.

6.2 Teacher Working Environment and Learner Competency Development

The second objective of the study was to determine the influence of teacher working environment on learner competency development in public primary schools in Tana River Sub-County, Kenya. Quantitative data were obtained from 145 teachers and 289 learners, while qualitative information was obtained through interviews with head teachers and County Education Officers. The working environment was examined in relation to classroom and school conditions, availability of teaching and learning resources, safety and support, management support, adequacy of facilities, teacher workload and class size.

Table 5: Teachers' and Learners' Responses on Teacher Working Environment and Learner Competency Development

		SD	D	NS	A	SA	Mean
Respondents	Statement	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	
Teachers (n = 145)	My classroom and school environment are conducive to effective teaching.	24 (16.6)	33 (22.8)	21 (14.5)	38 (26.2)	29 (20.0)	3.10
	Availability of teaching resources enhances learners' competency development.	13 (9.0)	20 (13.8)	17 (11.7)	49 (33.8)	46 (31.7)	3.66
	A safe and supportive school environment motivates teachers to perform better.	10 (6.9)	18 (12.4)	16 (11.0)	52 (35.9)	49 (33.8)	3.77
	Teachers receive adequate support from school management to improve learner learning.	26 (17.9)	32 (22.1)	24 (16.6)	36 (24.8)	27 (18.6)	3.04
	A positive working environment improves learner competency development.	14 (9.7)	19 (13.1)	18 (12.4)	48 (33.1)	46 (31.7)	3.64
Learners (n = 289)	My teacher has enough teaching and learning materials to help me understand lessons.	42 (14.5)	52 (18.0)	38 (13.1)	83 (28.7)	74 (25.6)	3.33
	The classroom environment enables my teacher to teach us effectively.	31 (10.7)	42 (14.5)	40 (13.8)	91 (31.5)	85 (29.4)	3.54
	My teacher has enough time to help me when I have difficulty understanding what is taught.	50 (17.3)	58 (20.1)	45 (15.6)	75 (26.0)	61 (21.1)	3.13
	The facilities available in our school help my teacher develop our skills and competencies.	38 (13.1)	48 (16.6)	43 (14.9)	86 (29.8)	74 (25.6)	3.38
	When there are too many learners in the classroom, it becomes difficult for the teacher to give each learner enough attention.	25 (8.7)	34 (11.8)	32 (11.1)	97 (33.6)	101 (34.9)	3.74
Overall Mean	Teachers						3.44
	Learners						3.43

The findings in Table 5 demonstrated a moderately positive perception of the influence of teacher working environment on learner competency development. Teachers recorded an overall mean of 3.44, while learners recorded an almost identical overall mean of 3.43. The close similarity between these two means is significant because teachers and learners considered the working environment from different perspectives yet reached almost the same overall assessment. Teachers evaluated the conditions under which they performed their professional duties, while learners evaluated how those conditions affected teaching and their own learning experiences.

Among teachers, the first statement examined whether the classroom and school environment were conducive to effective teaching. Twenty-four teachers (16.6%) strongly disagreed and 33 (22.8%) disagreed. In comparison, 38 (26.2%) agreed and 29 (20.0%) strongly agreed, while 21 (14.5%) were unsure. The mean score of 3.10 indicates only slight agreement. Although 46.2% considered their environment conducive, a substantial 39.4% expressed a negative view.

The findings suggest that teachers experienced considerable variation in the quality of their school working environments. Some schools may provide conditions that enable teachers to perform their duties comfortably, while others may experience limitations related to classrooms, infrastructure, teaching resources or other school conditions. Findings from head teachers reflected similar differences. One head teacher observed, *"The environment in which a teacher works affects the energy and attention that the teacher is able to give to the learners"*. The County Education Officers further explained that the quality of the working environment varied among schools and that conditions were particularly challenging where schools had inadequate facilities or difficult physical circumstances. This perspective is consistent with Nyang'ara and Anne (2024), whose study of public primary schools in Kuresoi South Sub-County found a positive and significant relationship between teachers' working conditions and pupil academic performance. Their study identified classroom conditions, workload, management support and teaching resources among the relevant aspects of teacher working conditions.

The teachers demonstrated considerably stronger agreement concerning the availability of teaching resources. A total of 49 teachers (33.8%) agreed and 46 (31.7%) strongly agreed that the availability of teaching resources enhanced learner competency development. This produced a combined positive response of 65.5% and a mean of 3.66. Only 22.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The finding indicates that teachers considered teaching and learning materials particularly important for the development of learner competencies. Competency development often requires learners to interact with materials, undertake activities, practice skills and demonstrate what they can do. Teachers therefore need appropriate instructional resources to translate curriculum expectations into meaningful classroom experiences.

During the interviews, one head teacher indicated that the availability of textbooks, teaching aids, practical materials and other learning resources enabled teachers to vary their teaching methods and involve learners more actively. Another one

stated, *"A teacher can explain well, but learners understand even better when there are materials they can see, use and practice with"*. Yet another head teacher expanded on this issue:

Competency development requires learners to do more than listen to the teacher. They need opportunities to practice, demonstrate skills, work with materials and participate in activities. Where a school lacks the necessary resources, the teacher may understand what should be done but still find it difficult to provide learners with the practical experiences required by the curriculum (Head teacher 1, 5th July 2026).

These findings are highly supported by UNESCO and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2024) who emphasize that quality education depends on teachers who are adequately supported and able to work within conditions that enable effective teaching. Nyang'ara and Anne (2024) similarly recommended the provision of teaching and learning resources and adequate infrastructure after finding that teacher working conditions significantly influenced pupil academic performance in Kenyan public primary schools.

Teachers expressed the strongest agreement regarding the importance of a safe and supportive school environment. Fifty-two teachers (35.9%) agreed and 49 (33.8%) strongly agreed that a safe and supportive school environment motivated teacher to perform better. This represented 69.7% positive responses, while only 19.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The corresponding mean of 3.77 was the highest among the teacher items. The finding suggests that teachers value a work environment in which they feel safe, supported and able to carry out their duties with confidence. Safety in this context may involve physical conditions within the school, respectful interpersonal relationships, manageable disciplinary situations and an organizational climate in which teachers receive support when difficulties arise.

Head teachers associated supportive environments with teacher morale, cooperation and willingness to undertake professional responsibilities. As one head teacher explained, *"Teachers perform better when they know that the school supports them and that they can carry out their duties in a safe environment"*. One of the County Education Officers provided a broader explanation:

"A supportive school environment creates confidence among teachers. When there is cooperation between the administration and teachers, reasonable discipline among learners, adequate communication and a feeling of safety, teachers are able to focus more on teaching. When the environment becomes difficult or hostile, some of the teacher's energy is spent dealing with those challenges instead of concentrating fully on learners." (County Education officer 1, 2nd July 2026).

The finding agrees with recent evidence from Omwocha et al. (2025), who examined work environment and job satisfaction among public primary school teachers in Narok Central Division. They found that workload and teachers' perceptions of learner discipline were significantly associated with job satisfaction and recommended strengthening the school work environment, including balancing workload and

improving learner discipline. OECD's TALIS 2024 findings likewise demonstrate that teachers face demands associated with workload, adapting to diverse learner needs, maintaining discipline, accountability and educational reforms. Such demands are related to teacher well-being and intentions to remain in the profession (OECD, 2025). The present study therefore indicates that a supportive environment may help teachers manage professional demands and sustain the quality of classroom engagement.

A more divided pattern emerged regarding support from school management. Twenty-six teachers (17.9%) strongly disagreed and 32 (22.1%) disagreed that teachers received adequate support from management to improve learner learning. In contrast, 36 (24.8%) agreed and 27 (18.6%) strongly agreed, while 24 (16.6%) were uncertain. The item recorded a mean of 3.04, the lowest among the teacher statements. The finding indicates that management support was an area of concern. Although 43.4% viewed management support positively, 40.0% expressed dissatisfaction. The narrow difference suggests that teachers' experiences of school leadership and administrative support varied considerably.

The interview findings helped explain the divided responses. Head teachers acknowledged that teachers require administrative support in areas such as instructional resources, classroom challenges, workload allocation, professional guidance and learner discipline. One head teacher summarized this responsibility by saying, *"Teachers need to know that when they encounter a problem in their work, the school leadership will listen and help them find a solution"*. The interviews further suggested that administrative support was not limited to providing materials. Communication, fairness in assigning responsibilities, recognition of teacher concerns and involvement in school decisions also contributed to the quality of the working environment. A head teacher described the issue in greater depth:

Supporting teachers means being available to them in their daily work. Sometimes the teacher needs materials, sometimes guidance, and sometimes assistance with a difficult class or learner. The administration also needs to distribute responsibilities fairly and listen when teachers raise concerns. When teachers feel that management understands the challenges they face, cooperation within the school becomes easier (Head teacher 7, 5th July 2026).

This finding is compatible with international evidence emphasizing the importance of organizational resources and professional support. OECD (2025) reports that teacher job satisfaction is strongly related to teachers' intentions to remain in the profession and that the demands experienced in schools have implications for teacher well-being. UNESCO and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2024) similarly call for education systems in which teachers are adequately supported, motivated and empowered to perform their professional responsibilities.

The final teacher statement examined whether a positive working environment improved learner competency development. A total of 48 teachers (33.1%) agreed and 46 (31.7%) strongly agreed, resulting in a combined positive response of 64.8%. Only 22.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 12.4% were uncertain. The mean score of 3.64

demonstrates relatively strong agreement. This finding brings the teacher responses directly to the dependent variable of the study. Teachers perceived the environment in which they worked as having important implications for learners' ability to acquire competencies. A positive working environment may enable teachers to devote more attention to lesson preparation, instructional activities, assessment, feedback and support for individual learners. The finding is supported by Mathay et al. (2024), whose Kenyan study in Mandera East Sub-County found that the work environment was significantly associated with students' academic performance. Their study recommended improving school work environments, maintaining adequate teacher supply and addressing teacher turnover. Although their research involved secondary schools, the findings reinforce the broader relationship between teachers' working conditions and learner outcomes.

The learner responses provide an important complementary perspective. Learners were first asked whether their teachers had enough teaching and learning materials to help them understand lessons. Forty-two learners (14.5%) strongly disagreed and 52 (18.0%) disagreed. Conversely, 83 (28.7%) agreed and 74 (25.6%) strongly agreed, while 38 (13.1%) were uncertain. The combined positive response was 54.3%, resulting in a mean of 3.33. The finding suggests that slightly more than half of the learners considered instructional materials adequate, while a substantial proportion experienced shortage. This result complements the teacher finding that instructional resources are important to competency development. Teachers strongly recognized the value of resources, while learners provided evidence that access to such resources was not universal. Head teachers acknowledged that some schools had to manage limited materials by sharing resources among learners or improvising instructional aids. One head teacher stated, *"When materials are few, teachers try to improvise, but there are activities that are difficult to teach effectively without the required resources"*.

The learners expressed stronger agreement regarding the general classroom environment. A total of 91 learners (31.5%) agreed and 85 (29.4%) strongly agreed that the classroom environment enabled their teacher to teach effectively. This represented 60.9% agreement and produced a mean of 3.54. Only 25.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This relatively positive finding suggests that many learners considered their classrooms sufficiently supportive of teaching. However, the presence of approximately one quarter of learners expressing disagreement indicates that classroom conditions were not equally favorable across all schools. Interviews from school administrators pointed to differences in classroom space, furniture, ventilation, learner numbers and the general condition of school facilities. Such differences may help explain why some learners perceived their classroom environments positively while others did not.

The finding relating to teacher time and individual learner assistance was considerably weaker. Fifty learners (17.3%) strongly disagreed and 58 (20.1%) disagreed that teachers had sufficient time to help them when they experienced difficulties. Seventy-five learners (26.0%) agreed and 61 (21.1%) strongly agreed, while 45 (15.6%) were unsure. The resulting mean of 3.13 indicates only slight agreement. The distribution suggests that many teachers may find it difficult to provide individual assistance

consistently. Although 47.1% of learners reported sufficient teacher support, 37.4% felt that teachers did not have enough time to help them individually. This finding becomes particularly meaningful when considered together with class size. Head teachers acknowledged that teachers' ability to offer individual attention depended heavily on workload and the number of learners assigned to them. One head teacher noted, *"A teacher may want to assist every learner individually, but the available time becomes a challenge when the class is large"*. A County Education Officer further elaborated:

"Teachers are expected to identify learners who have difficulties and provide appropriate support, but this becomes demanding where one teacher is responsible for many learners. The teacher has to complete the lesson, assess learning, attend to individual differences and still cover the required curriculum. The larger the class becomes, the more difficult it is to give each learner sufficient individual attention." (County Education Officer 1 2nd July 2026).

This finding corresponds closely with OECD (2025), which identifies workload and the need to adapt teaching to diverse learner needs among the significant demands experienced by teachers. It also corresponds with Omwocha et al. (2025), whose study of Kenyan primary teachers found workload to be significantly associated with job satisfaction.

Learners also responded positively concerning the contribution of school facilities to competency development. Eighty-six learners (29.8%) agreed and 74 (25.6%) strongly agreed that the facilities available in their schools helped teachers develop their skills and competencies. This represented 55.4% agreement, with a mean of 3.38. The finding suggests that school facilities contribute to learner competency development by supporting practical and participatory learning. Depending on the competency being developed, learners may require appropriate classrooms, books, equipment, digital resources, sanitation facilities, play spaces or other infrastructure that enables teaching and learning activities to take place effectively. This view was reflected in the interviews. A County Education Officer observed, *"Facilities become meaningful when they allow teachers to provide learners with experiences through which knowledge and skills can actually be practiced"*. The finding accords with Nyang'ara and Anne (2024), who recommended adequate infrastructural facilities and teaching and learning resources after establishing a significant relationship between teacher working conditions and pupil performance in public primary schools.

The strongest learner response concerned overcrowding. Ninety-seven learners (33.6%) agreed and 101 (34.9%) strongly agreed that when there were too many learners in the classroom, it became difficult for the teacher to give each learner enough attention. The combined positive response was therefore 68.5%, with a mean of 3.74, the highest among the learner statements. This is an important finding because it identifies class size as one of the clearest working-environment challenges experienced directly by learners. Large classes may reduce opportunities for individualized feedback, make classroom

management more demanding and constrain the amount of time teachers can spend assisting learners who require additional support. During interviews, head teachers strongly recognized this challenge. One stated, *"In a crowded class, the teacher may teach the whole group, but reaching every learner according to individual need becomes difficult"*. The County Education Officers similarly linked overcrowding with the implementation of competency-oriented teaching. According to the officer, competency-based learning requires participation, observation and continuous assessment. The officer continued to say that, when the teacher has a very large number of learners, observing every learner closely becomes difficult. Class size therefore affects the level of individual support that can realistically be provided. This interpretation is supported by current evidence that large classes can constrain what even skilled and motivated teachers are able to accomplish, especially where individualized teaching and feedback are required. World Bank analysis has emphasized that large classes can limit teacher effectiveness and that overcrowding creates important trade-offs in instructional quality.

When the teacher and learner findings are considered jointly, a particularly coherent pattern emerges. Teachers recorded an overall mean of 3.44, while learners recorded 3.43. The difference of only 0.01 suggests considerable convergence between the perceptions of the two respondent groups. Both groups therefore recognized the teacher working environment as an important factor in teaching and learner competency development. The findings nevertheless demonstrate that the working environment consists of several interconnected dimensions. Teachers expressed their strongest agreement regarding a safe and supportive environment ($M = 3.77$), availability of teaching resources ($M = 3.66$) and the contribution of a positive environment to competency development ($M = 3.64$). They were considerably less positive regarding management support ($M = 3.04$) and their actual classroom and school environment ($M = 3.10$).

The learner findings present a complementary picture. Learners were particularly concerned about overcrowding ($M = 3.74$) and strongly recognized that the classroom environment affected teachers' ability to teach effectively ($M = 3.54$). Their responses were more moderate regarding teaching resources ($M = 3.33$), facilities ($M = 3.38$) and the amount of time teachers had to provide individual assistance ($M = 3.13$).

The findings from head teachers and County Education Officers help explain these patterns. The interviews highlighted availability of resources, physical facilities, class size, workload, management support, safety, learner discipline and teacher morale as important dimensions of the school working environment. These themes demonstrate how conditions surrounding the teacher can eventually reach the learner through the quality and consistency of classroom instruction.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study concludes that teacher job security has a moderate positive perceived influence on learner competency development. Its contribution is

particularly evident through teacher retention and continuity of instruction. Stable teachers have greater opportunity to understand learners, monitor their development and maintain sustained instructional relationships. The study further concludes that job security does not remove other challenges affecting teachers. Employment stability must therefore be supported by conducive working conditions, manageable workload, adequate instructional resources and effective professional support.

The study concludes that the teacher working environment is a major component of teacher motivation and learner competency development. Its importance was strongly supported by both teachers and learners. Availability of teaching resources, safe school environments, suitable physical facilities, supportive management and manageable class sizes create conditions in which teachers can provide learner-centered instruction, continuous assessment and individualized support. Overcrowding emerged as a particularly important constraint. The study therefore concludes that improving teacher motivation without addressing practical classroom conditions may have limited impact on learner competency development.

School head teachers should treat teacher motivation as an important component of instructional leadership. Schools should develop practices that simultaneously support teacher stability, favorable working conditions, professional appreciation and teacher welfare. Head teachers should strengthen the support offered to teachers in their daily professional responsibilities. This should include fair workload distribution, regular consultation, assistance with classroom challenges, professional guidance, transparent communication and access to available instructional materials. Schools should prioritize the effective use of existing teaching and learning resources and identify areas where additional materials are needed. Competency-based learning requires learners to participate, practice skills and demonstrate learning, making adequate instructional resources particularly important.

School management should also develop regular and transparent systems for teacher recognition. Teachers should be acknowledged for professional commitment, innovation, improvements in learner competencies, teamwork and contribution to school programs. Recognition may include verbal appreciation, commendation letters, certificates, acknowledgement during meetings, leadership responsibilities and opportunities for professional growth. Schools should promote instructional continuity where teacher transfers or departures occur. Proper professional handover should include information concerning learner progress, competencies already developed, areas requiring further support and relevant assessment records. Teachers themselves should be encouraged to translate motivation into professional practice through consistent lesson preparation, learner-centered teaching, continuous assessment, feedback and individualized support. The ultimate value of motivational interventions should be reflected in improved teaching and learner experiences.

Conflict of Interest Statement

As authors of this journal article entitled, *Influence of Teacher Motivation Dynamics on Learner Competency Development in Public Primary Schools in Tana River Sub-County, Tana River County, Kenya*, we have no conflicts of interest to declare. We have all seen and agreed with the contents of the manuscript, and there is no financial interest to report. We certify that the submission is original work and is not under review by any other publication.

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About the Author(s)

Rodney Odinga Chuga is a Master's Student at Tangaza University, Kenya with a strong passion for research in educational leadership.

Dr. Beatrice Ndiga is a Lecturer, School of Education Tangaza University, Kenya. She has a keen interest in educational leadership research.

Dr. Lydia Kimanzi is a Lecturer, School of Education Tangaza University, Kenya. She has a keen interest in educational leadership research.

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