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Principals' Laissez-Faire Leadership and Teachers' Organizational Commitment in Public Secondary Schools in Kitui County, Kenya

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Abstract
Job commitment is critical for nurturing learners as they foster values, competency and skills, making better citizens of the 21st century. This study aimed to examine the relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' organizational commitment in public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya. The research was guided by Full-Range Leadership Theory. The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive-correlational survey design and an exploratory descriptive interview approach. The study targeted 410 public secondary schools, 410 principals, 410 deputy principals and 2,417 teachers. The Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample of 202 principals and 343. Additionally, 41 deputy principals were purposively sampled. Data were collected using questionnaires and interview guides. The sample size was hence 586 respondents. The results showed that principals' laissez-faire leadership did not have a statistically significant relationship with teachers' affective commitment (B=0.078, p=0.171), laissez-faire leadership did not have a statistically significant relationship with teachers' continuance commitment (B=0.043, p=0.444) and laissez-faire leadership had a statistically significant positive relationship with normative commitment (B=0.141, p=0.013). The study recommends that the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) should improve its continuous leadership development for principals, with an emphasis on prompt decision-making, accountability and relevant teacher support to discourage passive-avoidant leadership. Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs) should integrate leadership practices and teacher commitment into regular school evaluations, and the school leadership should promote practices that improve the bond of the teachers with schools by acknowledging their efforts, engaging them in decision-making, and creating an environment conducive to their work.

Keywords: *laissez-faire leadership style; teachers' job commitment; Affective commitment; normative commitment; continuous commitment*

1. Introduction

Laissez-faire leadership is a leadership style that involves limited intervention and gives followers a lot of freedom. While autonomy can offer employees a chance to make decisions and exercise professional judgment, there have been criticisms of laissez-faire leadership as absentee leadership in which the leaders do not make decisions, do not provide feedback and do not provide guidance when needed (Kamal & Kesuma, 2024). In this case, the leadership is passive, offers little guidance and waits until issues escalate before intervening. Within the school environment, this type of leadership could be manifested by providing little support to the teacher, providing little feedback to the teacher, making little decision-making, and being less involved in the daily management of the school's activities. While autonomy is likely to increase the creativity of highly skilled and self-motivated workers, it can decrease the efficiency and well-being of workers who are less talented and/or less motivated. Ahsan and Khalid (2023) relate the laissez-faire leadership to negative workplace outcomes like absenteeism, workplace incivility and burnout. These concerns have implications for the attachment and ongoing commitment of teachers to and in their schools.

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Empirical studies conducted in various learning institutions have examined the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and teacher-related outcomes, even though their findings differ based on the outcomes studied. In the United States, Johnson (2025) investigated the relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction after the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings indicated that laissez-faire leadership did not significantly predict teachers' job satisfaction positively, while the leadership styles examined collectively accounted for a relatively small proportion of the variation in job satisfaction. Similarly, Barbee (2024), in an exploratory study of teachers' perceptions and preferences on school principals' leadership styles, revealed that teachers generally preferred more engaged leadership styles to laissez-faire leadership.

In the United Kingdom, McIntyre et al. (2026) examined primary school teachers' preferences for different leadership styles, including transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership. The findings indicated a high preference for social identity leadership, followed by transformational and transactional styles, with laissez-faire leadership style ranking lowest. Similarly, the UK sustainable school leadership report by Perry et al. (2025) highlights the increasingly complex roles of school leaders and the significance of effective leadership in supporting sustainable school improvement. Evidence from Malaysia provides a more direct basis for examining the relationship between laissez. Abdul Halim et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between leadership styles and teachers' organizational commitment, specifically focusing on the mediating role of job satisfaction. The findings show a negative relationship between passive-avoidant leadership and teachers' organizational commitment, implying that leadership characterized by avoidance and limited involvement may limit teachers' attachment to their schools. In a related study, Hoque and Raya (2023) examined the relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' behaviour and found an association between weak support for teachers' emotional and psychological needs and laissez-faire leadership.

In African education settings, research has also examined the prevalence and implications of laissez-faire leadership in learning institutions. In Nigeria, Musa (2025) investigated principals' leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction in senior secondary schools in Sokoto State. The study revealed that the relationship between job satisfaction and democratic and autocratic leadership styles were stronger than the relationship involving laissez-faire leadership. In South Africa, Ndlovu (2024) explored teachers' experiences of laissez-faire leadership in the teaching of Grade 12 Accounting outside normal school hours. The study found that the involvement of school management teams in these lessons was mainly limited to communicating with parents, with limited participation in lesson scheduling, decision-making and discipline. Teachers reported different experiences regarding involvement: some valued the autonomy in planning and teaching their lessons, while others felt they were left to take managerial roles that they had not been prepared to perform. In Uganda, Namuddu and Christophe (2026) examined the effect of laissez-faire leadership style on teacher motivation in selected public secondary schools in Kasanje Town Council, Wakiso District. The study contributes to understanding how passive leadership relates to teachers' motivation since it showed that job satisfaction and organizational commitment of teachers working in highly passive leadership were significantly lower than those in other leadership types. The regional studies demonstrate that laissez-faire leadership is relevant to teachers' workplace experiences, even though the outcomes investigated differ across contexts and studies.

In Kenya, principals' leadership practices have been recognised as important in shaping teachers' experiences and attitudes towards their work and schools. Nyagaka (2019) investigated the relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style and the motivation of support staff in public secondary schools in Kenya and established a statistically significant correlation between laissez-faire leadership and support staff motivation. Similarly, Chirchir et al. (2014) examined the relationship between leadership style and teachers' commitment in public primary schools in Bomet County, Kenya. The study established a weak and statistically insignificant relationship between laissez-faire leadership and teachers' organizational commitment. More recently, Muga (2022) examined the relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction in Siaya, Kisumu and Kajiado Counties, Kenya. The findings established a negative significant correlation between laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction. These studies provide local evidence of the relationship between school leadership and teacher-related outcomes but did not establish how principals' laissez-faire leadership relate to teachers' organizational commitment. This creates the need to examine the relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' organizational commitment in public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya.

Organizational commitment (OC) is defined as the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization (Dorota, 2020). Based on this definition, it is assumed that committed

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employees identifies themselves with the organization's goals and mission. The model of organizational commitment was developed by Meyer and Allen (1991). The scholars treated organizational commitment as an employee's identification with an organization and presented it in three dimensions: affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment, which are still valid to date. Affective commitment is described as the desire to remain a member of an organization due to an emotional attachment to the organization. Normative commitment is defined as the desire to remain a member of an organization due to a feeling of obligation. It is described as the mindset that an employee has an obligation to pursue a course of action of relevance to a target. Continuance commitment is defined as a desire to remain a member of an organization because of awareness of the cost associated with leaving it, like inadequate job opportunities in the country. It is described as the perception by the employee that it would be costly and risky to discontinue a course of action (Benkarim & Imbeau, 2021).

The role of organizational commitment of teachers in the effective operation of secondary schools is of great importance, as committed teachers are likely to establish the role of teachers in carrying out their duties, as well as to engage actively in school activities and contribute to the achievement of the school goals. Principals are expected to be effective leaders, promote positive working conditions and lead teachers in implementing school programmes. In Kenya, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) has instituted a Teacher Performance Appraisal and Development (TPAD) framework through which teachers' performance in curriculum implementation is continuously monitored, and heads of institutions are given an oversight role in the appraisal process. Such institutional expectations highlight the significance of the role of effective school leadership in contributing to teachers' professional responsibilities and performance. However, concerns have been raised regarding teachers' absenteeism, irregular reporting to work, delayed syllabus coverage and poor academic performance in public secondary schools in Kitui County (Muimi, Mutweleli, & Ireri, 2024; Musau, 2024). Such challenges raise concerns about teachers' professional involvement and the effectiveness of school-level leadership in supporting the fulfilment of institutional responsibilities.

Empirical studies conducted in other educational contexts have established relationships between principals' leadership style and teachers' organizational commitment. Van Dat Tran and Huynh (2023) found that transformational leadership positively influenced teachers' organizational commitment in Vietnamese high schools. Studies in Ethiopia similarly reported relationships between principals' leadership styles and teachers' commitment (Ayele, 2022; Demissie, 2023), while Kyomuhangi, Kanyesigye and Ruteraho (2023) examined democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles and teacher commitment in Uganda. Although these studies demonstrate the relevance of principals' leadership to teachers' commitment, their findings were obtained from different national and educational contexts and may not fully explain the situation in public secondary schools in Kenya.

Kenyan studies have also examined principals' leadership styles and staff outcomes in public schools, although they focused on different staff categories and educational contexts. Nyagaka (2019) established a statistically significant correlation between laissez-faire leadership and support staff motivation. Chirchir et al. (2014) found a weak and statistically insignificant relationship between laissez-faire leadership and teachers' organizational commitment in public primary schools in Bomet County. Mugo (2022) also examined the relationship between principals' leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction in Siaya, Kisumu and Kajiado Counties, Kenya. While these studies provide useful evidence on leadership and employee outcomes in Kenya, they differ from the current study in terms of the categories of staff, educational levels, or geographical settings. However, they did not establish how principals' laissez-faire leadership relates to teachers' organizational commitment. Additionally, the studies did not provide a comprehensive examination of the influence of laissez-faire style in the specific context of the public secondary schools in Kitui County. The problem, therefore, is the limited empirical evidence on the influence of principals' laissez-faire style on teachers' job commitment in public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya. Even though teacher absenteeism, irregular reporting, delayed syllabus coverage, and other school-level challenges have been reported in the county, they have not been sufficiently established whether differences in principals' laissez-faire styles are related to teachers' commitment to their work. Additionally, the existing empirical studies concentrated on other counties or examined laissez-faire styles and related teacher outcomes, leaving a contextual and conceptual gap in Kitui County public secondary school setting. The study hence sought to examine the relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' organizational commitment in public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya.

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The paper was to examine the relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' organizational commitment in public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya. It hypothesized:
H_{01}: There is no statistically significant relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style on teachers' affective commitment in public secondary schools in Kitui County.
H_{02}: There is no statistically significant relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style on teachers' continuance commitment in public secondary schools in Kitui County.
H_{03}: There is no statistically significant relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style on teachers' normative commitment in public secondary schools in Kitui County.

The findings of this study may be useful to Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI) for coordinating development and review of educational leadership and management training programmes. Secondly, findings may be useful to principals, teachers, students and the entire school community by addressing the leadership gaps which influence teachers' organizational commitment and impact on the working and learning environment. Thirdly, the findings bring in new knowledge on laissez-faire leadership style and its relationship to teachers' organizational commitment levels and create room for future studies to fill in perceived gaps emanating from its findings.

This study was restricted to public secondary schools in Kitui County. The researcher only examined the school principals, deputy principals, and sampled teachers. Although there are many leadership styles, this study was restricted to the laissez-faire leadership style.

Full-Range Leadership Theory was introduced by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio (1994). The theory helps to understand leadership behaviours through the analysis of three leadership styles: transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership. It suggests that there is a wide spectrum of leadership behaviors, and that transformational leadership involves the capacity to inspire other people to rise above their own selfish interests to the organizational goal. Transactional leadership emphasizes the relationship between leader and follower; laissez-faire leadership is passive leadership, in which the leader avoids taking responsibility for leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994). One major strength of FRLT is its comprehensive approach to understanding leadership. By incorporating transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership within one framework, the theory allows researchers to examine different ways in which leaders interact with and influence their followers. It also recognizes that leadership behaviors are not necessarily mutually exclusive and that leaders may display varying combinations of behaviors over time (Bass & Avolio, 1994). This spectrum approach is widely regarded as more realistic than single-style models. Another strength is its notable empirical foundation. Previous research including the meta-analysis by Judge and Piccolo (2004) has established that transformational leadership is positively associated with outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance, while laissez-faire leadership is generally associated with less favorable outcomes. to negative outcomes.

Despite its contribution to leadership research, FRLT has some limitations. First, critics argue that its emphasis on transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership and under-representing other important leadership styles such as servant, authentic, or instructional leadership (Yukl, 2013). Consequently, the framework may not capture the full complexity of leadership in different organizational settings. Second, some scholars question whether FRLT represents a sufficiently distinct theoretical framework or an extension of earlier transformational and transactional leadership perspectives (Birasnav & Bienstock, 2019). Another weakness is that, laissez-faire leadership is generally positioned as negative. Laissez-faire leadership is not synonymous with bad consequences within organizations, but must be differentiated from autonomy of the professionals and from the appropriate delegation. It is not necessarily laissez-faire leadership when the leader is accessible, supportive and accountable, if he or she allows experienced employees to apply their independent judgement. As such, the effectiveness of leadership behaviours should also be taken into account in relation to organizational circumstances and the responsibilities of the leader.

Within FRLT, laissez-faire leadership is the passive-avoidant side of the leadership framework. Leaders hesitate to take action, avoid taking responsibility, respond slowly to issues that arise, and provide little feedback or direction (Bass & Avolio, 1994). They can also be expressed in the school environment when principals do not respond to teachers' concerns, offer insufficient direction to professional work, ignore new professional issues or are not present when administrative support is needed. These behaviours can have a negative impact on teachers' belonging, involvement and attachment to their school, which can impact organizational commitment. FRLT was considered

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relevant for the study due to its theoretical foundation in understanding principals' laissez-faire leadership behaviours and their association with organizational commitment of teachers. The study examines organizational commitment in terms of its three components: affective commitment (teachers' feelings of belonging to their school); continuance commitment (teachers' perceptions of the costs of leaving their school); and normative commitment (teachers' sense of obligation to stay in school). The study allows an examination of these dimensions individually in order to determine if principals' laissez-faire leadership behaviors are uniquely related to the different facets of organizational commitment among teachers. The theory thus provides the conceptual basis of the study of these relationships in public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

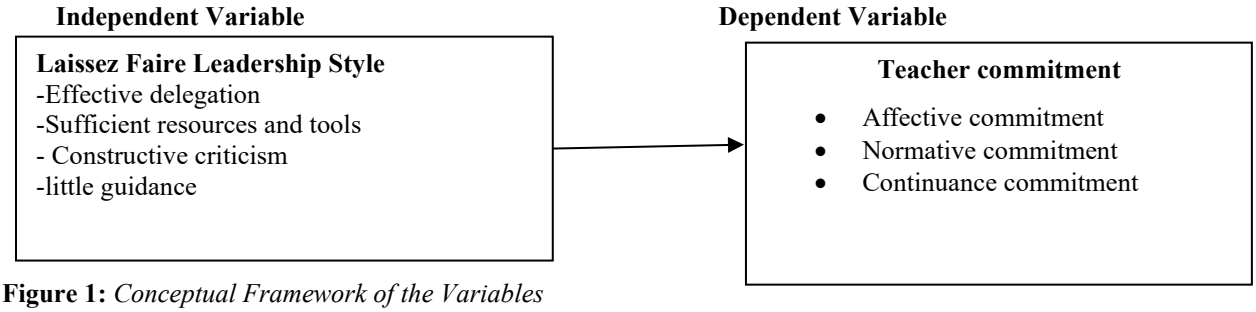

Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework of the Variables*

A conceptual framework shows that the principal's laissez-faire style can affect teachers' affective, normative, and continuance commitment. However, the strength of this relationship may be affected by the intervening variable, which is the teacher's job satisfaction in public secondary schools.

3. Research Methods

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, a convergent parallel design, which involved both quantitative and qualitative methods to get complementary information about the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and organizational commitment of teachers in public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya. The quantitative design used a cross-sectional descriptive-correlational survey design, while the qualitative design used an exploratory descriptive interview approach to gain contextual understanding of leadership practices and teachers' organisational commitment. The two strands were then examined independently and synthesized in the interpretation process to highlight points of convergence, complementarity and divergence.

The study targeted public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya. The county had 410 public secondary schools distributed across four categories: National (CI), Extra-county (C2), County (C3), and Sub-County (C4). The target population comprised of 410 principals, 410 deputy principals and 2,417 teachers. The target population was 3,237 s shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Target Population*

School category	Schools	Principals	Deputy principals	Teachers
National	2	2	2	104
Extra County	7	7	7	322
County	55	55	55	607
Sub County	346	346	346	1384
Total	**410**	**410**	**410**	**2417**

3.3 Sampling and Sampling Size

The study employed proportionate stratified sampling to ensure adequate representation of the four categories of public secondary schools in Kitui County. Using the Taro Yamane formula, samples of 202 principals and 343 teachers

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were determined from respective populations of 410 and 2,417. Principals were purposely selected, while teachers were selected through simple random sampling using staff lists provided by the schools. Additionally, 41 deputy principals were purposively sampled representing 10% of their target population. The sample size was hence 586 respondents.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

The study used self-developed questionnaires to collect data from principals and teachers while qualitative data were collected from deputy principals was collected using interview guides. Questionnaires captured information on principal's laissez-faire leadership style and teacher's organizational commitment (affective, continuance, and normative). The questionnaires employed a five-point Likert scale to measure respondents' perceptions of principals' laissez-faire leadership and teachers' organizational commitment. The response categories ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Qualitative data were used to obtain supplementary qualitative information from deputy principals regarding leadership practices and their observations of teacher's organizational commitment. The use of both data collection instruments allowed the researcher to compare qualitative findings with the perspectives obtained from the qualitative component.

The study assessed the content validity of the research instruments through professional judgment. Professionals in the field of education reviewed the questionnaires to establish the relevance, clarity, and adequacy of the items in relation to the study objectives. Construct validity was measured using exploratory factor analysis. The six items for laissez-faire leadership had communalities ranging from 0.561-0.833 while the extracted components explained 74.40% of the total variance. For teachers' organizational commitment, the 12 items had communalities ranging from 0.560-0.853 while the extracted components explained 77.06% of the total variance. Therefore, the data provided evidence regarding construct structure of the measurement items. Reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient to determine the internal consistency of the items. The laissez-faire leadership scale, comprising six items, yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.818 while the 12 items on teachers' organization commitment yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.817 indicating good internal consistency. Following the validation and reliability testing of research instruments, the researcher obtained the necessary approvals and research permits from the University, the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), and the Kitui County Director of Education. Permission was also sought from the sampled schools through their principals. Questionnaires were administered to principals and teachers using the drop-and-pick later method, with the assistance of trained research assistants. The completed questionnaires were collected after two weeks. The researcher conducted interviews with the deputy principals using the interview guides.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 28. Descriptive statistics specifically means and standard deviations were computed to summarize respondents' perceptions on principal's laissez-faire leadership and teachers' organizational commitment. Inferential analysis was conducted using three separate regression models to examine the relationship between of laissez-faire leadership on each dimension of teacher's organizational commitment: affective, continuance and normative commitment. Each model was tested at a 5% level of significance. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was use to assess the explanatory power of each model while the F-statistics and its associated and p-values were used to determine overall model significance. Regression coefficients and their corresponding p-values were examined to establish the direction and statistical significance of the relationships. Qualitative data obtained from the interview guides was analysed through descriptively. Relevant responses were selected and presented verbatim as direct quotations. The qualitative findings were used to complement and provide contextual insights into the quantitative results. Integration of the two data strands was undertaken during the interpretation of findings by comparing the quantitative results with the qualitative responses.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The researcher observed ethical principles by informing respondents of the purpose and objectives of the study and also ensured voluntary participation. The respondents' privacy was respected and confidentiality was observed. Respondents were assured that the data would be used for study purposes only. After getting the approvals from the relevant authorities to carry out the study, the researcher visited the schools, introduced the study to the principals and sought their permission to conduct the exercise.

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4. Analysis Result

Table 2 presents the instrument return rate across the three respondents categories. The study targeted 586 respondents; 202 principals, 343 teachers, and 41 deputy principals. Of these, 184 principals and 312 teachers returned completed questionnaires. Although 41 deputy principals were purposively selected, only 15 were available and willing to participate in the interviews. This represented response rates of 91.1% for principals, 90.9% for teachers, and 36.6% for deputy principals. Overall, 511 respondents participated in the study representing a response rate of 87.2%.

Table 2: *Instrument Return Rate*

Respondent category	Sampled respondents	Actual responders	Return rate
Principals	202	184	91.1
Teachers	343	312	90.9
Deputy principals	41	15	36.6
Total	**586**	**511**	**87.2**

The study sought to examine the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and teachers' organizational commitment in public Schools in Kitui County. Principals and teachers rated their agreement with statements on principals' laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' organizational commitment on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). Mean scores were interpreted as 1.00-1.80 (strongly disagree), 1.81-2.60 (disagree), 2.61-3.20 (neutral), 3.21-4.20 (agree), and 4.21-5.00 (strongly agree). Findings are presented in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 3: *Respondents Perceptions on Laissez-faire Leadership Style*

Statements	Principals (n=184)		Teachers(n=312)	
The principals;	**M**	**Std.**	**M**	**Std.**
Allow teachers to work problems out on their own	1.73	1.310	1.79	1.547
Stay out of the way of the teachers as they do their work	2.09	1.368	2.22	1.593
Allow teachers to appraise their own work	2.02	1.367	1.75	1.384
Give teachers complete freedom to solve problems on their own	1.90	1.471	2.10	1.175
In most situations, teachers prefer little input from me	1.99	1.465	1.98	1.694
Leave the teachers alone to do their work	1.97	1.446	1.95	1.470
Average	**1.95**	**1.404**	**1.96**	**1.477**

The findings revealed that principals and teachers shared similar perceptions regarding the practice of laissez-faire leadership in public secondary schools in Kitui County. The respondents disagreed that principals adopted a hands-off leadership approach. The low ratings across the items indicate that principals were generally involved in teachers' work instead of granting then unlimited autonomy. However, there were some differences; whereas the teachers reported less principal's interference in the daily work, the principals indicated that the teachers prefer to appraise their own work. These differences indicate variations in how principals and teachers perceived the extent of teach autonomy

Table 4: *Themes on Laissez-faire Leadership Style*

Theme	Illustrative quotation	Participant
Delegation with continued supervision	"Sometimes the principals delegate duties to subordinates including the deputy principal, teachers, and other non-teaching staff. They however closely supervise the output of the work delivered by the people who are responsible for accomplishing tasks on behalf of the principals. The principal always corrects and confronts teachers who fail in their duties."	DP1

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Decision avoidance and reluctance to assume leadership responsibility	"The principal is at times afraid of making decisions for the teachers and does not want to carry the responsibilities of being a leader."	DP2
Low motivational and empowerment support	"They also do less to keep the teachers motivated or empowered."	DP3

Qualitative findings which indicated that laissez-faire leadership was generally not practiced in the sampled schools was partially corroborated by the deputy principals who described delegation accompanied by close supervision and managerial intervention. However, some deputy principals had contrary experiences describing limited managerial involvement and considerable teacher autonomy. The results show variations in leadership practices across schools suggesting that the relatively low ratings reflected the dominant pattern rather than common practice in all schools.

Table 5
Respondents Perceptions on Teachers' Organizational Commitment

Statements	**Teachers(n=312)**	
	M	**Std.**
Affective Commitment		
I accomplish my duties on time	2.20	1.011
I feel proud to work in this school	2.29	0.928
I am willing to put in extra effort to help my school succeed	4.18	0.604
I feel emotionally attached to my teaching job	3.89	1.223
Continuance Commitment		
Leaving this school would require considerable personal sacrifice	4.18	0.899
I have good relationships and benefits in this schools that would be hard to replace at another school	4.03	0.869
It would be costly for me to leave this job	4.41	0.885
One of the main reasons I continue to work here is the stability it provides.	4.31	0.941
Normative Commitment		
I have a sense of duty to continue working at this school	2.01	0.945
Even if I received a better job offer elsewhere, I would not leave this school	1.89	1.147
I feel that I owe it to this school to continue working here	4.14	0.837
This schools have given me so much and it would be wrong to leave	2.03	1.044
Average	**3.30**	**0.944**

The findings indicate that teachers reported high levels or organizational commitment with an overall mean of 3.30 (SD=0.944). Across the three dimensions, continuance commitment recorded the strongest ratings followed by affective commitment and normative commitment had the lowest average. The results indicate that teachers' decisions to stay in the current work station were strongly influenced by the perceived costs and benefits of leaving than by emotional attachment or a sense of moral obligation. Regarding affective commitment, the results show mixed perceptions. Teachers expressed willingness to put more efforts to ensure the school's success and were fairly emotionally attached to their teaching career. They stated that they agreed less with respect to being able to meet their responsibilities on time and being proud to work in their school. It indicates that teachers were more inclined to do something to improve the school's performance, but were less attached emotionally to their schools. For continuance commitment, teachers emphasized the costs that might arise if they were to make a commitment to continue with their current employment. The perceived cost of leaving the job and the stability which the job offered were rated high. Likewise, teachers were aware of the personal sacrifice involved with moving to a new school. The results indicated that employment stability, existing relationships and the perceived costs of relocating were factors in the decisions of teachers to stay in their school. Regarding normative commitment, results indicated relatively low levels of feelings of obligation to stay in the present schools. Overall, teachers did not feel a responsibility to stay at their schools, would not stay even if they were offered a higher paying position elsewhere, and would not stay even if they felt it was wrong

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to leave their school due to the benefits it had given them. However, they concurred in this sentiment that they felt a responsibility for their schools to continue service. This indicates that while teachers felt some kind of responsibility for their institutions this did not necessarily mean that they felt a strong moral commitment to stay in their current place of work.

Table 6: *Themes on Teachers' Organizational Commitment*

Theme	Illustrative quotation	Participant
Punctuality and time management	"Some teachers always come to school very late."	DP1
Diligence in instructional responsibilities	"Majority of the teachers regularly give students assignments to work out."	DP3
Professional preparedness	"Delays to prepare lesson plans and schemes of work respectively."	DP4
Adherence to deadlines and supervision	"Some teachers fail to meet deadlines which and oppose classroom observation."	DP6

The qualitative results provide more information on teachers' professional commitment. While there were instances of teacher commitment to some pedagogic duties, the problems of teacher punctuality and teacher professionalism and compliance with the administrative requirements were also revealed. These results provided a helpful contrast to the high general pattern of organisational commitment reported in qualitative results. The triangulation of quantitative and qualitative findings not only enhances understanding of how the teachers' commitment was perceived at the organisation level, but also showed that teachers' positive organisational commitment did not necessarily reflect in their consistent performance in all professional tasks.

Simple linear regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style and the three dimensions of teachers' organizational commitment; affective, continuance, and normative commitment (n=312). The model summary, ANOVA, and regression coefficient are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: *Simple Linear Regression Results*

Dependent Variable (Commitment Dimension)	R	R2	Adj. R2	F(1,310)	Constant (B0)	B	SE	β	t	p
Affective Commitment	.078	.006	.003	1.88	17.938	-.055	.04	-.078	-1.371	.171
Continuance Commitment	.043	.002	-.001	.586	17.357	-.020	.026	-.043	-.766	.444
Normative Commitment	.141	.020	.017	6.286	7.848	.103	.041	.141	2.507	.013

The results show that principals' laissez-faire leadership did not have a statistically significant relationship with teachers' affective commitment (B=0.078, p=0.171). The model explained only 0.6% (R^2=0.006) of the variation in affective commitment. Therefore, $H0_1$ was not rejected suggesting that variations in principals' laissez-faire leadership were not significantly associated with teachers' affective commitment. Similarly, laissez-faire leadership did not have a statistically significant relationship with teachers' continuance commitment (B=0.043, p=0.444). The model accounted for only 0.2% (R^2=0.002) of the variation in continuance commitment. Therefore, $H0_2$ was not rejected suggesting that variations in principals' laissez-faire leadership were not significantly associated with teachers' continuance commitment. Results also show that laissez-faire leadership had a statistically significant positive relationship with normative commitment (B=0.141, p=0.013). The model explained 2.0% (R^2=0.020) of the variation in normative commitment. Therefore, $H0_3$ was rejected suggesting that variations in principals' laissez-faire leadership were significantly associated with teachers' normative commitment.

4.1 Discussions

The results showed that principals' laissez faire leadership style was not a prevalent leadership style in the schools studied. This descriptive pattern helps to understand the relationship with teachers' organizational commitment. The inferential results also revealed differences in the relationship of the three dimensions of commitment. There was no

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significant relationship between principals' hands-off leadership and either affective or continuance commitment. This is in line with Bwambale et al. (2024) who found no significant relationship between teachers' job commitment and in Uganda. Abdul Halim et al. (2021) however, discovered that passive-avoidant leadership is negatively related to teachers' organizational commitment, indicating that the impact of low leadership engagement might vary across contexts. The results also showed that there was a positive correlation between Laissez-Faire Leadership and normative commitment. This implies that in some cases, teachers might equate more managerial non-interference with greater professional autonomy and opportunity for personal responsibility. Ndlovu (2024) observed that some teachers appreciated the independence they experienced with laissez-faire leadership, especially the opportunity to learn to lead and take responsibility for their work Similarly, Bwambale et al. (2024) reported that teachers enjoyed the independence in problem solving. The results of the analysis can be explained using Full Range Leadership theory, in which laissez-faire leadership is defined as a passive-avoidant leadership style that involves avoiding leadership responsibility and providing little guidance. This leadership might allow some autonomy of action, but not enough to support and engage teachers in becoming emotionally attached to or affecting their decision to stay. This positive association with normative commitment indicates that, at times, non-interference can be considered as trust in teachers' professional judgement.

5. Conclusions

The study concluded that principals in public secondary schools in Kitui County rarely practiced Laissez Faire leadership style. Principals were usually engaged in guidance and supervision of teachers and there were few cases of teacher autonomy. Laissez-faire leadership was not statistically significantly correlated with teachers' affective commitment. The affective commitment of teachers showed mixed feelings, with a tendency to make effort, but not very proud of their schools. There were no statistically significant relationships between Laissez Faire leadership style and affective and continuance commitment. Despite teachers' generally low levels of normative commitment to their school, the study found a weak positive relationship between laissez-faire leadership and normative commitment. This unanticipated relationship should be taken with a grain of salt and does not mean it is caused. Overall, the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and teachers' organisational commitment was dimension-specific with no significant association with affective commitment or continuance commitment, but showed a weak positive association with normative commitment.

6. Recommendations

The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) should improve on its continuous leadership development for principals with the emphasis on prompt decision-making, accountability and relevant teacher support to discourage passive-avoidant leadership. Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs) should integrate leadership practices and teacher commitment into regular school evaluations to identify leadership gaps and guide corrective actions. The school leadership should promote practices that improve the bond of the teachers with schools by acknowledging their efforts, engaging them in decision-making, and creating an environment conducive to their work. This is necessary in light of low levels of pride and normative commitment revealed in this research.

7. Suggestions for Further Research

Further research should be conducted using validated Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) passive-avoidant leadership items to examine the relationship between principals' laissez-faire leadership style and teachers' organizational commitment in public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya.

Studies may also investigate the moderating role of job satisfaction, replicated in other counties in Kenya, and use longitudinal designs to provide in-depth insights into the relationship.

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