

Off-Site Team Retreat Practices and Teacher Job Satisfaction among Public Secondary Schools in Teso North Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract

One strategy used by organizational leaders to encourage group thinking and produce favorable results is team building among staff members. Off-site retreats and other recreational programs run by the school administration are some of the essential practices that improve instruction and learning for the benefit of the kids. However, little research has been done on how these strategies affect teachers' job satisfaction in various contexts, particularly in Kenya's Teso North Sub County, which has recently seen teacher attrition and poor academic achievement. The impact of off-site retreat practices on teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools in Teso North Sub County of Busia County, Kenya, was the aim of this study. The study was guided by Walberg's Theory of Educational Productivity, which emphasizes the various factors influencing learning and academic success. Under the positivist paradigm, a descriptive survey design was used with 36 principals, 44 deputy principals, 44 senior masters, 218 class teachers, and six ward education officers as the target population. A sample size of 19 principals, 24 deputy principals, 24 senior masters, and 117 class instructors who were chosen by simple random selection was calculated using Taro

Yamane's formula. Principals and teachers were given a questionnaire, and all ward education officers were interviewed for the study. Quantitative data were analyzed using both inferential statistics (regression analysis) and descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation). Narration was used to present the thematically analyzed qualitative data. The study found that school administrators' off-site retreat policies had affected teachers' job satisfaction over time ($M=3.56$; $SD=.785$). Off-site retreats were observed to cause improvements in teacher job satisfaction of 329 units ($\beta=.329$). Practices for off-site retreats should be customized to meet the unique needs and preferences of various educators.

Keywords: Off-site retreats; Public secondary schools; School principals; Teacher job satisfaction; Team building

Introduction

Numerous companies worldwide and in various fields have hosted off-site retreats (Schmidt, Porter, Rivera-Amill & Appleyard, 2023). Travel to foreign locales like spas, hot springs, holy sites, and pilgrimage sites—places that have been utilized for rest and renewal for innumerable generations—gave rise to retreats (Naidoo, Schembri & Cohen, 2018). Off-site retreats, according to Malvicini and Serrat (2017), are gatherings intended to allow a group to momentarily disconnect from regular operations for concentrated conversation, dialogue, and strategic deliberation over the future of their company or specific challenges. Retreats have been demonstrated to be effective in fostering team science and interdisciplinary translational research collaborations between academic and community partners (Ranwala et al, 2017). Additional advantages include boosting students' confidence and drive, which promotes professional development and an increase in publications (Schmidt et al., 2023). According to research by O'Shea et al. (2023), retreats help Emergency Medicine (EM) doctors feel less stressed and emotionally worn out. Bailey et al. (2023) reported that after a retreat intervention, stress greatly decreased and professional contentment significantly improved among doctors and advanced care professionals. Nevertheless, the manner in which off-site retreats have been utilized by school principals to enhance teacher job satisfaction seems to have garnered minimal documentation.

According to Uke, Otu, Abel, and Udom (2024), job satisfaction is one of the elements that reflect the overall effectiveness of work performance. It is defined in terms of the relationship between what people actually receive from their jobs—such as compensation, status, and recognition—and their anticipated outcomes. Locke and Lathan (2012) view job satisfaction as commonly defined as an emotional state that provides employees with joy and positive energy by perceiving that they are receiving what they consider

important for them. According to Yang, Lu, Ban, and Sun (2022), a key component of both teaching quality and institutional coherence in the field of education is teacher work satisfaction. Notably, better institutional outcomes, teacher dedication, teacher retention, and student accomplishments are all associated with higher levels of teacher satisfaction (Burić & Kim, 2021; Toropova, Myrberg & Johansson, 2021). In order to improve teaching quality, institutional efficiency, and student performance, Baroudi, Tamim, and Hojeij (2022) emphasize that administrators must measure and comprehend work satisfaction in order to create an effective learning environment. Although administrators are responsible for creating an environment that helps teachers achieve school goals (Azovide & Bouchamma, 2021), their team-building tactics, such as off-site retreats to improve teacher job satisfaction, have not received enough attention. This understanding is crucial, particularly in areas like Teso North Sub County in Kenya, which have consistently exhibited low teacher job satisfaction indicators over the years.

Students' academic performance in Busia County has stagnated over time despite the Kenyan government's efforts to improve educational quality through the introduction of Free Day Secondary Education (Imo, Kipkenei, Obino & Khaemba, 2024). Additionally, Busia County secondary schools' ratings on national exams and other measures of educational quality have been declining over time, falling short of the national average (Othoo, Olendo & Gogo, 2023). According to a recent study conducted in Busia County by Eric, Kipkenei, and Obino (2025), Teso North Sub-County received a mean score of 3.365 on the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) between 2016 and 2023, which is significantly lower than the county average of 3.9125. According to an examination of the county's 2024 KCSE results, nearly half of the children who received an E were from Teso North Sub County. The Busia County Education Office's 2024 KCSE results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: 2024 KCSE Performance of Busia County

SUB COUNTY	Entry	D+	D	D-	E	X
Butula	3596	516	513	336	32	5
Samia	22200	430	436	297	52	4
Bunyala	1215	219	223	122	15	2
Teso North	3243	478	603	554	147	7
Busia	2759	457	475	458	75	4
Nambale	2835	483	524	461	83	9
Teso Central	1526	344	280	179	17	0
Teso South	1601	212	285	357	100	0

Source: Busia County Education Office

Table 1 shows a concerning KCSE performance, particularly for Teso North Sub County. For example, Teso North comprised 147 (84.5%) of the 174 candidates who received an E in the 2024 KCSE. In the 2024 KCSE, the sub-county had the most applicants with grades D (603), D- (554), and E

(147). Although previous research in various settings (Baroudi et al., 2022; Burić & Kim, 2021; Toropova et al., 2021) has connected school results, such as students' academic achievement, to teacher job satisfaction, there is a dearth of data about the Teso North Sub County in Kenya. In a similar vein, while off-site team retreats have been linked to better staff performance and professional development (Bailey et al., 2023; O'Shea et al., 2023), there is no evidence of these connections among teachers in Teso North Sub County, Kenya. Thus, the goal of the current study was to respond to the following research question:

How do off-site team retreat programs influence the job satisfaction of teachers in public secondary schools in Teso North Sub County of Busia County, Kenya?

Conceptual Framework

According to the conceptualization of this study, school principals' off-site team retreat practices have an impact on teachers' job satisfaction in Teso North Sub County's public secondary schools. Therefore, the off-site team retreat practices, which are represented by holiday group vacations, leisure activities, and group trips, among other things, are the study's independent variable. The timely creation of lesson plans and work schedules, as well as the intention to remain at the school longer, are indicators of the dependent variable, which is teacher job satisfaction (see Figure 1).

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
Off-site Team Retreat Practices Holiday Group Vacations Recreational Activities Group Excursions	Teacher Job Satisfaction Timely preparation of lesson plans/Schemes of work Intention to stay longer at the school

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework

Theoretical Framework

Walberg's Theory of Educational Productivity served as the foundation for this article. The various factors influencing learning and academic achievement are highlighted by the Theory of Educational Productivity (Walberg, 1980). The approach emphasizes how psychological characteristics and immediate environmental circumstances influence academic achievements, including cognitive abilities, conduct, and attitudes (Buck, 2024). According to Walberg et al. (1986), there are nine major factors that affect a student's educational success: ability/prior achievement, motivation, age/developmental stage, quantity of instruction, quality of instruction, classroom climate, home environment, peer group, and exposure to media

outside of school. According to Walberg's theory of academic accomplishment, individuals' unique psychological traits and their surroundings have a direct impact on educational results (cognitive, affective, and attitudinal) (Galizty & Sutarni, 2021). Understanding the circumstances and variables that impact educational achievement is made possible by Walberg's Theory of Educational Productivity, which sheds light on why a teacher or student isn't reaching their full potential (Walberg, 1992).

Walberg's theory was chosen as the guiding concept for this study because it is consistent with the goal of the study, which is to investigate how administrators' off-site team retreat activities affect teachers' job satisfaction in public secondary schools. The research objective of examining how off-site team retreat practices recognizes the importance of social-emotional components and the educational setting aligns with the theory. By outlining the relationship between student outcomes and the learning environment, Walberg's theory provides a lens through which to view these interactions. Walberg's theory is used in this study to explain how principals' team-building activities, such as off-site team retreats, improve teacher collaboration, create a positive learning environment, and ultimately increase teacher job satisfaction.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study used a mixed-methods descriptive survey approach that included both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. This design was helpful since it made it possible to quantify some characteristics of the phenomena being studied using a quantitative approach and others using a qualitative method (Almeida, 2018). Complementarity in data collection, analysis, and interpretation was one benefit of this (Ivankova & Wingo, 2018). The positivist research paradigm was used to make it possible to measure and describe the investigated phenomena objectively and without manipulation.

Study Setting

One of Busia County's eight sub-counties, Teso North Sub-county, was the site of the current study. With a population of 117,947 and an area of 236.8 km², the region is known for cross-border trade and subsistence farming (Eric et al., 2025). There are 36 public secondary schools in the area: 31 Sub-County, 4 Extra County, and 1 National. Over the previous seven years, the sub-county's mean score was 3.365, significantly lower than the county average of 3.9125. Teso North Sub County was chosen for the current investigation because of this.

Target population and sampling strategy

This study focused on 342 teachers—36 principals, 44 deputy principals, 44 senior masters, and 218 class teachers—from 36 public secondary schools. Six ward education officers were also the focus of the study. The principals were chosen because they are in charge of creating innovative team-building activities like off-site team retreats, while the ward officers were targeted because they oversee the quality of education that is managed at every school. Teachers were included since they are the ones who are expected to benefit from these retreats, even though deputy principals were included because they help principals plan off-site team retreats. The sample size was calculated using Yamane's (1967) formula as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n is the sample size; N is the target population; e is the margin of error. Based on the formula, the sample size of the study is:

$$n = \frac{342}{1 + 342(0.05)^2} = 184$$

Thus, 184 was the sample size. However, the survey included every ward education officer. Each target population category—principals, deputy principals, senior masters, and class teachers—was used to further stratify the sample. The distribution of the study sample is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Sample Size Distribution

Sub County	Target Population	Sample Size	Percent
Principals	36	19	10.4
Deputy Principals	44	24	13
Senior Masters	44	24	13
Class Teachers	218	117	63.6
Total	342	184	100

Instrumentation, Validity and Reliability

Instruments: The researchers administered structured questionnaires consisting of closed-ended questions to collect data from the sampled Principals, deputy principals, senior teachers, and class teachers. Interviews were also conducted with the ward education officers.

Validity: The questionnaire and interview schedule items were scrutinised by educational administration experts during their construction. Questions were discussed and further adjustments made according to corrections recommended by lecturers from the School of Educational Administration, Mount Kenya University. These experts assessed the extent to which the questions contained in the instruments were relevant to the study objective and recommended appropriate adjustments, which were fully adopted.

Reliability: The tools were subjected to pre-testing during a pilot study involving teachers from randomly selected 3 public secondary schools in the Sub County. This was performed to test whether the questions were clear and easily understood. Participants in the pre-testing exercise were thereafter excluded from the main data collection process. The Cronbach's Alpha (CA), denoted as α (alpha), was employed to assess the dependability of the instrument using data gathered during the pilot testing. The computed CA for the instrument was .912 ($\alpha=.912$). The study accepted the instrument as reliable since the computed CA surpassed the threshold set by Nunnally (1978). On the other hand, trustworthiness was used to test the reliability of the interview schedule.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used to analyze quantitative data using both descriptive and inferential statistics. While inferential statistics (regression analysis) were employed to examine how off-site team retreat practices affect teacher job satisfaction, descriptive statistics produced mean (M) and standard deviation (SD), which were crucial for interpreting the results, based on a Likert scale of 1–4, where 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; and 4= Strongly Agree. The choice of 1 – 4 scale was to assist in pushing respondents toward a directional opinion (agreeing or disagreeing) regarding how they perceive off-site recreational practices, as suggested by Koo and Yang (2025). For inferential statistics, the tested regression model was:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + e$$

Where:

Y = Teacher job satisfaction (Timely preparation of lesson plans and academic performance)

B₁ = Coefficient for off-site team retreat practices

X₁ = off-site team retreat practices

β_0 = Constant representing the fixed teacher job satisfaction

e = Error term: factors affecting teacher job satisfaction beyond the study

Similarly, thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data obtained from interviews with the zonal education officers.

Ethical Considerations

The National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) and the County Director of Education in Busia gave the researchers permission to carry out the study. The sampled instructors created and signed an assent form. Participants were asked not to remove their identities from the research equipment in order to maintain anonymity. In a similar vein, the sampled respondents voluntarily agreed to participate in the

study by signing a consent form. By asking study participants to withhold their identities from the research tools, confidentiality was guaranteed. Furthermore, only the results of data analysis and the research report were communicated with Mount Kenya; data collected in the field was carefully maintained in the custody of the corresponding author.

Results

Following several trips to different institutions, the researcher collected all of the instruments after distributing 184 questionnaires to the sampled respondents. This resulted in a 100% return rate. Ward education officers were also interviewed to the point of saturation.

Off-Site Team Retreat Practices and Teacher Job Satisfaction

The goal of the study was to determine whether off-site team retreat activities and teacher job satisfaction are related. The respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed with the following statements regarding the impact of team retreat practices on job satisfaction: 1 = strongly disagree (mean of 1 to 1.4); 2 = disagree (mean of 1.5 to 2.4); 3 = agree (mean of 2.5 to 3.4); and 4 = strongly agree (mean of 3.5 to 4). Table 3 provides an illustration of the results.

Table 3: Influence of Off-site Team Retreat Practices on Teacher Job Satisfaction

Off-Site Retreats	N	Mean	SD
Holiday Group Vacations		3.86	.836
Teacher morale is often boosted by camping trips organised by our school during holidays	184	4.37	.656
Teacher morale is often boosted by beach tours organised by our school for teachers during holidays	184	3.88	.996
Teacher morale is often boosted by retreat vacations (eg exam marking) organised by our school during holidays	184	3.59	.977
Teacher morale is often boosted by paid visitation such game park visits organised by the school during holidays	184	3.61	.716
Recreational Activities		3.68	.821
Teacher morale is often boosted by leisure sports (eg football, basketball, cricket) organised by our school	184	3.83	.703
Teacher morale is often boosted by scavenger hunts (eg solving puzzles, clue searching) organised by our school	184	3.59	.960
Teacher morale is often boosted by board games such as friendly competitions, etc organised by our school	184	3.62	.801
Group Excursions		3.13	.693
Teacher morale is often boosted by outdoor activities (eg Amazing Race, hiking, outdoor adventures) organised by our school	184	2.97	.764
Teacher morale is often boosted by creative activities eg art workshops, music sessions, or "talent shows organised by our school	184	3.17	.504
Teacher morale is often boosted by cultural experiences such e.(visiting museums, historical sites, or attending cultural events etc)	184	3.26	.813
Overall Mean		3.56	.785

The key respondents agreed ($M=3.56$; $SD=.785$) that the school's off-site team retreat practices have affected teacher job satisfaction in the research region, according to Table 3 results. In particular, the respondents believed that recreational activities like friendly competitions and leisure sports ($M=3.68$; $SD=.821$) and holiday group vacations like beach tours and camping excursions ($M=3.86$; $SD=.836$) have an impact on teacher job satisfaction. However, there was no consensus among the key respondents about the impact of group activities like talent shows or museum trips on teacher work satisfaction ($M=3.13$; $SD=.693$).

Interviews with the education officers highlighted that group vacations are one of the most prominent retreats practiced by many schools in the area, often desired because it offers venting opportunity from work pressure to teachers. One of the officers stated:

Every year, a lot of schools plan group vacations for their instructors. Typically, these trips last one to four days. The majority of schools favor Lake Victoria and coastal areas because they provide beautiful settings where educators may unwind and take in the views from the coastline. These vacations are commended for promoting unity within the group, the ability to resolve conflicts, and the clarity of shared goals and the school's vision. However, many schools neglect to plan these vacations for their instructors because they are frequently costly. (Education Officer 3).

Although the economic concerns have frequently proven to be a barrier, the education officer's statement shows that group holidays for teachers are highlighted for their potential to improve cohesion and dispute resolution. This suggests that school administrators use these strategies to help instructors achieve certain objectives.

According to another interview, some capable schools typically host retreats outside of the county where they operate at least once a year, supposedly to help teachers develop life skills and promote unity. These off-site retreats have a number of objectives, such as:

To develop social and life skills; to promote unity; to cultivate two-way communication practices; to impart institutional vision to educators; and to cultivate collaborative goal-setting practices (Education Officer).

Records from numerous schools in the study area show that fostering social skills and fostering unity are two of the major objectives of off-site trips. To determine the kind and direction of the association between off-site team retreat practices and teacher job satisfaction in public secondary schools, the study also performed a regression analysis. First, research was done to see how well the model ($Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + e$) could predict the impact of off-site team

retreat practices on teacher work satisfaction in public secondary schools. For this, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed. The ANOVA results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	20.994	1	20.994	50.818	.000 ^b
	Residual	17.661	183	.097		
	Total	38.554	184			

a. Dependent Variable: Teacher Job Satisfaction among public secondary schools

b. Predictor: (Constant), Off-site Team retreat Practices,

Table 4 shows that teacher job satisfaction among public secondary schools in the study area is significantly predicted by the off-site team retreat practices under investigation {F (1, 184) =50.818, P<0.05}. In this instance, the significance value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05 (P<0.05). Therefore, the diversity in teacher work satisfaction in public secondary schools in Teso North Sub County can be explained by off-site team retreat practices.

Table 5 shows the significance of off-site team retreat practices in predicting teacher job satisfaction.

Table 5: Model of prediction using Regression Analysis

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	Change Statistics				
					R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.737 ^a	.543	.532	.321	.543	50.818	1	183	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Off-site retreat practices

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.827	.238			3.480	.001
	Off-site Retreats	.329	.073	.406		4.516	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Teacher job satisfaction

The real impact of the coefficients of the independent variable (team building techniques) on the dependent variable (teacher job satisfaction) in Teso North Sub County is shown by the model's findings in Table 5. For off-site retreats, the unstandardized beta is .329. This suggests that in public secondary schools, off-site retreats predict improvements in teacher job satisfaction of .329 units.

The regression equation $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + e$, with the constant (β_0) being 0.827, the coefficient can be plugged into the model to predict job satisfaction of teachers as:

$$Y = .827 + .329 X_1 + e$$

Considering the value of the obtained R^2 ($R^2 = .543$), it can be deduced that 54.3% of the change in teacher job satisfaction among the public secondary schools under the current study is attributed to off-site team retreat practices. The remaining 45.7% of change in teacher job satisfaction in the research area might be attributable to other factors beyond this study. Figure 1 presents the regression line of fit.

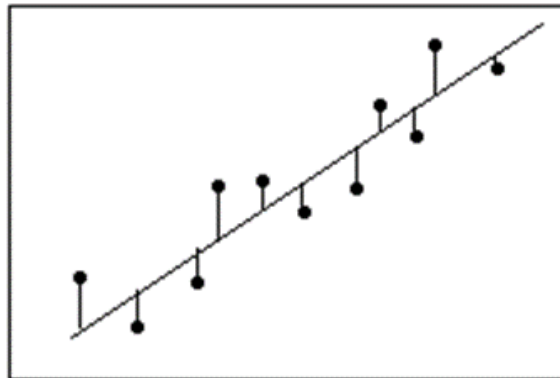


Figure 1: Regression Line of Fit

Discussions

The distributed data gathering tool used in this study yielded a 100% response rate. These response rates (for the questionnaire and interviews) were deemed sufficient by the researchers for carrying out statistical and descriptive analysis and drawing conclusions from a study. Experts have noted that a low response rate is a sign of a badly executed survey (Chelghoum, 2024; Mursa, Patterson, McErlean, & Halcomb, 2025; Shiyab, Ferguson, Rolls & Halcomb, 2023). Furthermore, conclusions from data analysis results can be drawn with ease when response rates surpass 60% (Borgholthaus et al., 2025).

According to the study, group excursions have affected teacher job satisfaction in certain schools but not in others. According to Walberg's theory of educational production (Buck, 2024; Walberg, 1980), this study implies that some of the environments created by such group outings for instructors are not motivating, while others are. Compared to other schools, some seem to have created favorable conditions where group outings have been crucial in raising teacher morale.

Overall, this study has demonstrated that the collaborations that off-site team retreat practices foster have an impact on teachers' job satisfaction. This result is consistent with other earlier research that discovered retreats are beneficial for fostering interdisciplinary translational collaborations and team science among academic and community partners (Ranwala et al, 2017). According to a study conducted in the USA by Schmidt et al. (2023), workers appreciated the opportunity to learn soft skills from annual off-site retreats,

such as leadership, interpersonal communication, and conflict resolution. According to research by O'Shea et al. (2023), getaways greatly lessen people's perceptions of stress and emotional tiredness, allowing them to fully engage in their careers. According to the current study, off-site team retreat practices can be a crucial tactic for promoting teacher work satisfaction, which could ultimately lead to better academic performance in Teso North Sub County.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that off-site retreat practices by school principals, such as holiday group vacations and recreational activities, influence job satisfaction among educators. Such retreats cause significant improvements in teacher job satisfaction in public secondary schools.

Recommendations

For improvement in off-site team retreat practices and consequently student academic performance, this study recommends that off-site retreat practices by school principals should be tailor-made to suit specific desires or choices of the teacher.

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Conflict of Interest: The authors reported no conflict of interest.

Data Availability: All data are included in the content of the paper.

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Declaration for Human Participants: This study has been approved by the relevant Institutional Review Board (IRB), Ethics Committee of Mount Kenya University ERC Reference number MKU/ISERC/5823, and the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki were followed.

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