

Teachers' perceptions towards principals' instructional supervisory role in selected secondary schools

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ABSTRACT

Effective instructional supervision plays a crucial role in enhancing teaching quality and student learning. However, teachers' perceptions towards supervision vary, some view it as supportive while others see it as fault-finding. This study examines teachers' perceptions towards principals' instructional supervisory practices to identify areas of improvement. The Administrative theory of supervision and a concurrent triangulation mixed approach guided the study. Purposive and simple random sampling were utilized to sample 127 teachers and 10 principals. A survey and an interview guide were employed to gather data which was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. An independent sample t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were utilized to test the mean differences in teachers' perceptions. Findings indicate that while most teachers recognize supervision as beneficial for professional development, a significant number perceive supervision as authoritarian. The results unveiled that teachers' gender, age and education qualification did not significantly influence their perceptions [$t(98)=1.468$, $p>0.05$, $F(4, 95)=0.556$, and $F(4, 95)=0.174$, $p>0.05$]. The study concludes that fostering a positive supervisory environment can enhance teachers' confidence, improve instructional strategies, and ultimately lead to better student outcomes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Instructional supervision is a process that enhances reflective practices among teachers and raises their standards of the instructional process [1]. It is feasible to discuss the impacts of instructional supervision in enhancing instruction, the professional growth of instructors, and how it creates a conducive environment that holds up learning to help students excel academically [2]. Supervision encompasses overseeing teachers' work to help them overcome instructional weaknesses so that the students can benefit from teaching [3]. Therefore, supervisors help teachers to solve the problems they experience while teaching [4]. Comighud *et al.* [5] posit that teachers' perceptions towards instructional supervision has been a topic of interests among researchers, who recognize its importance in predicting effective implementation of the supervision process. Hence, understanding teachers' perceptions is crucial for successful implementation of the supervision process [6]. Given that perceptions influence effective implementation of instructional supervision, teachers with positive perceptions are likely to embrace instructional supervision [7]. However, despite the fact that instructor perceptions influence successful implementation of supervision practices by principals, ineffective

implementation of instructional practices have been observed in Meru county, as evidenced by the poor academic performance of the students, which serves as a critical indicator of teaching effectiveness [8].

Enhancing teachers' perceptions towards instructional supervision is essential as it is strongly associated with successful implementation of the supervision process, learning and serves as a predictor of teachers' behavior. In many cases, principals view their role as a crucial factor in improving teachers' performance. Conversely, teachers perceive supervision such as classroom observation as an irrelevant force by the supervisors [9]. Teachers feel anxious during classroom observation and lack the confidence to comment on the feedback. These perceptions have been attributed to supervisors' inadequate skills, training, and qualifications required for supervision and mistrust among the supervisors and instructors [10].

Although this research primarily examined teachers' perceptions towards principals' instructional supervisory role, it is essential to recognize that differences in their educational qualifications impact their perceptions. Teachers' educational background has been associated with positive perceptions towards instructional supervision [11], [12]. In a correlational study on the influence of teachers' educational qualification on their attitude towards supervision, the findings revealed that teachers with lower levels of education qualification embraced supervision as a means of raising the caliber of their instruction more enthusiastically than those with higher levels of qualification. Supervisory support was more important to less skilled teachers [11]. Additionally, Singh [12] unveiled that teachers with postgraduate degrees had more favorable perceptions of instructional practices compared to primary school teachers with only graduate degrees.

Also, gender has been associated with positive perceptions towards instructional supervision. According to Yuliskurniawati *et al.* [13], gender refers to the distinct characteristics of males and females, encompassing both biological differences and societal responsibilities assigned to each. The debate over which gender perceives instructional supervision positively has been the focus of various studies [12], [14]. Singh [12] in assessing the influence of gender on teachers' viewpoint towards instructional practices, the findings indicated a substantial link between the factors. Female teachers displayed a positive attitude toward instructional practices. Nevertheless, some researchers have reported contradictory results, suggesting no significant gender difference in teachers' perception [15]. Reid and Soan [16] discovered that instructors in United Kingdom had a favorable view of clinical supervision irrespective of their age and gender, recognizing its role in fostering their professional development. Given the above, research in the area of gender and its influence on teachers' perceptions towards principals' instructional supervisory role was deemed necessary.

A study in Malaysia revealed that instructors were dissatisfied with the supervisor's methods of supervision. Both male and female teachers reported that supervisors focused more on finding errors than helping them grow professionally. Teachers felt anxious in the presence of the supervisors and could not teach properly [17], [18]. Teachers' failure to acknowledge supervision as a means for their career progression and improvement of student performance, makes the idea of supervision detrimental [19]. Furthermore, supervision is indispensable to the teaching career and student performance, as a result, it can operate as a two-sided coin that can encourage teacher skill growth or cause stress and undermine their self-esteem [20].

In Cape Coast, Mensah *et al.* [21] found that many teachers showed resentment towards supervision and feared to be supervised because supervisors were perceived as inspectors on a fault-finding mission with an agenda of casting blames. Teachers viewed supervision as an evaluation as opposed to a collaborative approach. They perceived supervision as a tiresome engagement and time-wasting because supervision was impromptu and was done only when there was a need. In addition, Bariham *et al.* [22] carried out research in Ghana and established that head teachers neglected the supervisory duty which led to substandard teaching and insufficient dedication among teachers. The study recommended closer face-to-face and regular instructional supervision more preferably than snappy, unplanned, and irregular supervision.

Teachers portray negative attitudes towards instructional supervision due to the authoritative, and bureaucratic nature of the supervisors [23]. In Tanzania, teachers displayed a negative attitude towards instructional supervision perceiving it as a fault-finding exercise. Consequently, they tended to disregard supervisors' attempts to conduct classroom observations aimed at evaluating the educational process [24]. In addition, Ngole and Mkulu [25] highlights that supervision continues to be a challenge in Tanzania characterized by teachers' negative perception towards supervision. According to Ngole and Mkulu [25], most of the school heads lacked experience, adequate knowledge, and training in supervision and were unable to identify specific challenges faced by the teachers. As a result, supervision was ineffective in guiding instructors towards their instructional development.

Kenyan public secondary schools regard instructional supervision as the primary means to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. To achieve this goal, the Ministry of Education (MoE) issued a Legal Notice Circular (MoE No. 2009 QSA/2/1A/VIL.11/86) designating principals as the internal instructional

supervisors within schools [26]. Their role includes conducting classroom visits and observations to evaluate teachers' professional competence and reviewing professional documents to ensure that educational standards are maintained [11]. Conversely, many public secondary schools in Kenya continue to experience instances of ineffective instructional supervision given that teachers view instructional oversight as an attempt to find flaws [27]. Ineffective instructional supervision has been observed in Meru County, leading to a consistent decline in teachers' effectiveness, their performance in instructional duties, and a drop in student academic performance [28]. Regrettably, improving the instructional process has been revealed to rely heavily on instructors' beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes towards instructional supervision [27]. Therefore, relevant instructional strategies can help rebuild teachers' positive perceptions and attitudes towards instructional supervision, perceiving it as a tool to improve instructional quality and their teaching skills. As a result, the researcher deemed it essential to investigate teachers' perceptions towards principals' instructional supervisory role in Igembe North sub-county, Kenya. The study also sought to answer the question: how do teachers perceive principals' instructional supervisory practices, and what effect do these perceptions have on teacher development, teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes?

Thibaut *et al.* [29] emphasized that both individual and contextual factors influence teachers' perceptions and attitudes. The study was therefore designed to achieve the following objectives: i) assess teachers' perceptions towards instructional supervision; ii) evaluate the effectiveness of classroom observation in professional development; iii) explore challenges associated with instructional supervision; and iv) examine the influence of teacher demographic factors on their perceptions towards instructional supervision. This research was informed by three research hypotheses: i) There is no significant difference in the mean perceptions of teachers towards principals' instructional supervisory role when teachers are categorized by gender; ii) There is no significant difference in the mean perceptions of teachers towards principals' instructional supervisory role when teachers are categorized by age; and iii) There is no significant difference in the mean perception of teachers towards principals' instructional supervisory role when education qualifications categorize teachers.

Unlike previous studies that focus solely on either the benefits or drawbacks of instructional supervision [18], [30], this study provides a nuanced perspective by identifying both positive and negative perceptions. While many teachers appreciate supervision for professional development, others express concerns about anxiety and hierarchical enforcement. This dual perspective highlights the need for a balanced and teacher-friendly approach to supervision. The study challenges existing assumptions that demographic factors such as gender, age, and educational qualifications significantly influence teachers' perceptions of instructional supervision. The study reveals that perceptions remain consistent across different teacher groups ($p > 0.05$), reinforcing the idea that instructional supervision should prioritize instructional quality and professional development rather than being tailored based on demographic differences. While prior research has noted gender-based differences in educational leadership, this study adds a fresh dimension by showing that gender imbalances in supervision ratings arise primarily when female leaders are assessed by teachers of a different gender. This finding contributes to the discourse on gender equity in instructional supervision and leadership. The study underscores the tension between authoritative and developmental supervision models. The findings highlight the need for school principals to transition towards a more supportive and non-judgmental supervision approach, incorporating peer observations and constructive feedback to alleviate teachers' anxiety and improve engagement. The study offers actionable recommendations for policymakers, advocating for the strengthening of mentorship programs and equitable supervision practices. Unlike previous studies that merely identify issues, this research suggests concrete steps for creating a more inclusive and effective instructional supervision framework. Overall, this study provides a fresh perspective by integrating diverse viewpoints, challenging traditional assumptions, and offering practical strategies for enhancing instructional supervision in a way that is both effective and teacher-friendly.

2. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

The inquiry was grounded in the administrative theory of supervision by Planturoot. The theory likens the school to an organization composed of a group of individuals, with one person appointed as the supervisor overseeing the activities of the entire organization. The theory postulates that for an effective organization, an individual within the organization should supervise the transition processes. In a school setting, the principal is the instructional supervisor designated by the teachers service commission (TSC) to oversee the education processes.

Planturoot postulates that guided by the philosophies of essentialism, experimentalism, and existentialism, the principal is responsible for fostering school development and enhancing classroom instruction. The principal is the instructional overseer who utilizes the essentialist philosophy to support individual teachers in advancing their instructional practices. Principals who embrace essentialist philosophy

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tend to be authoritative, which leads to teachers harboring negative perceptions towards supervision. The principal utilizes the philosophy of experimentalism in supervision by engaging teachers in the design and implementation of supervisory strategies. Consequently, supervision becomes developmental as it engages teachers in collective action. This encourages a collegial approach to supervision, promoting teamwork between the principal and the teachers to explore the essential instructional practices together. This encourages positive perceptions among teachers because they view supervisors as their partners in the supervision process rather than inspectors. Existentialists argue that humans possess inherent freedom and are not influenced by external forces. Principals who adopt the existentialist philosophy create an environment that encourages teachers to discover and develop their abilities, as such, teachers' exhibit positive perceptions towards supervision. The theory is relevant to this inquiry because the principal serves as the school's internal instructional supervisor and oversees teachers' performances in the school. Additionally, the organization is compared to the school that consists of teaching staff, non-teaching staff, and administrators who collaborate as distinct systems to achieve the schools' objectives. The principal orchestrates the school's activities through the instructional practices, overseeing the processes that drive progress within the institution. The theory advocates for coordinating the school systems through instructional supervision to achieve established goals.

3. METHOD

3.1. Participants and procedure

The inquiry utilized a concurrent triangulation, a mixed methods approach that combines numerical and non-numerical data to provide a better understanding of the research problem in a single study [31]. The approach used a cross-sectional survey design and phenomenology to enhance simultaneous data collection and analysis to corroborate the study findings by Esia-Donkoh and Baffoe [32]. The quantitative results were triangulated with the qualitative findings to confirm the convergence of the outcomes. Triangulation combined the responses of the principals and the opinions of the educators.

The study focused on 427 teachers and 31 principals from public secondary schools in Igembe North sub-county. According to Perneger *et al.* [33], a sample size of 30% of the population is sufficient if the population is homogenous. As a result, 30% of the 427 teachers, equating to a sample of 128 teachers, was selected using simple random sampling. A sample of 10 principals was obtained from a population of 31 principals using purposive sampling technique. Participants were guaranteed the confidentiality of their information, and their consent was obtained before participating in the research.

3.2. Instruments

The instruments used in this study were a teachers' questionnaire and principals' interview guide. A questionnaire consisting of teachers' demographic data and 21 Likert-scale statements was designed to assess teachers' perceptions of their principals' instructional supervisory role. Each item was evaluated using a five-point response scale ranging 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=undecided, 2=disagree and 1=strongly disagree. The items were chosen based on review of the existing literature. The qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews to obtain in-depth insights from the principals concerning teachers' perceptions. The researcher used a set of six questions to gather insights from the principals. Three subject matter experts vigorously examined the research tools to ascertain the face and content validity. The researchers examined the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire using Cronbach alpha via a pilot study. The findings revealed a reliability coefficient of 0.84 indicating that the study's questionnaires were deemed dependable for the fieldwork [34]. To guarantee the credibility and dependability of the interview guides, the subject matter experts and the supervisors evaluated the questions based on lucidity, wording, ambiguity, and relevance. Two questions were excluded based on the evaluation of the experts and the supervisors. The instruments were revised for enhancement and then submitted to the supervisors for validation.

3.3. Data analysis

The quantitative data were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 25 software, where percentages, frequencies, means, standard deviations, coefficient of variations (CV), *t*-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were computed. Regarding teachers' perceptions, percentages and means were determined for each response, that is, 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3=undecided, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree. The average rating was three determined by summation of the nominal values of the scale and dividing by the aggregate number of cases. Consequently, average scores below three signified negative perceptions while means scores above three reflected positive perceptions. Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data, facilitating the identification of themes, and the results were presented through direct quotations. ANOVA and *t*-test were utilized to test the hypothesis at *p*-value <0.05.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Demographic features of the teachers

Table 1 presents a comprehensive summary of the study's quantitative descriptions of teacher participants. The results in Table 1 portray that most of the teachers were male 59% while 41% comprised female teachers. The study findings confirmed the findings of Mwiti *et al.* [35] which established that in public secondary schools in Igembe North sub-county, male teachers (56%) outnumbered female teachers (44%). The study also sought to ascertain the age distribution of the sampled teachers, categorized in age brackets. The majority of the teachers 35% were between the age brackets 26-30 years followed by 34% of the teachers aged between 31-35 years. Additionally, the study results show that 13% of the teachers were aged between 20-25 years, 8% between 36-40 years, and 10% aged above 41 years, respectively. The study results are consistent with Mwiti *et al.* [35] that most of the teachers were between the ages of 31 and 36 years.

A large percentage (83%) of the teachers possessed a bachelor of education degree. Teacher participants with a diploma degree constituted 7%, and holders of postgraduate degree (PGDE or Postgraduate Diploma in Education) constituted 6%. Participants who had a master's degree were few 4%. The study findings revealed that teachers were eligible to teach in public secondary schools and capable of accurately completing the questionnaires. A diploma from an accredited institution is the minimal qualification needed to teach in secondary schools, under TSC norms [36].

Table 1. Teachers' demographic characteristics, N=100

Variables	Description	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	59
	Female	41
Age	20-25 years	13
	26-30 years	35
	31-35 years	34
	36-40 years	8
	Above 41 years	10
Education qualification	Diploma	7
	B.Ed	83
	PGDE	6
	M.Ed	2
	Others	2

4.2. Teachers' perceptions towards principals' instructional supervisory role

The study sought to assess teachers' perceptions towards principals' instructional supervisory role. The results were analyzed and presented in Table 2. Teachers expressed varied opinions regarding principals' instructional supervisory role. Overall, teachers tend to view instructional supervision positively, especially when it comes to its role in supporting professional development and improving teaching quality. For example, a substantial majority of teachers expressed satisfaction with classroom observation (81%, M=4.22), and many noted that supervision helps them prepare their professional documents (M=4.22) and improves their teaching strategies (M=3.77). This reflects the recognition of supervision as an essential element of professional development. Furthermore, teachers agreed with the statement that principals adopted a friendly approach during supervision (81%, M=4.08). Likewise, most of the teachers concurred that principals carried out supervision fairly (84%, M=4.17, CV=0.25) which suggest a positive instructional supervisory approach. The study findings portray that the majority of the teachers felt satisfied with classroom observation. The results confirm the findings by Nasreen and Shah [37] who found that teachers felt supervisors were professional and respectful during classroom observation. Teachers also felt that supervisors were collaborative and engaged them in a dialogue after lesson observation. The findings further agreed with Ahmad and Saefurrohman [23], who revealed that for successful instructional supervision, a collegial relationship between the teachers and the supervisor is essential to guarantee that teachers get the assistance they need for professional development rather than finding errors. The interview with one principal pinpointed that:

"After classroom observation, I normally sit with the teacher and highlight areas that need some improvement." (DS/M/8/10)

In another interview, another principal said:

"Most of the time I have a dialogue with the teacher and it takes place immediately after lesson observation." (DS/F/03/10)

The interview excerpt indicates that principals established a friendly approach in executing their supervisory role.

Table 2. Teachers' perceptions towards principals' instructional supervisory practices

Variable	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	St.D	CV
I am satisfied with classroom observation	53	28	11	4	4	4.22	1.060	0.25
The principal carries out supervision fairly	46	38	8	3	5	4.17	1.045	0.25
I like to prepare my professional documents	53	29	9	5	4	4.22	1.069	0.25
Classroom observation makes me anxious	14	20	18	16	32	2.68	1.456	0.54
Classroom observation enhances teachers' development	53	26	4	8	9	4.06	1.309	0.32
Supervision leads to improvement in my teaching	50	29	5	5	11	4.02	1.326	0.00
Classroom observation has positive impact on student learning	46	24	12	5	13	3.85	1.395	0.36
Supervision is a form of professional development	48	27	12	4	9	4.01	1.259	0.31
I always prepare lesson notes	66	23	4	5	2	4.46	0.937	0.21
I dislike lesson observation	22	15	5	20	38	2.63	1.625	0.61
Supervision is more of fault-finding	18	20	19	15	28	2.85	1.480	0.51
Supervision is important for my professional development	49	20	15	8	8	3.94	1.301	0.33
Supervision aims to control teachers	20	24	14	18	23	3.00	1.478	0.49
Supervision is more authoritative than democratic	22	22	21	12	23	3.08	1.468	0.48
Classroom visits are unplanned	19	14	17	21	29	2.73	1.490	0.55
Supervision helps improve my teaching strategies	40	29	10	10	11	3.77	1.362	0.36
The principal employs a friendly approach during supervision	43	38	10	2	7	4.08	1.116	0.27
I am confident in the presence of the supervisor	46	37	11	2	4	4.19	0.992	0.23
Supervision of teaching and learning can improve school mean grade	51	25	12	3	9	4.06	1.254	0.31
Supervision helps me to be a better teacher	36	33	8	14	9	3.73	1.325	0.36
Through supervision I learn new teaching strategies	35	25	10	17	13	3.52	1.446	0.41
Grand mean						3.68	1.29	

SA: strongly agree; A: agree; N: neutral; D: disagree; SD: strongly disagree; St.D: standard deviation; CV: coefficient of variation

Table 2 portrays that a significant majority of teachers agreed that they always prepared lesson notes (89%, $M=4.46$). The study findings are in tandem with Moivaziri and Shatery [14] that Iranian teachers had positive attitudes toward the preparation of lesson plans and lesson notes. In an interview, one of the principals pointed out:

"I check teacher professional documents such as the scheme of work, record of work, lesson plans, and classroom observation as a requirement of Teacher Performance Appraisal and Development (TPAD), but I emphasize mostly on teacher lesson notes." (DS/M/8/10)

In another interview, another principal highlighted:

"I check the implementation of the curriculum, check syllabus coverage every week on record of work, lesson plans, lesson notes to know the extent they are done, I check scheme of work done at the beginning of the term, and I conduct classroom observations according to TPAD." (DS/M/O7/10)

However, the study also highlights certain areas of concern. Notably, a significant number of teachers reported feeling anxious during classroom observations ($M=2.68$) which influenced their performance and willingness to engage. In addition, results portray that teacher disliked classroom observation ($M=2.63$) which cultivated a negative perception towards instructional supervision. In support of this, one interviewee said:

"Teachers do not like to be supervised, the teacher might choose not to come to class. You notice the teacher is not happy." (DS/M/06/10)

The findings agree with Mbawala and Hermanto [24], who found that teachers disregarded supervisors' attempts to conduct classroom observations aimed at evaluating the educational process, perceiving it as a fault-finding exercise.

Table 2 also shows that the teachers felt that supervision was more of fault-finding ($M=2.85$). These perceptions suggest that while the intent behind supervision may be positive, its execution may not always align with teachers' needs for support and collaboration. The perception of supervision is more authoritative than democratic ($M=3.08$) further underlines a sense of hierarchy that may hinder open communication between principals and teachers. Moreover, the findings reveal that supervision despite being largely perceived as beneficial for teacher development, teachers felt that classroom visits were unplanned ($M=2.73$). This implies lack of clear structure in the supervisory process contribute to feelings of uncertainty and discomfort. Additionally, while a majority agreed that supervision plays a role in enhancing student learning

($M=3.85$) and school performance ($M=4.06$), a smaller percentage expressed confidence that supervision helps them learn new teaching techniques ($M=3.52$), pointing a potential gap between observation and actionable feedback. The overall rating of principals' instructional supervisory practices in the selected secondary schools was ($M=3.68$), indicating that teachers generally perceived instructional supervision as a positive force, however, the way in which it is carried out could be refined. Research by Gitiha *et al.* [38] established that a mean beyond 3.0 on a Likert scale signifies a positive perception of the subject being studied, whereas a mean below 3.0 signifies a negative perception.

The researchers computed a standard deviation to establish the dispersion of the data about the mean responses and the link with the rest of the data. To comprehensively indicate the dispersion of the mean, the researcher computed a CV. High CV value indicated a greater disparity in responses while low CV values indicated more uniformity around mean response. Table 2 portrays the range of CV values between 0.00 and 0.61, indicating the uniformity amid the data set. The highest CV value of 0.61 indicates considerable variability of the data on the variable 'I dislike lesson observation' about the mean. It implies a lack of consensus among the selected teachers on the variable under study. The lowest CV value of 0.00 on the variable 'supervision lead to improvement in my teaching' shows uniformity about the mean and the consensus of the data among the selected teachers in the study.

4.3. Differences in mean perception when teachers are categorized by gender

An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to explore teachers' perceptions towards principals' instructional supervisory role in relation to their gender. From the findings presented in Table 3, the mean rating of male teachers on supervision is higher (3.7538) compared to the mean rating of female teachers (3.5726). Given that the mean rating for supervision is higher among male teachers compared to female teachers, this indicates that the majority male rating was higher than female rating. Although the male teachers had a higher mean rating than female teachers, the difference is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Table 4 shows the *t*-value (1.468), which measures the standardized difference between the means. This value is relatively low, suggesting a weak difference in the perceptions based on gender.

Based on the findings presented in Table 4 regarding teachers' perception towards instructional supervision by principals, it was observed that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean perceptions of male and female teachers given that the level of significance ($p=0.145$) is greater than 0.05. As a result, the study failed to reject the null hypothesis, concluding that there was no statistically significant difference in the mean perceptions of male and female teachers regarding principals' instructional supervisory roles. The findings showed that gender was not a significant determinant of teachers' perception toward principals' instructional supervisory role in Igembe North sub-county. The study findings agree with Imran *et al.* [15] whose findings showed that while certain aspects of teaching, such as classroom management exhibited gender differences, many perceptions and instructional practices were not significantly influenced by the teacher's gender.

On the contrary, the findings differed from those of Singh [12] who revealed that teachers' gender played a significant role in influencing their perception of instructional supervision practices, female teachers perceived instructional supervision positively compared to male teachers. The findings disagree with Bada *et al.* [30] who found that the mean score of female teachers for each instructional leadership item was more than that of male teachers. Likewise, Bada *et al.* [30] identified a significant gender disparity in teachers' perception of principals instructional leadership practices. The study revealed that female teachers feel more empowered when working under a female principal, whereas male teachers perceive themselves having less influence in this situation.

Table 3. Teachers' mean ratings on supervision

Variable	Group statistics			
	Gender	N	Mean	St.D
Mean perception	Male	59	3.7538	0.62453
	Female	41	3.5726	0.58102

Table 4. *t*-test for exploring the relationship between gender and teachers' perceptions towards instructional supervision by principal

Variable	Levene test for equality of variances <i>t</i> -test for equality of means							
	Sig	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
							Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	0.932	1.468	98	0.145	0.18124	0.12345	-0.06373	0.42622
Equal variances not assumed			90.003	0.140	0.18124	0.12184	-0.06081	0.42330

4.4. The difference in mean perception when teachers are categorized by age

One way analysis of the variance was computed to explore teachers' perceptions towards principals' instructional supervisory role in relation to their age. The results in Table 5, portray F statistic, $F=0.556$ which is relatively low indicating that the variance in perceptions between different age groups is small compared to the variance within each age group. The p-value is greater than the alpha value 0.05 ($p=0.695 > \alpha=0.05$), indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in teachers' perceptions across different age groups.

The sum of squares within groups is 36.075 showing that majority of the variance in perceptions comes from individual differences within the same age groups rather than between different age groups. The sum of squares (36.920) confirms that the variation explained by age is very minimal. The investigation failed to reject the null hypothesis, concluding that there was no statistically significant difference in the mean perceptions of teachers towards principals' instructional supervisory role when teachers were categorized by age. The findings show that teachers' age was not a potent determinant of their perceptions towards principals' instructional supervisory role in Igembe North sub-county. The study findings allude to Sharma and Al-Sinawai [18] who established that teachers' age was not a potent predictor of their attitudes and beliefs towards supervision. Teachers' perceptions and beliefs towards supervision were independent of their age.

Table 5. ANOVA test for differences in the mean perceptions when teachers are categorized by age

Variable	Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	F	Sig.
Between groups	0.845	4	0.211	0.556	0.695
Within groups	36.075	95	0.380		
Total	36.920	99			

4.5. The difference in mean perception when teachers are categorized by education qualification

The researchers computed a one-way ANOVA to test the mean differences in the teachers' perceptions towards principals' instructional supervisory role in relation to their education qualifications. The study findings are presented in Table 6. The statistics in Table 6, show F statistics, $F=0.174$ which is quite low, implying that the variance between groups (teachers with different educational qualifications) is smaller compared to the variance within the groups. According to the study findings, the p-value is greater than the alpha value 0.05, ($p=0.951 > \alpha=0.05$). This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean scores of teachers' perceptions based on their educational qualifications. Based on the outcomes discussed, the study fails to reject the null hypothesis and culminates that there is no significant difference in the mean perceptions of teachers towards principals' instructional supervisory role when teachers were categorized by education qualification. The results reveal that perceptions of teachers towards instructional supervision by principals in Igembe North sub-county were not predicted by their education qualifications.

The findings negate Kipkoech *et al.* [11] whose study showed a substantial correlation between the educational background of instructors and their views toward supervision. These findings also differ from Sanchez *et al.* [39] whose findings revealed that instructors with a bachelor's degree perceived instructional supervision more positively than instructors who had a master's degree. Also, Gebremeskel and Ambaye [40] found that educators with a master's degree did not recognize the supervisory role of the principal while teachers with a bachelor's degree were more enthusiastic about the supervisory role of the principal and consulted the principal.

Table 6. ANOVA test for the mean difference when teachers are categorized by education qualification

Variable	Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	F	Sig.
Between groups	0.268	4	0.067	0.174	0.951
Within groups	36.652	95	0.386		
Total	36.920	99			

4.6. Discussion

The findings from this study provide a nuanced view of teachers' perceptions towards principals' instructional supervisory practices. Based on the findings, teachers generally have a positive perception towards principals' instructional practices. Most teachers find supervision beneficial for their professional development, teaching improvement, and student learning. The findings agree with previous study [41], [42]

who found that teachers had positive perceptions towards head teachers' instructional supervisory role. The findings further concurs with Aldaihani [19], whose results revealed that supervision positively impacts teachers' professional performance. Internationally, the role of the principal remains instrumental in enacting change that support the students and the overall growth of the teacher [43].

Majority of the teachers expressed satisfaction with classroom observation ($M=4.22$, $CV=0.25$) and felt that supervision contribute to their professional growth. Teachers believed that classroom observation enhances their professional development and supervision helps improve their teaching strategies. Nevertheless, the findings refute other studies [7], [21], [44] who revealed that teachers' perceptions towards instructional supervision were negative.

However, there are concerns about classroom observation causing anxiety ($M=2.68$), teachers disliking classroom observation ($M=2.63$, $SD=1.625$) and perception that supervision may sometimes be faulting finding. The findings agree with Alsahli [10] who reported that failure to plan classroom observation results in feelings of anxiety, stress, and nervousness. Teachers are anxious during classroom observation because principals are subjective, enforcing a top-bottom hierarchy. The findings further agree with Sharma and Al-Sinawai [18] who found that teachers perceived instructional supervision as a directive fault-finding mission. Additionally, teachers felt that supervision was more authoritative than democratic ($M=3.08$), this perception underlines a sense of hierarchy that may hinder open communication between principals and teachers. The findings are consistent with Cansoy *et al.* [45] who revealed that instructional supervision in Turkey was perceived as a hierarchical requirement. This might divert supervision from its intended purpose.

Based on gender, the mean rating of male teachers on supervision is (3.7538) compared to the mean rating of female teachers (3.5726). Considering that the mean rating for supervision is higher among male teachers compared to female teachers, this indicates that the majority male rating was higher than female rating. Although, the difference was not statistically significant. Gender imbalances exist when female leaders are rated by teachers who are not of the same gender. Similarly, the male teachers will be more likely to better rate their male leaders. Akala [46] concluded that the gender imbalance among teachers in Kenya stems from the persistent gap between policies and the actual lived experiences of women, which further reinforces inequalities.

Across all the three tests, the result show that gender ($p=0.145$), age ($p=0.695$) and education qualifications ($p=0.951$) do not significantly influence teachers' perceptions towards principals' instructional supervisory role ($p>0.05$). This implies that instructional supervision is perceived consistently across different teachers' groups reinforcing the idea that effective supervision should focus more on instructional quality, communication and professional development. The study findings agree with the study [18], [14] who found that supervisory beliefs of teachers were not influenced by their demographic features.

The study establishes that perceptions towards supervision are not shaped by gender, age, or educational qualifications, challenging assumptions that different teacher groups might have varied reactions to supervision. The research reveals a mixed response to supervision, while many teachers find it beneficial, a significant portion feel anxious or dislike lesson observation, indicating the need for a more teacher-friendly approach. By identifying both positive and negative perceptions, this study offers actionable insights for school principals to enhance supervision techniques, making them more supportive and developmental rather than authoritative or fault-finding. Overall, this study provides fresh perspectives on instructional supervision and its effects on teachers, making it valuable for shaping future instructional strategies.

The findings of this study carry important implications for policymakers and the broader community. The positive perceptions of supervision suggest that principals and administrators should maintain and enhance instructional supervision as it is perceived as an essential tool for improving teaching effectiveness. Therefore, the ministry should involve strengthening teacher mentorship programs and provide more professional development opportunities. In addition, the principals should create a more supportive and less intimidating environment for classroom observation via peer observation and non-judgmental feedback. Furthermore, the ministry should promote equitable leadership and supervision to minimize gender bias and a more inclusive instructional supervision tailored to the needs of teachers regardless of their demographic features.

However, the study has certain limitations. Potential bias in the findings may result from a small sample size. Based on the limitation, subsequent research should consider increasing the sample size and explore alternative statistical approaches such as regression analysis to better assess the effect of gender, age, and education qualification on teachers' perceptions towards principals' instructional supervisory role. Moreover, a study could be conducted to evaluate other factors such as leadership style, school culture, and teachers' professional needs which may have significant impact on perceptions of supervision. Future research could be conducted to assess teacher job satisfaction which is a major factor which influence perceptions of teachers towards instructional supervision.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that while instructional supervision is largely seen as constructive and supportive of teacher development ($M=3.68$), efforts should be made to minimize anxiety and ensure that supervision is perceived as a collaborative and growth-oriented process rather than a means of control. A democratic and developmental supervision model can enhance teachers' confidence, reduce anxiety, and foster a more positive attitude towards classroom observation. Instructional supervision when conducted fairly and supportively, significantly contribute to professional development of teachers. The study recommended that educational policymakers to develop training for supervisors to equip them with democratic skills in instructional supervision, empathetic communication and constructive feedback to reduce perceptions of supervision as authoritative or fault-finding. Also, they should implement strategies that minimize stress associated with classroom observation, such as pre-observation meetings or collaborative goal setting. Future research should employ qualitative methods to investigate why teachers associate classroom observation with anxiety or perceive supervision as fault-finding.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

This journal uses the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) to recognize individual author contributions, reduce authorship disputes, and facilitate collaboration.

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C : **C**onceptualization

M : **M**ethodology

So : **S**oftware

Va : **V**alidation

Fo : **F**ormal analysis

I : **I**nvestigation

R : **R**esources

D : **D**ata Curation

O : **O** Writing - **O**riginal Draft

E : **E** Writing - Review & **E**editing

Vi : **V**isualization

Su : **S**upervision

P : **P**roject administration

Fu : **F**unding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

We have obtained informed consent from all participants included in this study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The research related to human use has been complied with all the relevant national regulations and institutional policies in accordance with the tenets of the Helsinki Declaration and has been approved by the Board of Postgraduates, University of Embu via an approval letter to proceed with obtaining authorization for data collection from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). A research permit was secured from the Ministry of Education, National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation, and an authorization letter license number: NACOSTI/P/24/32468. The

researcher embarked on a rigorous process of obtaining authorization from the State Department of Early Learning, and Basic Education from the County Director of Education, Meru County. An authorization letter was issued with license number: MRU/C/EDU/11/1/305. Permission was sought from the principals of the sampled schools through formal letters prior distribution of the surveys. The consent of the participants was obtained by filling out consent forms to ensure participation was voluntary. Pseudonyms were used to give participants imaginary identities to ensure the principle of confidentiality and anonymity was upheld.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author [BKK], upon reasonable request.





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