

## Original Research

# Correlation Between Teachers' Years of Service Experience and Legal Literacy in Secondary Schools in Bobasi Sub-County, Kenya

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### ABSTRACT

Legal literacy is a critical competency for teachers, which enables them to navigate complex school environments where legal obligations and risks frequently arise. Teachers often make decisions that affect the constitutional liberties of students, colleagues, and the broader school community. Despite this responsibility, various studies have shown that many teachers operate without formal legal training. This study investigated how gender, education level, and in-service experience influence legal literacy among secondary school teachers in Bobasi Sub-County, Kenya. A descriptive survey using a correlational research design was adopted. The target population included 395 secondary school teachers. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Key findings show that gender has a statistically significant but weak influence on legal literacy, accounting for only 1.6% of the variance. Education level has a moderate influence, explaining 4.7% of the variance. In-service experience emerged as the strongest predictor, accounting for 31.2% of the variance in legal literacy. These findings suggest that practical experience is a key driver of legal knowledge, while gender plays a minor role. The study recommends integrating legal literacy into pre-service teacher training curricula and strengthening in-service professional development programs. Educational stakeholders should develop targeted legal education initiatives to bridge knowledge gaps and improve legal competency among teachers. Future research should explore additional factors such as access to legal resources, socioeconomic status, and cultural beliefs to gain a more comprehensive understanding of disparities in legal literacy.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Legal literacy refers to the ability to understand, interpret, and apply legal principles relevant to one's professional responsibilities. In the teaching profession, legal literacy is particularly critical because teachers operate within complex legal frameworks that govern student rights, professional conduct, institutional accountability, and policy implementation. Decisions relating to learner discipline, safeguarding, assessment practices, and welfare management often carry legal implications, requiring teachers to make

judgments that are not only pedagogically sound but also legally defensible (Omondi, J., 2018; Smith & Jones, 2020). Inadequate legal awareness may therefore expose teachers to litigation, professional sanctions, and violations of learners' rights.

In Kenya, the education sector is governed by a comprehensive legal framework that includes the Constitution of Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2010), the Basic Education Act (Republic of Kenya, 2013), the Children Act (Republic of Kenya, 2001), and the Teachers Service Commission Act (Republic of Kenya, 2012). These statutes clearly outline the rights of learners, the duties of teachers, and the standards of professional conduct expected within educational institutions. Despite this extensive legal infrastructure, many teachers enter the profession with limited practical understanding of education law, increasing the risk of unintentional legal violations and professional misconduct (Mwangi, 2020). This challenge is particularly evident in sub-counties such as Bobasi, where diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts frequently give rise to legally sensitive situations involving discipline, child protection, equity, and school governance.

A major factor contributing to this gap in teachers' legal literacy is the limited emphasis placed on education law in pre-service teacher training at universities and colleges. In many Kenyan teacher education programs, legal studies are either offered as optional units or omitted entirely, with greater emphasis placed on pedagogy, subject content, and classroom management (Omondi, P., 2018). Consequently, teachers graduate without systematic exposure to education law, relying instead on informal learning during in-service practice to navigate legal challenges. This lack of structured legal training hampers the rigorous preparation of teachers for the legal realities of contemporary schooling and undermines their ability to uphold learners' rights and professional standards effectively. Addressing this curricular gap is therefore essential for strengthening legal literacy and promoting legally compliant educational practice.

Previous studies indicate that teachers' legal literacy does not develop in isolation but is shaped by a combination of personal and professional characteristics. Factors such as the gender of the teacher, level of formal education, and years of service experience have been shown to influence how teachers understand and apply legal principles in school settings. Research suggests that teachers with higher academic qualifications and longer professional experience are more likely to demonstrate stronger awareness of students' rights, employment laws, and institutional regulations, largely due to increased exposure to policy documents, administrative responsibilities, and professional learning opportunities (Balch et al, 2008). However, findings on the influence of gender remain inconsistent, with most studies indicating that its effect is minimal compared to education and experience.

Despite growing international scholarship on teachers' legal literacy, empirical evidence within the Kenyan context remains limited and fragmented. Most existing studies are either descriptive or conducted in non-Kenyan settings, making it difficult to draw context-specific conclusions that reflect the legal and institutional realities of Kenyan secondary schools. As a result, teacher education and professional development programs often lack evidence-based guidance on how best to address legal literacy gaps among educators (Mwangi, 2020). This study, therefore, sought to examine how gender, level of education, and years of service relate to legal literacy among secondary school teachers in Bobasi Sub-County, Kenya, with the aim of generating locally grounded evidence to inform teacher training and continuous professional development policies.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of school-related litigations reflects the development of education law as an independent field influenced by societal transformations, legal precedents, and policy reforms. Initially, these litigations primarily addressed access to education, targeting systemic inequities and exclusionary practices (Jackson, 2025). A pivotal example is the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education* of 1954, in which the U.S. Supreme Court declared racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional, marking a critical moment in the fight for educational equity (Preston et al., 2021). Studies such as those discussing *Brown v. Board of Education* of 1954 largely rely on legal analysis of court rulings and policy evolution, emphasizing landmark judgments and constitutional interpretations (Butlin, 2024). While these approaches are useful for understanding the evolution of education law, they offer limited insight into how legal knowledge is internalized, applied, or experienced by educators, especially teachers and teacher trainees.

As education systems evolved, the scope of school-related litigations expanded to encompass broader issues. Cases began to address student rights, such as freedom of expression and protection against discrimination, alongside matters of teacher tenure and employment security (Decker, 2024). Bradley et al. (2019) observed a growing emphasis on special education within contemporary educational discourse, with litigations advocating for the rights of students with disabilities and the implementation of inclusive practices in line with laws like the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Kumar & Hamid, 2024).

Additionally, administrative accountability has emerged as a critical area, with lawsuits often challenging school policies, governance practices, and budget allocations. These developments underscore

how school-related litigations have shaped and been shaped by the dynamic interplay between legal frameworks, educational policies, and societal values (Littleton, 2008).

The origins of school-related litigations in Kenya can be traced to the evolution of the education system and the increasing recognition of legal rights within educational institutions. These litigations often arise at the intersection of educational policy implementation, teacher responsibilities, and the protection of students' rights. Legal disputes typically focus on issues such as student discipline, employment terms of teachers, discrimination, or failure to meet mandated educational standards. In many instances, these cases underscore the critical need for legal literacy among educators and institutional administrators (Perry-Haza & Tai-Waibeil, 2020).

Although various studies in Kenya acknowledge the rise of school-related litigations, most of them often treat legal challenges in education in a generalized national context, without situating them within teacher training contexts. Moreover, little attention is given to how Kenya's unique legal instruments such as the Basic Education Act (Republic of Kenya, 2013), Children Act (Republic of Kenya, 2001), and Teachers Service Commission Act (Republic of Kenya, 2012) are interpreted and internalized at the pre-service teacher level. Teacher training colleges and universities in Kenya play a critical role in preparing educators for the demands of the classroom. However, there is growing concern that the current teacher training curriculum does not adequately address educational law, leaving teacher trainees underprepared to navigate legal issues in their professional practice. While courses on pedagogy, curriculum development, and classroom management are prioritized, legal aspects such as students' rights, teacher responsibilities, and institutional governance are often underemphasized (Omondi, J., 2018).

A review of teacher training curricula in Kenyan universities reveals that educational law is either minimally covered or entirely absent in many programs. Most Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programs allocate few or no credit hours to modules that focus on legal frameworks governing education. This omission is significant given the increasing prevalence of school-related litigations, including cases of corporal punishment, discrimination, and teacher misconduct (Republic of Kenya, 2013).

For instance, teacher trainees may not be well-versed in key legal documents such as the Children Act (Republic of Kenya, 2001), the Teachers Service Commission Act (Republic of Kenya, 2012), or the Persons with Disabilities Act (Republic of Kenya, 2003), which outline critical aspects of education law. As a result, newly trained teachers often enter the profession with limited knowledge of their legal obligations and the rights of their students, leaving them vulnerable to lawsuits and professional misconduct allegations (Mwangi, 2020).

Empirical evidence on school-related litigations in Kenya largely focuses on reported court cases, policy documents, or anecdotal accounts of disputes involving teachers and schools (Mwangi, 2020). While these sources highlight the existence of the problem, they do not provide data on why such litigations persist, particularly from the perspective of teacher preparation. Furthermore, there is scant empirical data on: Teacher trainees' awareness of key education laws, the extent to which legal content is taught in B.Ed. programs, the relationship between legal knowledge gaps and vulnerability to litigation. Most studies assume that curriculum omissions directly lead to legal ignorance without systematically measuring this relationship. This study seeks to generate primary data to bridge this gap and provide evidence-based recommendations for curriculum reform.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is informed by the principles of adult learning theory, which emphasizes that adults learn best when the knowledge acquired is relevant to their professional roles and grounded in real-life experiences. In the educational setting, legal literacy functions not merely as theoretical knowledge but as a practical skillset that enables teachers to make informed decisions in areas such as student discipline, rights enforcement, and policy compliance. Recent studies affirm that experiential learning environments are essential in fostering meaningful knowledge acquisition among professionals (Moswela, 2008).

The framework for this study posits that legal literacy among teachers is shaped by a combination of demographic and professional characteristics. Specifically, the independent variables examined are gender, education level, and in-service experience, each of which is hypothesized to influence the dependent variable, legal literacy, in different ways.

Gender may influence the type and frequency of exposure to legal content through training or lived professional experiences. Education level denotes the extent of formal academic preparation, which may or may not include education law. Meanwhile, in-service experience represents the accumulation of practical exposure to legal issues within schools such as handling disciplinary cases, interpreting institutional policies, and participating in professional development sessions (Mwangi, 2022).

Among these factors, in-service experience is theorized to be the most influential due to its grounding in contextual, ongoing engagement with legal matters. Unlike academic education, which often

lacks structured legal components, and gender, which has minimal direct impact, sustained professional practice provides opportunities for reflective learning and applied legal reasoning.

This theoretical framework not only explains observed differences in teachers' legal knowledge but also serves as a basis for proposing reforms in teacher training and professional development initiatives aimed at improving legal literacy in the education sector.

#### 4. METHOD

The study employed a cross-sectional survey that is correlational in nature and phenomenological research as the most suitable research designs to test the three research hypotheses. A census of 395 secondary school teachers were examined in secondary school teachers in Bobasi Sub-County. The data were collected using structured questionnaires, which consisted of three main sections: demographic data (gender, highest education, and duration of in-service training), training skills with three items, and literacy level in education law consisting of eight items. Training skills use yes/no answers, while the literacy level in education law utilized a five-point level of awareness Likert scale. The instrument was developed, with an average Cronbach alpha of 0.756, which was above the threshold of 0.7, making it reliable for collecting data. Validity of the instrument was also ascertained through aligning the content with theoretical constructs, as well as face validity through expert guides.

The data were coded into the Statistical Package of Social Science version 27, where both descriptive and inferential data were analyzed. The descriptive statistics consisted of frequencies, percentage frequencies, mean, and standard deviation. Pearson correlation and simple regression analysis were used as inferential statistics in examining the interrelationship and testing hypotheses, respectively. These were presented using tabulae format.

#### 5. RESULTS

##### 5.1. Demographic information

Gender, highest education level, and duration of in-service were the key demographic variables collected for the study. The results for these variables are presented in [Tables 1](#), [Table 2](#), and [Table 3](#).

**Table 1. Gender of the Respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	210	53.2	53.2	53.2
	Female	185	46.8	46.8	100.0
	Total	395	100.0	100.0	

The results indicate that there were slightly more male respondents, with 210 (53.2%), compared to 185 (46.8%) female respondents. This suggests that while there is still a small gender gap, the difference between male and female participation is gradually narrowing.

**Table 2. Highest Education Level**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Masters	36	9.1	9.1	9.1
	Bachelor	359	90.9	90.9	100.0
	Total	395	100.0	100.0	

The results in the table show that the majority of respondents, 359 (90.9%), hold a bachelor's degree. In contrast, only 36 (9.1%) teachers possess a master's degree. This reflects a high level of educational attainment within the teaching profession.

**Table 3. Duration for in-Service**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 3 years	109	27.6	27.6	27.6
	3-10 years	249	63.0	63.0	90.6
	More than 10 years	37	9.4	9.4	100.0
	Total	395	100.0	100.0	

The duration of in-service shows that the majority of respondents, 249 (63.0%), have been teaching for between 3 and 10 years. A smaller group, 109 (27.6%), have been in the profession for less than 3 years, while 37 (9.4%) respondents have over 10 years of experience in teaching.

##### 5.2. Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics were used to examine the training skills and literacy level in education law. The results were presented in [Tables 4](#) and [5](#), respectively.

**Table 4. Training Skills**

Literacy Skills	Yes	No
I have attended education law during in-services	0(0.0%)	383(100%)
I have knowledge on what tort and contract law	21(5.5%)	362(94.5%)
I have been involved in laws suit during my TSC job	0(0.0%)	383(100%)

The results in [Table 4](#) indicate that none of the teachers had attended any formal education law training. Additionally, none of the respondents reported being involved in a lawsuit during their tenure with the Teachers Service Commission (TSC). However, a small group, 21 (5.5%) of the respondents, reported having some knowledge of tort and contract law, while the majority, 362 (94.5%), were unfamiliar with these common legal terms used in education law. This suggests that while teachers lack formal training in education law, they may acquire some legal knowledge through informal channels, such as discussions with colleagues or other sources, rather than through structured educational programs.

**Table 5. Literacy Level in Educational Law**

Literacy Level	NA	LA	MA	HA	VHA	Mean	SD
I am aware that students have the right to access quality education.	19(5.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	23(6.0%)	341(89.0%)	4.94	0.24
I know students have the right to be treated equally without discrimination on any grounds, including gender, race, or disability.	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	64(16.7%)	298(77.8%)	21(5.5%)	3.79	0.68
I understand that students have the right to participate freely in decision-making processes that affect their education subject to reasonable limitations.	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	64(16.7%)	298(77.8%)	21(5.5%)	3.89	0.46
I have knowledge on the students' right to participate in their cultural activities and practices.	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	159(41.5%)	205(53.5%)	19(5.0%)	3.64	0.58
I know that students have the right to free from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation.	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	19(5.0%)	328(85.6%)	36(9.4%)	4.04	0.38
I am aware that students have the right to privacy, including in their communications and personal matters.	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	345(90.1%)	38(9.9%)	4.10	0.30
I know that every teacher has a right to fair labor practices as enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya.	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	147(38.4%)	236(61.6%)	4.62	0.49
I have knowledge students are entitled to respect for their dignity, which prohibits degrading treatment.	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	347(90.6%)	36(9.4%)	4.09	0.29
<b>Overall mean</b>						<b>4.14</b>	<b>0.27</b>

Legal literacy was assessed based on the respondents' awareness levels, using a scale where 1 represents "Not Aware" (NA), 2 represents "Low Awareness" (LA), 3 represents "Moderate Awareness" (MA), 4 represents "High Awareness" (HA), and 5 represents "Very High Awareness" (VHA), as summarized in [Table 5](#). According to the findings, a significant proportion of respondents, 341 (89.0%), demonstrated very high awareness of the students' right to access quality education, with a mean score of 4.94 and a standard deviation of 0.24. This suggests that most teachers are highly informed about this fundamental student right.

Additionally, 298 (77.8%) of the respondents exhibited high awareness of students' right to be treated equally, regardless of gender, race, or disability, with a mean score of 3.79 and a standard deviation of 0.68. Similarly, 298 (77.8%) respondents also showed a high level of understanding regarding students' right to participate freely in decision-making processes related to their education, subject to reasonable limitations, with a mean score of 3.89 and a standard deviation of 0.46. These results highlight that while awareness is generally high, there is room for improvement in specific areas.

Furthermore, 205 (53.5%) respondents reported a high level of knowledge about students' right to engage in cultural activities and practices. A strong majority of 328 (85.6%) were aware that students have the right to be free from all forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, with a mean score of 4.04 and a standard deviation of 0.38. Likewise, 345 (90.1%) respondents were aware of students' right to privacy, including their communications and personal matters, with a mean score of 4.10 and a standard deviation of 0.30. The study also found that 236 (61.6%) respondents had very high awareness that teachers are entitled to fair labor practices as enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya, with a mean score of 4.62 and a standard deviation of 0.49. Finally, 347 (90.6%) respondents exhibited high awareness of students' entitlement to respect for their dignity, which prohibits degrading treatment, with a mean score of 4.09 and a standard deviation of 0.29. Overall, the findings suggest that there is a strong awareness among respondents about

students' rights and teacher rights, although specific areas, such as cultural participation, could benefit from further emphasis in legal literacy initiatives, with an overall mean of 4.14 and a standard deviation of 0.27.

### 5.3. Inferential statistics

Pearson correlation analysis and simple regression analysis were used to examine the objectives. The Pearson correlation coefficient was essential for examining the relationship between variables. On the other hand, the simple regression was to examine the objective using 5% significance level.

**Table 6. Pearson Correlation**

		Gender of the Respondents	Highest Education Level	Duration for in-Service	Legal Literacy
Gender of the Respondents	Pearson Correlation	1	-.038	-.055	.126*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.458	.284	.014
	N	383	383	383	383
Highest Education Level	Pearson Correlation	-.038	1	.423**	.217**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.458		.000	.000
	N	383	383	383	383
Duration for in-Service	Pearson Correlation	-.055	.423**	1	.558**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.284	.000		.000
	N	383	383	383	383
Legal Literacy	Pearson Correlation	.126*	.217**	.558**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	.000	.000	
	N	383	383	383	383

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation analysis presented in Table 6 explores the relationships between the Gender of the Respondents, the Highest Education Level, the Duration of In-Service, and Legal Literacy. Gender shows a weak positive correlation with Legal Literacy ( $r=0.126$ ,  $p=0.014$ ), which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level, suggesting a slight but meaningful association between gender and Legal Literacy. However, Gender exhibits weak, negative, and non-significant correlations with both Highest Education Level ( $r = -0.038$ ,  $p = 0.458$ ) and Duration for In-Service ( $r = -0.055$ ,  $p = 0.284$ ), indicating no significant relationship between gender and these variables.

The analysis further reveals a moderate positive correlation between Highest Education Level and Duration for In-Service ( $r = 0.423$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), which is statistically significant, implying that individuals with higher education levels tend to have longer service durations. Highest Education Level also has a weak but significant positive correlation with Legal Literacy ( $r = 0.217$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that higher education levels are modestly associated with higher Legal Literacy. Conversely, the correlation between the Highest Education Level and Gender is weak and not significant, reflecting a limited association between educational attainment and gender differences.

Duration for In-Service displays a strong positive and significant correlation with Legal Literacy ( $r = 0.558$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that individuals with longer service durations are likely to score higher in Legal Literacy. The relationship between Duration for In-Service and Highest Education Level is also significant and moderate, reinforcing the connection between education and experience. However, Duration for In-Service shows a weak and non-significant correlation with Gender, suggesting that gender does not meaningfully influence service duration.

In conclusion, the analysis highlights that Gender has a small but significant influence on Legal Literacy, while Highest Education Level and Duration for In-Service demonstrate significant relationships with Legal Literacy and with each other. These findings suggest that education and experience play a more substantial role in shaping Legal Literacy outcomes than gender. The weak correlations in some areas, however, indicate that the practical implications of these relationships may be limited.

***H<sub>01</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between gender and legal literacy among secondary school teachers in Bobasi Sub-County.***

The first hypothesis above was tested using simple linear regression analysis, which examines the relationship between the Gender of the Respondents (independent variable) and Legal Literacy (dependent variable). The results are summarized in Tables 7, Table 8, and Table 9.

**Table 7. Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.126 <sup>a</sup>	0.016	0.013	0.265

a. Predictors: (Constant), Gender of the Respondents

The Model Summary in Table 7 shows an R value of 0.126, indicating a weak positive relationship between gender and legal literacy. The  $R^2$  value is 0.016, meaning that only 1.6% of the variance in legal literacy is explained by gender. The adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.013 suggests a minimal adjustment for the model's degrees of freedom, confirming the weak explanatory power. The standard error of the estimate is 0.265, representing the average distance between observed and predicted legal literacy scores.

**Table 8. ANOVA**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	0.430	1	0.430	6.123	.014 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	26.767	381	0.070		
Total	27.197	382			

a. Dependent Variable: Legal literacy

b. Predictors: (Constant), Gender of the Respondents

The Coefficient Table 8 provides details on the regression equation. The constant (intercept) is 4.039, indicating the predicted legal literacy score for individuals when gender is not considered. The unstandardized coefficient for gender is 0.067, meaning that a one-unit change in the gender variable (moving from the female gender category to the male) is associated with a 0.067 increase in legal literacy score. The standardized coefficient ( $\beta=0.126$ ) confirms the weak effect size. The t-statistic for the gender coefficient is 2.474, with a p-value of 0.014, indicating that gender significantly predicts legal literacy at the 0.05 level.

**Table 9. Coefficient**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	4.039	0.042		95.362	0.000
Gender of the Respondents	.067	0.027	0.126	2.474	0.014

a. Dependent Variable: Legal literacy

The Coefficient Table 9 provides details on the regression equation. The constant (intercept) is 4.039, indicating the predicted legal literacy score for individuals when gender is not considered. The unstandardized coefficient for gender is 0.067, meaning that a one-unit change in the gender variable, moving from the male gender category to female, is associated with a 0.067 increase in legal literacy score. The standardized coefficient ( $\beta=0.126$ ) confirms the weak effect size. The t-statistic for the gender coefficient is 2.474, with a p-value of 0.014, indicating that gender significantly predicts legal literacy at the 0.05 level. The null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative accepted. This implied that gender had a significant positive relationship with legal literacy among the secondary school teachers in Bobasi Sub-County.

The analysis indicates that gender has a statistically significant but weak relationship with legal literacy. While the regression model is significant, it explains only a small portion (1.6%) of the variance in legal literacy, suggesting that other factors not included in the model likely play a more substantial role. The weak  $\beta$ -value underscores the limited practical significance of gender as a predictor of legal literacy. These findings suggest that efforts to improve legal literacy should focus on additional predictors beyond gender to achieve a more comprehensive understanding and impactful interventions.

***H<sub>02</sub>: There is no statistically significant relationship between education level and legal literacy among secondary school teachers in Bobasi Sub-County.***

The second hypothesis above was tested using simple linear regression analysis to explore the relationship between the Highest Education Level and Legal Literacy. The results, as presented in Tables 10, Table 11, and Table 12, are discussed below.

**Table 10. Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.217 <sup>a</sup>	0.047	0.045	0.261

a. Predictors: (Constant), Highest Education Level

Table 10 shows an R-value of 0.217, indicating a weak but positive correlation between education level and legal literacy. The  $R^2$  value of 0.047 suggests that 4.7% of the variance in legal literacy is explained by education level. The adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.045 confirms that the explanatory power of the model remains modest even after accounting for the degrees of freedom. The standard error of the estimate is 0.261, reflecting the average deviation of observed legal literacy scores from the predicted scores.

**Table 11. ANOVA**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	1.285	1	1.285	18.897	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	25.912	381	0.068		
	Total	27.197	382			

a. Dependent Variable: Legal literacy

b. Predictors: (Constant), Highest Education Level

Table 11 evaluates the overall significance of the regression model. The regression sum of squares (1.285) compared to the residual sum of squares (25.912) yields an F-statistic of 18.897 with a p-value of 0.000. Since  $p < 0.01$ , the model is statistically significant, indicating that education level is a significant predictor of legal literacy.

**Table 12. Coefficient**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	4.558	0.097		46.772	0.000
	Highest Education Level	0.147	0.034	0.217	4.347	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Legal Literacy

Table 12 provides the details of the regression equation. The constant (intercept) is 4.558, indicating the predicted legal literacy score for individuals with the lowest education level (baseline). The unstandardized coefficient for Highest Education Level is 0.147, meaning that a one-unit increase in education level is associated with a 0.147-point increase in legal literacy score. The standardized coefficient ( $\beta = 0.217$ ) highlights a weak to moderate effect size. The t-statistic for the coefficient is 4.347, with a p-value of 0.000, confirming that education level significantly predicts legal literacy. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis accepted. This implied that education level had a statistically significant positive relationship with legal literacy among secondary school teachers in Bobasi Sub-County.

The regression analysis demonstrates that the Highest Education Level is a statistically significant predictor of Legal Literacy. However, the explanatory power of the model is limited, as education level accounts for only 4.7% of the variance in legal literacy. While the relationship is weak to moderate, it underscores the importance of education in shaping legal literacy levels. These findings suggest that policies or programs aimed at enhancing legal literacy could benefit from targeting individuals with lower education levels. To improve the model's predictive power, future research should consider incorporating additional variables, such as access to legal resources, socioeconomic status, or professional experience, which may also influence legal literacy.

**H<sub>03</sub>: There is no statistically significant influence of in-service experience on legal literacy among secondary school teachers in Bobasi Sub-County.**

The final hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression analysis, which examines the relationship between Duration for In-Service (independent variable) and Legal Literacy (dependent variable). The results, as summarized in Table 13, Table 14, and Table 15, are discussed below.

**Table 13. Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.558 <sup>a</sup>	0.312	0.310	0.222

a. Predictors: (Constant), Duration for in-Service

Table 13 shows an R-value of 0.558, indicating a strong positive relationship between duration for in-service and legal literacy. The  $R^2$  value of 0.312 suggests that 31.2% of the variance in legal literacy is explained by the duration of in-service. The adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.310, which is nearly identical to  $R^2$ , confirms the model's robustness in explaining this variance. The standard error of the estimate is 0.222, reflecting the typical deviation of observed legal literacy scores from the predicted values.

**Table 14. ANOVA**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	8.483	1	8.483	172.692	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	18.715	381	0.049		
	Total	27.197	382			

a. Dependent Variable: Legal Literacy

b. Predictors: (Constant), Duration for in-Service

Table 14 evaluates the overall significance of the regression model. The regression sum of squares (8.483) compared to the residual sum of squares (18.715) yields an FFF-statistic of 172.692, with a p-value of 0.000. Since  $p < 0.01$ , the model is statistically significant, indicating that duration for in-service significantly predicts legal literacy.

**Table 15. Coefficient**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	3.684	0.036	101.171	0.000
	Duration for in-Service	0.231	0.018	13.141	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Legal Literacy

Table 15 provides the details of the regression equation. The constant (intercept) is 3.684, which represents the predicted legal literacy score when the duration of in-service is zero. The unstandardized coefficient for Duration for In-Service is 0.231, meaning that for every additional unit of In-Service Experience, legal literacy scores increase by 0.231 points. The standardized coefficient ( $\beta=0.558$ ) highlights a strong effect size. The t-statistic for the coefficient is 13.141, with a p-value of 0.000, further confirming the statistical significance of the predictor. The null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. This implied that the duration for in-service had a statistically significant positive relationship with legal literacy among secondary school teachers in Bobasi Sub-County.

The regression analysis demonstrates a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between Duration for In-Service and Legal Literacy. The model explains a substantial portion (31.2%) of the variance in legal literacy, suggesting that In-Service Experience is an important determinant of legal literacy levels. These findings imply that individuals with longer In-service experiences are more likely to have higher legal literacy. This underscores the value of work experience in developing legal knowledge and competence. To further enhance legal literacy, organizations may consider offering targeted training and professional development programs during in-service periods. Future studies could examine additional factors, such as the quality of in-service training or the nature of job responsibilities, to build on these findings.

## 6. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that demographic factors such as gender have a statistically significant but practically negligible influence on teachers' legal literacy. This outcome suggests that legal knowledge is not inherently shaped by biological or social gender differences but rather by access to learning opportunities and professional exposure. The weak influence of gender may be attributed to the standardized nature of teacher training and professional expectations in Kenya, where both male and female teachers operate under the same legal frameworks, institutional regulations, and policy environments. This finding aligns with adult learning theory, which emphasizes relevance and experience over demographic characteristics as key determinants of meaningful learning. Similar conclusions have been reported in previous studies, which found gender to be a weak or inconsistent predictor of legal or professional knowledge among educators (Ghazali & Nordin, 2019; Ozkaya & Colak, 2024; Zeivots et al., 2024; Ward-Seidel et al., 2024).

The modest influence of education level on legal literacy can be explained by the limited emphasis placed on education law within pre-service teacher education programs. While higher academic qualifications may enhance general analytical and interpretive skills, they do not necessarily translate into applied legal competence when legal content is absent or superficially addressed in the curriculum (Wolski, 2002). This explains why teachers with higher education levels demonstrate only slightly higher legal literacy compared to their counterparts. The finding is consistent with earlier studies that argue that formal education alone is insufficient for developing applied legal knowledge unless legal literacy is intentionally embedded within training programs (Blackham, 2024; Rollerson, 2021; Xu & An, 2024). Therefore, while education contributes to legal awareness, its impact remains constrained by curricular gaps in educational law.

In contrast, in-service experience emerged as the most significant predictor of legal literacy, highlighting the central role of experiential learning in the acquisition of legal knowledge. Teachers with longer service duration are more likely to encounter legally sensitive situations such as disciplinary proceedings, parental disputes, child protection cases, and institutional accountability processes. These real-world experiences create opportunities for reflective learning, problem-solving, and contextual application of legal principles, as posited by adult learning and experiential learning theories. This finding strongly supports previous research that emphasizes professional practice as a critical pathway through which teachers develop

practical legal competence (Kumar & Hamid, 2025). Unlike formal education, in-service experience provides continuous, context-driven exposure that deepens understanding and reinforces learning over time.

A particularly important and unique finding of this study is the contradiction between teachers' high awareness of fundamental rights and their limited formal legal training. While most teachers demonstrated strong awareness of basic learner and teacher rights, none had received structured education law training during in-service programs. This suggests that much of their legal knowledge is acquired informally through experience, peer discussions, or institutional directives rather than systematic instruction (Özyildirim et al., 2025; Schimmel & Militelo, 2025; Tannenbaum et al., 2025). Such reliance on informal learning may explain inconsistencies in legal understanding and expose teachers to significant legal risks, especially when handling complex cases that require precise legal interpretation. This finding extends existing literature by demonstrating that awareness alone does not equate to legal competence, particularly in the absence of formal legal education.

The implications of these findings for learning and professional development are significant. First, they highlight the need to reconceptualize legal literacy as a core professional competency rather than an incidental outcome of teaching experience. Second, they underscore the importance of embedding structured legal education within both pre-service and in-service teacher training programs. Without deliberate instructional interventions, teachers will continue to rely on trial-and-error learning, which may lead to legal violations, professional vulnerability, and compromised learner rights (Smith & Junes, 2020). Future learning frameworks should therefore integrate education law as a standalone component, supported by practical case-based learning approaches that reflect the legal realities of school environments.

Overall, the findings of this study are consistent with international research that emphasizes the role of professional experience and workplace exposure in enhancing teachers' legal literacy (Law et al., 2025; Morgan et al., 2022; Ozkaya & Çolak, 2024). Similar studies conducted in the United States and Europe have shown that teachers' understanding of education law tends to improve through practical engagement with school policies, disciplinary procedures, and legal disputes rather than through demographic characteristics such as age or gender, or purely academic qualifications (Schimmel & Militello, 2021). However, this study extends existing knowledge by providing empirical evidence from the Kenyan context, where limited emphasis is placed on formal legal training during pre-service teacher education. Unlike some studies that attribute legal competence to academic background or length of formal education (Davies, 2018; Ia & Ye, 2020; Wamala, 2016), the present findings demonstrate that in-service experience is the most significant determinant of teachers' legal literacy. This divergence may be explained by the contextual reality in Kenya, where teachers often encounter legal issues directly in school settings without adequate prior training, thereby acquiring legal knowledge informally through practice. Consequently, these findings underscore the need for policy reforms that prioritize structured, continuous, and practice-oriented legal literacy programs for teachers.

## 7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between gender, level of education, and in-service experience with legal literacy among secondary school teachers in Bobasi Sub-County, Kenya. With respect to the first objective, the findings demonstrate that gender has a statistically significant but practically negligible influence on teachers' legal literacy. Although minor differences exist, gender does not meaningfully determine teachers' legal knowledge, suggesting that legal literacy is not inherently shaped by demographic characteristics but by learning opportunities and professional exposure.

Regarding the second objective, the study concludes that education level plays a supportive but limited role in shaping teachers' legal literacy. While higher academic qualifications are associated with slightly improved legal awareness, formal education alone does not adequately equip teachers with applied legal knowledge. This outcome points to gaps within pre-service teacher education programs, where education law is either insufficiently covered or embedded superficially within other subjects, limiting its impact on professional legal competence.

In relation to the third objective, the study establishes that in-service experience is the most significant determinant of legal literacy among secondary school teachers. Teachers with longer professional experience demonstrated substantially higher levels of legal knowledge, reflecting the influence of experiential learning, continuous professional engagement, and repeated exposure to legally sensitive situations within school environments. This finding underscores the central role of practical experience in developing applied legal competence.

Overall, the study concludes that legal literacy among secondary school teachers in Bobasi Sub-County is shaped primarily by professional experience rather than demographic factors or formal academic qualifications. The findings reveal systemic gaps in both pre-service and in-service legal training,

highlighting the need for deliberate reforms in teacher education. Strengthening legal education during teacher training and embedding structured legal literacy programs within in-service professional development are therefore essential for empowering teachers to make legally informed decisions, reduce professional risk, and effectively uphold learners' rights.

## 7.2 Recommendations

To enhance legal literacy among secondary school teachers, this study recommends integrating education law as a compulsory unit in pre-service teacher training programs, ensuring graduates understand learners' rights and professional responsibilities. For serving teachers, regular in-service training with practical case studies should be implemented by the Ministry of Education and the Teachers Service Commission. Development of accessible resources, including handbooks, digital modules, and online platforms, will support continuous learning. Legal literacy should also be recognized as a core professional competency within national policies and teacher standards. Finally, future research should examine institutional, socioeconomic, and leadership factors influencing legal literacy, using mixed-methods approaches to inform evidence-based interventions.

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There was no conflict of interest for this research.

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## ETHICAL STATEMENT

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI).

## AI USE STATEMENT

No AI was used in the research and writing of the manuscript.

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