

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-EFFICACY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN KISWAHILI LANGUAGE SKILLS IN NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Secondary school students' academic achievement in Kiswahili language in Nakuru County has been low over the years. This unsatisfactory achievement could be due to the students' self-efficacy given that it has been cited as a significant predictor of performance. This paper examined the relationship between self-efficacy and secondary school students' academic achievement in Kiswahili language skills in Nakuru County. It was grounded on the Social Cognitive and Krashen's Monitor Model theories and adopted the correlational research design. Purposive, proportionate and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 405 students who participated in the study. Data was collected using Students' Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SSEQ), and Kiswahili Language Skills Achievement Test (KLSAT). The face and content validity of the two instruments were checked through expert judgement. The reliability of SSEQ and KLSAT were estimated using the Cronbach Alpha and Kuder Richardson formulae and found to be 0.812 and 0.756 respectively. Simple linear regression test, conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Science, was utilised to determine the relationship between self-efficacy and Kiswahili language achievement. The results showed that self-efficacy mean score was at $M = 3.64$ ($SD = 0.16$) out of 5 while Kiswahili language achievement mean score was 6.70 ($SD = 3.47$) out of 20. There was a positive relationship ($r = .262$) between self-efficacy and achievement in Kiswahili language skills. Self-efficacy explained 4.2% ($R^2 = .042$) variation in the outcome and was a significant predictor of achievement in Kiswahili language skills, $F(1, 402) = 17.094$, $p = .000$. This paper concludes that students' self-efficacy was high while achievement in Kiswahili language skills was unsatisfactory and there was none causal relationship between the two.

Keywords: academic achievement, language skills, relationship, self-efficacy

Introduction

Every society has a language that distinguishes it from others (Crystal & Robbins, 2024). In the African and East African context and specifically Kenya, the language for identity is Kiswahili. Apart from unifying and identity purposes, a language bridges cultural gaps and breaks related barriers (Aseti, 2019). Kiswahili language is the main business language in East and Central Africa and has been recommended as the official language of East African Community (East African Community [EAC], 2017). The Kenyan constitution promulgated in 2010 recognizes Kiswahili not only as a national language but also as the official language (Wamalwa et al., 2017).

Kiswahili is the national and official language of Kenya (Atandi, et al., 2019). It thus plays a key role in the social and economic development of the country. This could partly explain why it is a mandatory subject at both primary and secondary school levels in Kenya. Kiswahili and English are among the compulsory subjects in secondary schools in the current education system that is being faced out 8-4-4 and even in the incoming Competency Based Curriculum (CBC). The objectives of teaching Kiswahili at secondary school level are to: recognize, investigate, evaluate and develop the different genres of language and literature in

Kiswahili, learn and evaluate different concepts of cultures using Kiswahili, comprehend through the language and come up with solutions some of the issues affecting the society and be proud and happy in using Kiswahili as a national and international language (Nyongesa, 2020). Going by the objectives, the teaching of Kiswahili in secondary schools aims at equipping learners with knowledge, skills, positive attitudes and values towards the language.

Development of Kiswahili language skills is one of the goals of teaching the subject in Kenyan secondary schools (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development [KICD], 2017). This is essential since listening, speaking, reading and writing skills are basic requirements for effective interaction with other Kiswahili language speakers and passing related tests and examinations. This could perhaps explain why Kenya Certificate of Secondary School (KCSE) Kiswahili language has several examinable papers. Under the 8-4-4 education system, Kiswahili had three examinable papers; Kiswahili paper 1(102/1) which tested composition, Kiswahili paper 2(102/2) which is concerned with language use skills and Kiswahili paper 3(102/3) that focuses on literature (Agonya et al., 2019).

Despite the highlighted importance of the language, Reports from the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) reveal that students' achievement in the KCSE Kiswahili language has generally been below average. The mean grades for the years 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 were 3.96, 4.65, 4.86, 4.81 and 5.20 out of 12 (KNEC, 2020, 2024). Although there has been a steady improvement nationally, these results are below the average 6 points mark. Unsatisfactory performance in the subject has also been observed in Nakuru County. Data from KNEC indicate that the county mean grades in KCSE Kiswahili language for the years 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 were 3.75, 4.05, 3.28 and 3.18 (County Director of Education [CDE], 2024). These results are an indicator that learners did not possess the requisite knowledge and skills. KNEC (2022) pointed out that one of the main contributors to this dismal performance was students had difficulties with the Kiswahili composition paper which required writing skills.

Empirical studies show that there are many factors which influence students' achievement in languages (Bhati et al. 2022; Cheng, 2020). Arishaba and Balimuttajjo (2024) noted that students' characteristics such as motivation, home background and attitudes affected their achievement. A study by Njoroge and Ndirangu (2018) revealed that the relationship between instructional materials and achievement was positive and statistically significant. Atandi et al. (2019) cited use of student centered teaching methods that are rich in learning activities as correlates of achievement in Kiswahili language. Juma and Kyalo (2022) observed that performance in Kiswahili was significantly influenced by methods used by teachers in the implementation of the subject's curriculum. Chemutai et al. (2019) associated teachers' qualification, motivation and experience, and school environmental factors such as lack of a formal school language policy, use of mother tongue and sheng' with achievement in the language. Students' self-efficacy has also been cited as a determinant of their achievement (Verma & Bhandari (2022).

Literature shows that self-efficacy is a significant predictor of academic achievement (Bhati et al., 2022; Cheng, 2020). Self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to produce given attainments (Bandura, 1977). It is thus concerned with confidence in one's ability to organise and execute a given course of action to solve a problem or accomplish a task. Madhuri and Saini (2019) contend that self-efficacy denotes self-confidence and effectiveness in accomplishing a task. Adesola and Li (2018)

assert that self-efficacy affects choice of activities and the amount of effort invested by a learner when doing tasks. Pham et al. (2021) observed that students with low self-efficacy are more likely to give up performing given tasks when they face challenges while the likelihood of executing an assignment by those with self-efficacy is high.

Given that self-efficacy has been associated with achievement, it is essential to examine how the self-efficacy theory guides instruction processes. Self-efficacy theory not only offers a comprehensive understanding of the learning process, but also provides insights that teachers can use to guide students towards specific skills development (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). According to the theory, self-efficacy comprises of several components, namely; mastery experiences, vicarious learning, social persuasion, goal setting, emotional and psychological state and self-regulation (Bandura, 2006). Mastery of experiences occurs when students succeed in academic endeavours that help them develop deeper beliefs in their abilities. When students score high grades in assignments or tasks, they are encouraged to continue learning deeper and complex content (Ngatia, 2019). Bandura (1977) asserts that past experiences are crucial indicators of self-efficacy. Students who succeed in their academic endeavours develop deeper beliefs in their abilities.

Vicarious learning refers to the extent to which students believe that success of others influences their success (Austin et al., 2015). Ikavalkoa et al. (2023) assert that being able to observe or “listen in” on experts or peers as they discuss a topic makes one have a belief that they too can also learn and achieve what the others achieved. Social persuasion component of self-efficacy is about how students feel motivated by their teachers, parents and peers (Mullen et al., 2017). Kaendio and Muiro (2021) established that peer social persuasion was a key determinant of behaviour change among students. However, Schwab et al. (2021) contend that even though peers' social persuasion affected students' behaviour, the contribution of those of parents and teachers was higher. Goal setting is the ability of a learner to set achievable and challenging academic targets (Zimmerman & Clearly, 2006). Self-efficacy of learners is enhanced when they are goal oriented and work towards its achievement. Such students tend to keep setting higher goals and consequently become more motivated to learn and excel in their academic achievement.

Emotional states are a combination of physiological arousal and appraisal, and subjective experiences which are informed by backgrounds and cultures (Ongero, 2021). Michaela et al. (2019) on a study conducted in Finland among teenagers aged between 13-17 years confirmed that students experience stress and anxiety, as a result, they posted poor grades in examinations. The results of this study underscore the importance of psychological health for students to fully participate in learning. Self-regulation has been defined as the process whereby students activate and sustain cognitions, behaviors and affects, which are systematically oriented toward attainment of their goals (Lee et al., 2021). Self-regulation is thus the conscious and continuous effort to reach a higher goal. Desola and Li (2021) assert that students with this attribute have the ability to perform a task to completion even if it is being boring and difficult. Such students listen to their teachers rather than daydreaming, actively plan and organise their work, and choose homework over games and watching television. These components of self-efficacy as articulated in the theory, guides instructional practices by explaining human behaviour in relation to motivation, self-regulation, success, and accomplishment of tasks.

Studies have revealed that there is a positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement in various academic fields (Velma & Bhandari, 2022; Yokoyama, 2019). Hayat et al. (2020) showed that self-efficacy had an impact on university medical science students' learning and academic performance in Iran. Ochieng (2015) demonstrated that students' academic achievement in Kenya was influenced by their self-efficacy while Moturi (2012) revealed that secondary school students in Nyakach and Nyamira sub-counties with high self-efficacy performed better in Mathematics and English than those with lower self-efficacy. All these findings are in agreement with Bandura's (2006) observation that students who possess a high degree of self-efficacy are more likely to attempt challenging tasks, to persist longer at them, and to exert more effort in order to achieve expected outcomes.

These discussions show that self-efficacy is a significant predictor of academic achievement. Strong belief in self is essential because individuals with high level of self-efficacy assign themselves higher goals and exercise more effort and willingness to have them accomplished. The low achievement in Kiswahili experienced in Nakuru County could have been due to students' low self-efficacy. It is against this background the researchers explored the association between self -efficacy and achievement in Kiswahili language skills in Nakuru. Effective communication in any language requires that its users must be able to listen, speak and write well (Murunga, 2016). This paper focused on listening and writing skills since they enhance learners' comprehension, writing proficiency and academic achievement. It did not assess speaking and reading skills because of the long hours required to practice and assess them. However, in language teaching all the components of language are taught. The inquiry was deemed necessary because an examination of existing published works shows dearth in literature that links achievement in Kiswahili language and self-efficacy among secondary students in Nakuru County.

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no statistically significant relationship between students' self-efficacy and academic achievement in Kiswahili language skills.

Methodology

The correlational research design was adopted during this inquiry, which was conducted in Nakuru County and involved only public secondary schools. A sample of 405 students selected using stratified, proportionate and simple random sampling techniques participated in the study. A Students' Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (SSEQ) and Kiswahili Language Skills Achievement Test (KLSAT) were used to gather data. The questionnaire comprised of two parts, A part, generated the respondents' bio-data and B part, that measured the 6 dimensions of self-efficacy. The dimensions were mastery experiences, vicarious learning, social persuasion, goal setting, emotional and psychological state and self-regulation. KLSAT was in the form of a poem, which was read by selected learners in turns as the rest of them listened. This was done several times depending on the teacher's assessment of the particular learners' ability. Other learners were selected to recite the poem as the others listened. The teachers dictated questions to the students' related to the poem and asked them to provide written answers. Students were given ample time to respond to the questions. Thereafter the teachers collected the answer sheets for marking.

Before commencement of the data collection exercise, clearance to conduct the study was sought from all the relevant authorities. Respondents consent to participate in the study was also sought through the County, Sub-County offices and the school principals. During analysis, the collected data was checked for errors, cleaned and coded and keyed into a file prepared using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The responses to the items that were used to measure the 6 elements of self-efficacy were scored, their means determined and transformed into measures of the construct. The relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement was determined using simple linear regression after ascertaining that parametric assumptions associated with the test were not violated. This involved testing the study hypothesis at the .05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

This paper explored the relationship between students' self-efficacy and their achievement in Kiswahili language skills. Self-efficacy was measured using its six dimensions namely; mastery experiences, vicarious learning, social persuasion, goal setting, emotional and psychological state and self-regulation. The dimensions of self-efficacy were measured using close ended items based on how strong students believed in them. The responses to the items were scored as follows; Very Strong Belief = 5, Strong Belief = 4, Moderate Belief = 3, Weak Belief = 2, Very Weak Belief = 1. The means of the items were computed and then transformed into the mean score of the dimensions. Self-efficacy was determined by summing the mean scores of its six dimensions and averaging them as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean Scores of Dimensions of Self efficacy

Self-efficacy dimension	N	Mean	SD
Mastery experiences	404	3.71	0.24
Vicarious learning	404	3.60	0.23
Social persuasion	404	3.69	0.76
Goal setting	403	3.85	0.43
Emotional and psychological states	404	3.37	0.19
Self-regulation	404	3.63	0.42
Overall self-efficacy mean score	404	3.64	0.16

The results show that self-efficacy overall mean score ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.16$) was high given that it was out of five. This is an indication that students believed they had the ability to effectively deal with tasks, obligations and challenges encountered when learning Kiswahili language. These findings are in tandem with those of a study by Aseti (2019) which established that the students had high levels of self-efficacy. This is essential in the learning of Kiswahili language since it is a belief that one has the capacity to succeed in given circumstances or accomplish a goal or objective (Yokohama, 2019).

The students' achievement in Kiswahili language skills was assessed using their scores in KLSAT, which was marked out of 20. The scores were converted into ranges and summarized using frequencies and percentages as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Students' KLSAT Scores (n = 405)

Range	Frequency	Percent
0 to 3	86	21.2
4 to 7	154	38.0
8 to 11	116	28.6
12 to 15	49	12.1

An examination of the results reveal that the mean scores of majority (66.6%) of the students who took the test ranged between 4 and 11. The scores of the rest were in the range of 0 to 3 (21.2%) and 12 to 15 (12.1%) respectively. The mean score of the test was also computed and found to be $M = 6.70$ ($SD = 3.47$). These results were considered unsatisfactory given that the test was marked out of 20. These findings are consistent with the results of the KNEC (2020) which revealed that students' mastery of Kiswahili language, especially the composition component which tests writing skills, was low. These results support those of Njoroge and Mwangi (2018) who noted that secondary students' performance in Kiswahili was low, as most of them could neither speak the language fluently nor write in it well. The unsatisfactory performance was attributed to effects of 'sheng', shortage of Kiswahili teachers, inadequate instructional materials and inappropriate teaching methods. Chemutai et al. (2019) study conducted among public mixed secondary schools in Nyamira North sub county also noted low achievement in Kiswahili language, an observation that was attributed to failure to use library facilities fully, lack of language policies in schools and tendency of students to use mother tongue and 'sheng'.

Simple linear regression was used to test the hypothesis which stated that the relationship between students' self-efficacy and achievement in Kiswahili language skills was not statistically significant.

Table 3: Results of Regressing Self Efficacy and Achievement in Kiswahili Language Skills

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-value	p-value
	B	Std. Error			
Constant	2.398	1.054		2.274	.023
Students' self-efficacy mean score	1.171	.283	.202	4.134	.000

$r = .262$, $R^2 = .042$, Adjusted $R^2 = .038$, $F(1, 402) = 17.094$, $p = .000$

The regression test results indicate that there was a positive relationship ($r = .262$) between self-efficacy and achievement in Kiswahili language skills. It means that students with high levels of self-efficacy tend to perform better in Kiswahili language skill. The results also show that self-efficacy explained 4.2% ($R^2 = .042$) variation in Kiswahili skills achievement. The results further show that self-efficacy was a significant predictor of achievement in Kiswahili language skills, $F(1, 402) = 17.094$, $p = .000$. These results confirm that the two constructs are related. They thus do not support the study hypothesis which stated that self-efficacy was not significantly related to achievement in Kiswahili language skills.

The regression test results showed a statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and achievement in Kiswahili language skills. These findings are similar with those of a study by Hayat et al. (2020) which revealed that the students' self-efficacy had an impact on their emotions, metacognitive learning strategies and academic performance. Bakar et al. (2016) established that there was a positive and significant relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement. This was attributed to the fact that strong belief self-drives an individual to excel through increased commitment, endurance and perseverance. Velma and Bhandari (2022) opine that self-efficacy fosters students' emotional health and well-being, and serves as a predictor of motivation, learning and achievement. This view was based on the fact that students with high levels of self-efficacy assign themselves higher goals and exercise more effort and willingness to have them accomplished. Yokoyama (2019) supports these sentiments by asserting that student with strong self-efficacy do well in academics. Such students are confident of their learning abilities, often take part in classroom activities. They are proactive all the time, tend to apply and adapt to new situations. Such students show strong intrinsic motivation to learn from mistakes and overcome hurdles consequently doing their assignments well.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study concludes that students' self-efficacy was high while achievement in Kiswahili language skills was unsatisfactory and varied with self-efficacy. It also concludes that there was non-causal relationship between self-efficacy and achievement. The non-causal relationship is a pointer that there are other factors that affect achievement, the predictor variable or both. Factors which are associated with achievement include; availability of instructional materials, teaching methods, students' characteristics like misalignment between their self-efficacy and language skills, learning environment among others. This calls for further investigations to find out the underlying factors and come up with a definite conclusion.

School administrators and Kiswahili language teachers should be made more aware of the importance of exposing learners to experiences that enhance their self-efficacy. Learners should be equipped with analytical and problem-solving skills that build their self-confidence. Kiswahili language teachers should adopt learner-centered teaching methods that are rich in learning activities, involving students in skill enhancing activities such as listening exercises, writing and speaking competitions among others. Self-efficacy enhancement can further be achieved by the development and implementation of school language policies, provision of instructional materials and improving on learner motivation. Highly efficacious learners will set for themselves challenging tasks and will be committed to accomplishing them consequently improving their language skills acquisition and thus improving their academic achievement.

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