

Students' and Teachers' Retention Perception as Predictors of Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement in Secondary Schools in Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract

Retention is a common intervention strategy often used when students fail to meet minimum standards on academic assessments. It has remained a controversial and highly debated topic in education despite many years of research. In Kenya, there have been mixed concerns both in private and public schools due to teacher and school accountability demands. Although numerous researches have been done on class retention, there is a dearth of local studies on retention perception. This study sought to establish the extent to which secondary school students' and teachers' retention perception relates to self-esteem and academic achievement. Erickson's Psychosocial Theory formed the logical theoretical basis to explain the study. The study adopted correlation design. The study targeted secondary school teachers and students drawn from Meru County which had 283 public secondary schools. Cluster sampling was used to select 28 public schools; random sampling to select 336 form four students and purposive sampling to select 28 form four class teachers. Questionnaires with standardized scales were used as the main tool for data collection. A pilot study was done to determine the validity and reliability of the instruments. Cronbach coefficient alpha was used to ascertain internal consistency. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to describe and analyze the collected data. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The null hypotheses were tested. The level of significance used in rejecting a null hypothesis was $p < .05$. No significant difference was found between students' and teachers' retention perception ($t(183) = .32, p > .05$). Students' self-esteem had significant correlation with teachers' perception ($r(26) = .84, p < .05$) as well as with students' perception ($r(333) = .63, p < .05$). Academic achievement had significant correlation with teachers' perception ($r(26) = .83, p < .05$) as well as with students' perception ($r(333) = .79, p < .05$). Academic achievement correlated positively and significantly with self-esteem ($\chi^2(18) = 492.84, p < .05$). A major finding was that students with a positive perception developed a high self-esteem and also attained high academic grades. The major conclusion is that teachers' and students' perception have a direct relationship with students' self-esteem and academic achievement. There is therefore need for educators to avoid forcing students to repeat and rather employ other strategies including individualized remedial programs. If retention has to be used, it must be as a last result when all other measures have failed to work. However voluntary retention should be considered to allow students to catch up with the rest.

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