

Academic Identity Status and Achievement Goal Orientation as Predictors of Academic Achievement among Form Three Students in Embu County, Kenya

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Abstract

Over the last three years (2012 to 2014), the candidature for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education has been increasing but the national pass rate has consistently been low. Low pass rates limit the nation's progress towards attaining the universal goals of education. Although studies have associated low pass rates with risks presented by contextual and psychological factors, there is a dearth of local studies on how students' academic identity and achievement goals predict academic achievement. The purpose of this study was to determine whether academic identity status and achievement goal orientation predict academic achievement among secondary school students in Kenya. Specifically, the relationships among academic identity status, achievement goal orientation, and academic achievement were examined. Sex differences and the prediction equation were also established. Framed upon the identity status theory and the 3 x 2 model of achievement goal orientation, the study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. The study targeted all year 2015 form three students in Embu County. Purposive, stratified proportionate, and simple random sampling procedures were used. 390 students were selected from 10 public secondary schools in Mbeere South Sub County. Quantitative data were collected through adapted Academic Identity Measure and Achievement Goal Orientation Questionnaire. To crosscheck the quantitative data, interviews were conducted with 40 participants purposively selected from those who filled the questionnaire. Academic achievement was inferred from students' examination grades. A pilot study involving 40 students established and enhanced the psychometric properties of the study instruments. Quantitative data were analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, multiple regression, and independent samples t-test. Qualitative data were analysed thematically. A major finding was that achieved academic identity status was the only academic identity status that correlated positively and significantly with academic achievement ($r(383) = .38, p < .05$). There was a significant positive correlation between approach achievement goal orientation and academic achievement ($r(383) = .20, p < .05$). A significant negative correlation was found between avoidance achievement goal orientation and academic achievement ($r(383) = -.15, p < .05$). Boys had significantly higher scores in foreclosed academic identity status ($I(383) = 2.21, p < .05$) while girls had significantly higher scores in approach achievement goal orientation ($I(383) = -.56, P < .05$). The equation for predicting academic achievement from academic identity status and achievement goal orientation was significant ($F(3, 381) = 26.73, p < .05$). Achieved academic identity status had the highest significant predictive value on academic achievement compared to avoidance and approach achievement goal orientation. In the exploratory analysis, age and school type had significant main effects in the prediction model. A path analysis established that achievement goal orientation mediated the relationship between academic identity status and academic achievement. The study recommended that parents and teachers should create conducive environments for the development of achieved academic identity status and approach goal orientations. Specifically, schools should have interventions to help students attain achieved academic identity status since it is the most facilitative identity in predicting academic achievement

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