

Selected Predictors of Academic Achievement among Form Three Students in Public Secondary Schools in Kiambu County, Kenya

Ng'ang'a Maria Wacera

Abstract

In the last five years (2013 to 2017), poor academic achievement has been experienced in Kiambu County. This is despite government's interventions and education being an important sector in individual and national development. Most researchers attribute this to socio-cultural and classroom environmental factors. Yet there could be certain personal factors affecting students' academic achievement. The study was therefore designed to determine the relationships among students' achievement goal orientation, perceived competence and academic achievement in Kiambu County. Differences in achievement goal orientation and perceived competence due to school type were also tested. The study was guided by the goal orientation theory and intelligence theory. The research adopted mixed methods sequential explanatory design. The study targeted all Form Three students in Kiambu County in 2017. Purposive sampling was used to select Gatundu South Sub-County. Using stratified random sampling, 12 schools were selected. Through proportionate stratified sampling, one girls' only and one boys' only boarding, one co-educational boarding and nine co-educational day schools were selected. Simple random sampling was used to select 665 participants. Achievement goal orientation and perceived competence scales were adopted and used to measure achievement goal orientation and perceived competence respectively. A pilot study on 40 students was conducted in a school within the County. Purposively, 40 respondents were selected from those who filled the questionnaires for an interview to cross check the quantitative data. Academic achievement was inferred from students' examination grades obtained from school records. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 21. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically. Data collected was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. To examine relationships among variables and school type differences, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient and Analysis of Variance were used respectively. Hypotheses were tested $p < .05$ level of significance. To determine a prediction model, multiple regression analysis was used. The findings revealed that all the domains of achievement goal orientation significantly correlated to academic achievement ($r(630) = .310, p < .05$). The highest relationship was observed between performance avoidance ($r(630) = .355, p < .05$). All the two sub-scales of perceived competence were found to be negatively correlated to academic achievement. The highest relation was found between entity perceived competence $r(414) = -.192, p < .01$. The findings also revealed significant differences in the four domains of achievement goal orientation and flexible perceived competence given the categories of school types ($F(12, 1872) = 10.334, p < .05$; $F(3, 409) = 3.980, p < .05$) respectively. The difference for perceived competence was in favour of co-educational day and boys' boarding. In addition, the equation for predicting academic achievement from achievement goal orientation and perceived competence was significant ($F(5, 624) = 32.497, p < .05$). Performance avoidance had the highest significant predictive value on academic achievement. In the exploratory part of the study, a significant gender difference was found with regard to perceived competence. Based on the findings, it was recommended that teachers, parents and all concerned stakeholders should create conducive environments that enhance students' achievement goals. Overall, schools should have interventions to enhance students' perceived competence in order to improve academic achievement.

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