

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL-TYPE AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' SELF-ESTEEM IN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

Shadrack K. Munanu
Karichu Secondary School, Kenya
&
Prof. John M. Kobia
Chuka University, Kenya
jkobia2001@yahoo.com

Abstract

Students' admission into different public secondary school types is based on the criteria of their KCPE (Kenya Certificate of Primary Education) marks. There is a lot of stereotyping on "school labels". National schools post best KCSE (Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education) grades, making them institutions of fame and prestige. Extra-county and County schools follow National schools and at the bottom are Sub-county schools, producing the bulk of the poor grades (D's). The implication is that most students in the last category miss qualification to professional careers. The trend is worrying and parents are concerned about the school type their children attend. Therefore, students over time have known differences between secondary school categories. Such categorization could affect one's self-realization, influencing self-esteem. The aim of this study was to find out if there are differences in students' self-esteem among school-types. The study employed correlational research design. Quantitative data was collected by use of questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered to a sample of 480 students in form 4 class from 12 public secondary schools in Nairobi County. Cluster and purposive sampling was used to get the 12 schools. One form 4 class stream of 40 students (in each sampled school) was selected through simple random sampling. Chi-square (χ^2) statistics tested the differences in students' self-esteem between school types. An analysis of gender differences and students' self-esteem used t-test and χ^2 . The level of significance in rejecting the null hypothesis was at $P \leq 0.05$. The study found a significant relationship between school type and students' self-esteem, $\chi^2(6) = 456.56, p = .00$. The study also found significant gender differences and students' self-esteem, $t(443) = -4.96, p < .05$, and $\chi^2(2) = 42.61, P = .001$. The findings showed that most students from national and extra-county schools have high self-esteem whereas majority of sub-county students exhibit low self-esteem. It was recommended the need to develop self-esteem enhancement programmes in secondary schools, more so in the sub-county schools. There was also need to enhance the image of sub-county schools by heavily investing on learning infrastructures and resources.

Key Terms: School-type, Self-esteem, Secondary school, Students

1.1 Introduction

The need for quality education for Kenyan children has been a major concern, mostly to parents. It is perceived by many that the school-type a student attends has an influence to his or her life. There is high performance, fame and prestige for national and good county schools. Weak performance generally exists in district or day schools (currently called sub-county schools), which have the bulk of the secondary school students.

In the U.S.A various school categories exist. There are private and public schools. Conventional public secondary schools have most of the student population. According to O'Brien (2001) most students who attend magnet schools come from middle and upper class families having some form of higher education. Magnet schools are public and they tend to post better academic performance than conventional public schools. The reasons cited for the scenario include low parental education, low self-esteem of students and lack of parental support. Gamoran (1996) cited in O'Brien (2001) found that many people perceive magnet schools as offering good academic performance that will translate to higher-level careers. (This scenario compares to the Kenyan National schools). Wood (2008) in his study "comparing private schools and public schools using hierarchical linear modelling found no differences between public and private schools academic performance at least in mathematics and reading.

In Nigeria, a study done by Yusuf and Adigun (2010) revealed that students' academic performance deteriorated in public secondary schools. Many parents preferred to enrol their children in government schools where better academic performance is guaranteed. Parents also perceive that their children cannot perform very well in co-educational schools. Urban schools are also perceived to perform poorly in relation to rural schools. According to Sabitu, Babatude and Oluwole (2012), private schools are generally perceived to perform better in terms of the availability of human and physical facilities and better academic performance than public schools.

In Kenya, government funded secondary schools are classified as National, Extra-county, County and Sub-county school types. The public secondary schools select students entering form one class using the criteria of score marks attained at KCPE (Kenya Certificate of Primary Education) examinations. Students with the highest scores gain admission into national schools, followed by extra-county schools, while those with average and low scores are selected into county and sub-county schools respectively (Softkenya.com, 2014). People may commonly commit fundamental attribution error (Heider, 1958). They tend to over-value dispositional or personality based explanation to behaviours. For example, students who score poor KCPE marks, and admitted to sub-county and other "low-ranked" secondary schools, may believe that they are academically poor. If students have such an attitude and self-image of failure in secondary school, they can develop irrational thoughts and feel powerless to change their situation. They may develop "learned

helplessness”. For instance a student may conclude as follows: “ I come from a poor family, I was in a poor primary school, I got poor KCPE marks, I am now in a poor village secondary school, and I don’t see myself going far”.

Self-esteem reflects a person’s overall emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. It is a judgement of oneself as well as an attitude towards the self. Self-esteem encompasses beliefs (for example, “I am competent” “I am worthy) and emotions like “triumph, despair, pride and shame” (Hewitt, 2009). Experiences in a person’s life are a major source of self-esteem development. The positive or negative life experiences one has, creates attitudes towards the self, which can be favourable and develop positive feelings of self worth, or can be unfavourable and develop negative feelings of self worth.

During the school years, academic achievement is a significant contributor to self-esteem development. A student who consistently achieves success or one who consistently fails, will have his/her self-esteem being affected (Crocker, et al, 2002). Social comparisons play an important role in shaping a child’s self-esteem and influence the positive or negative feelings they have about themselves. Adolescents peer influence is critical as they make appraisals of themselves with close friends (Thorne & Michaeliu, 1996).

Rosenberg (1979) says that self-esteem cannot be “taught”, rather it is developed through an individual’s life experiences. He examined how social structural positions like racial or ethnic statuses and institutional contexts like schools or families are related to self-esteem. Researchers have suggested that a high level of self-esteem facilitate achievement of goals. High self-esteem can help with coping skills and low self-esteem can lead to avoidance of problems. Students with high self-esteem usually set higher goals for themselves (Hisken, 2011).

1.2 Research Problem

Schools portray differences in academic performances. National schools post best grades followed by extra-county schools and sub-county schools (that constitute majority of secondary school students) are at the bottom producing the bulk of low grades mostly D’s. Parents are usually concerned about the type of school their children attend. The demand for national schools made the

government to increase the number from the traditional 18 to the current 103 schools spread in the 47 counties of Kenya. Academic performance gaps have usually been attributed to differences in factors like poverty, limited funding, inadequate learning and teaching resources, teachers (Yusuf & Adagun, 2010), and pupils entry behaviour (KCPE marks). However, the students' psychological factor(s) related to the school-type a student's attends has not been adequately studied. Studies have shown that self-esteem is related to academic achievement. Perceptions and stereotypes in relation to school's social status and school-type labels have developed over time. In view of this, the study sought to establish if the school categorization had an effect on students' self-esteem. This may help in prediction and trying to understand academic performance gaps and related remedies.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- i) To find out differences in students' self-esteem among school-types.
- ii) To find out gender differences in self-esteem among students.

1.4 Research Methodology

1.4.1 Research Design

The research adopted a correlational research design. Correlational research is useful in trying to make prediction about behaviour. It is used when investigating the relationships between naturally occurring variables and with studying individual differences (Goodwin, 2005). In this study, the relationship between school-type and self-esteem of secondary school students are naturally occurring variables that can only be correlated for prediction purposes.

1.4.2 Research Sample

A sample of 480 form 4 public secondary schools students was drawn from 12 secondary schools. The 12 schools were purposively sampled following the 12 clusters drawn in the Nairobi County-Kenya. This ensured a representative sample of all school types (National, Extra-county, County and Sub-county). Each of the 12 secondary schools provided a simple randomly sampled class stream of 40 students ($12 \times 40 = 480$). Form 4 class was chosen for being the most senior class that was assumed to have well internalized, for instance the schools traditions that may impact on their personality.

1.4.3 Research Instruments

The main research instrument that was used to collect data was the questionnaire for student respondents. The questionnaire was chosen because it was less expensive, takes less time and energy to administer. The questionnaire addressed specific objective and/or hypothesis (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). A Pilot study was done that included 3 secondary schools (1 National-Girls, 1 County -Boys and 1 Sub-county -co-educational) with a total of 65 student respondents. Internal consistency was estimated using the Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The acceptable correlation coefficient was a cut-off of $r = .90$ (Siegle, 2002). Cronbach Coefficient alpha was .948 for self-esteem questions. Thus, internal consistency of items related to self-esteem was good.

1.4.4 Data Analysis

The data collected was entered in the data view window of SPSS version 17. Inferential and descriptive statistics was used.

Two null (statistical) hypotheses were analysed. H_01 : There is no significant difference between students' self-esteem and school-type was analyzed using chi-square (χ^2) statistics. H_02 : There is no significant gender differences between students' self-esteem, was analyzed by use of a t-test and chi square test statistics. The level of significance was set at $P \leq .05$. Data was presented using frequency tables and percentages.

1.5 Research Findings

Relationship between Students' Self-esteem and School-type.

The school-type of the participants was the independent variable, measured nominally at the categories of national, extra-county, county and sub-county school types. Self-esteem, a dependent variable was measured using Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES). Ten question items to measure self-esteem were used. Each question was measured on a 4-point likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The range of self-esteem scale was 0 to 30.

Table 1:

Self-esteem score Ranges for the Students Participants

| Self –esteem range | freq | Percent |
|--------------------|------|---------|
| 0 to 14 | 142 | 31.5 |
| 15 to 25 | 147 | 32.6 |
| 26 to 30 | 162 | 35.9 |
| Total | | 100.0 |

Scores between 15 and 25 is within the normal range. Scores below 15 suggest low self-esteem and scores above 25 suggest high self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965).

Data shows that, 35.9 percent had a high self-esteem while 32.5 percent suggested having low self-esteem. 32.6% suggested having normal range of self-esteem.

According to the findings (Table 2), majority (137 out of 142) of the respondents who suggested having low self-esteem came from sub-county schools. This translates to 74.9% of the sub-county students having low self-esteem. Majority of national and extra-county school students suggested having high self-esteem at 69 (89.6%) and 62 (77.5%) respectively. County and sub school students at 17% and 7% respectively, suggested high self-esteem.

Table 2

School-type and Students' Self-esteem Cross Tabulation

| School-type | Self-esteem Score/range | | | Total |
|---------------|-------------------------|----------|----------|-------|
| | 0 to 14 | 15 to 25 | 26 to 30 | |
| Sub-county | 137 | 34 | 12 | 183 |
| County | 0 | 92 | 19 | 111 |
| Extra –county | 2 | 16 | 62 | 80 |
| National | 3 | 5 | 69 | 77 |
| Total | 142 | 147 | 162 | 451 |

Data in Table 1 was subjected to chi-square (χ^2) test analysis. This is given in Table 3.

Table 3

School-type and self- esteem chi-square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymp.sig (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|--------|----|---------------------|
| Pearson chi-square | 456.56 | 6 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 468.92 | 6 | .000 |
| Linear by linear Association | 260.18 | 1 | .000 |
| N of valid cases | 451 | | |

The study sought to establish if there are differences in students' self-esteem and school-type. Chi-square (χ^2) statistics was used to test the null hypothesis. There are no significant differences in students' self-esteem and school type. The results indicated a statistically significant difference in students' self-esteem and school type, $\chi^2 (6) = 456.56, p = .000$. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected.

For gender differences and self-esteem, Table 4 gives the analysis.

Table 4
Gender and Students' Self-esteem Cross-Tabulation
Self-esteem range scores

| Gender | | 0-14 | 15-25 | 26-30 | Total |
|--------|---|------|-------|-------|-------|
| Male | N | 113 | 63 | 86 | 262 |
| Female | N | 29 | 84 | 76 | 189 |
| Total | | 142 | 147 | 162 | 451 |

The null hypothesis was subjected to statistical analysis of the t-test for independent samples. The t-test was to find out whether there are significant differences between self-esteem means of males and females. It was established that self-esteem of females ($M=21.77, SD=5.89$) was higher than that of males ($M=18.69, SD=7.27$). This means that girls exhibited a higher self-esteem than boys. The t-test was found to be statistically significant, $t (443) = -4.96, p < .05$. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 5
Students' Gender versus self-esteem group statistics

| | Gender | N | Mean | Std Dev. |
|-------------|--------|-----|-------|----------|
| Self-esteem | Male | 262 | 18.69 | 7.27 |
| | Female | 189 | 21.77 | 5.89 |

Table 6

Students' Gender versus self-esteem Independent Sample Test

| Self-esteem | t | df | t-test for equality of means | | |
|-----------------------------|-------|--------|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| | | | sig (2-tailed) | Mean difference | std error difference |
| Equal variances assumed | -4.79 | 449 | .000 | -3.077 | .64 |
| Equal variances not assumed | -4.96 | 442.86 | .000 | -3.077 | .62 |

Chi-square (χ^2) statistics additionally tested this hypothesis. The results indicate a statistically significant relationship between the gender of the students and their self-esteem, $\chi^2(2) = 42.61, p = .001$. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. More boys than girls seem to have low self-esteem.

1.6 Discussions of the Results

The study found a significant difference in students' self-esteem and school type. Students from mainly national and extra-county schools have high self-esteem at 89.6% and 77.5% respectively. Majority (74.9%) of sub-county school students have low self-esteem. Similar findings were recorded by Oigara (2011) on his study "effects of school environment on students' achievement and self-esteem: A case study in Kenya". In his study, girls in single sex school had high self-esteem than girls in co-educational school. However, his school type was based on one-national girls only school and one national co-educational school. The two were private schools in the same neighbourhood in Nairobi County.

Foster (2009) found that school experience shape students' beliefs about school, affect students' level of self-esteem, and affect the academic performance of students. Foster's study had hypothesised that there were significant differences among academically "successful" and "unsuccessful" students based on gender, grade and school type. In the findings, significant differences in self-esteem appeared only among "successful and unsuccessful" students by grade level only with no differences relative to gender or school-type. This contrasts the current findings of significant differences in students' self-esteem by school-type. Foster (2009) used only one school with a sample of 48 African elementary school children and compared only "successful and

unsuccessful” students based on achievement data on standardized testing in a school in the mid-Atlantic region of United States.

The current study found there are gender differences in self-esteem. Girls seemed to exhibit higher self-esteem than boys. Aswani (2007) found that girls tended to have higher self-concept than boys did in the lower primary school classes. However, this changed as they moved up classes. Hossaini (2002) found contrary results that gender is not a predictor of self-esteem of pre-university students in Shiraz. He had used coppermith self-esteem test in data collection on a sample of 240 students. The current study used Rosenberg self-esteem scale to collect data on 480 high school students in Kenya.

1.7 Conclusion

The findings of this study have shown that there are significant differences between students’ self-esteem among school types. Students in national and extra-county schools mostly have high self-esteem whereas those from sub-county schools depict low self-esteem. It can therefore be concluded that academic achievement gaps among school-types may be related or influenced by students’ differences in their self-esteem. Secondary school girls appear to have high self-esteem than boys.

1.8 Recommendations

Since about one third of the students who are in secondary school (with majority drawn from sub-county schools) have low self-esteem, there is need to develop a programme in the school curriculum for self- esteem enhancement. When students enter form one (1) in any school, there is need for them to be introduced to the knowledge of the personal psychological variables that may influence their academic achievement and career aspiration outcomes. Schools ought to engage psychological experts on regular basis to motivate students. This will build their inner strength and boost their egos to actualize their potentials in academic work and career aspirations.

References

- Aswani, J. S. (2007). An Investigation Into Selected Factors on Academic Self-Concept Among Primary School Pupils in Bondo District. *Thesis*, 23-45.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*. New York: Freeman.
- Crocker, J., Sommers, S. R., & Luhtanen, R. K. (2002). Hopes Dashed and Dreams Fulfilled. Contingencies of Self-Worth and Graduate School Admissions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 1275-1286.
- Foster, E. (2009). *An Examination of School Attitude and Self-Esteem Among African American Elementary School Students*. New York: Routledge.
- Goodwin, C. J. (2005). *Research in Psychology. Methods and Design*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Heider, F. (1958). *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*. New York: Wiley.
- Hewitt, J. P. (2009). *Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hisken, L. J. (2011). *The Correlation Between Self-esteem and Student Reading Ability, Reading Level and Academic Achievement*. Warrenburg: University of Central Missouri.
- Hossaini, T. A. (2002). Forecasting Between Self-Esteem, Parenting and Gender Among Pre-University Students in Shiraz. *American Journal of Scientific Research*, 221-229.
- Mugenda, O. M., & Mugenda, A. G. (2003). *Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. Nairobi: ACTS.
- O'Brien, K. (2001). A Study of the Career Aspirations of Eighth Grade Students. *Thesis*, 26-57.
- Oigara, J. (2011). Effects of School Environment on Student Achievement and Self-Esteem. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 34-45.
- Reasoner, R. W. (2001, July 3). *Review of Self-Esteem Research*. Retrieved from Self-Esteem International: <http://www.self-esteem-international.org/content/5-research.htm>
- Rogers, C. (2012, June 18). *A Theory of Therapy, Personality and Interpersonal Relationships as Developed in the Client-Centered Framework*. Retrieved from SimplePsychology: <http://www.simplepsychology.org/carl-rogers.htm>
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Rosenberg, M. (1979). *Conceiving the Self*. New York: Basic Books.
- Sabitu, A. O., Babatude, E. G., & Oluwole, A. F. (2012). School Types, Facilities and Academic Performance of Students in Senior Secondary Schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. *International Education Studies*, 56-70.
- Siegle, D. (2002, September 24). *Instrument Reliability: Educational Research*. Retrieved from Gifted: <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/siegle/research/Instrument%20Reliability%20and%20Validity/Reliability.htm>
- SoftKenya. (2014, December 29). *KCPE Results 2014*. Retrieved from SoftKenya: <http://softkenya.com/kcpe/kcpe-results/>
- Thorne, A., & Michaeliu, Q. (1996). Situating Adolescent Gender and Self-Esteem with Personal Memories. *Child Development*, 74-90.
- Wood, D. (2008, January 14). *Private vs. Public: The Great Debate*. Retrieved from Education.com: <http://www.education.com/magazine/article/private-vs-schools/>
- Yusuf, M. A., & Adigun, J. T. (2010). The Influence of School Sex, Location and Type on Student's Academic Performance. *Journals of Education and Science*, 81-85.