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Influence of Self-Concept on Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Rongo Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract:
Academic achievement among students in various countries has been of great concern and there has been low academic performance of secondary school students in Rongo Sub-County, Kenya which has influenced the career choices of the students from the Sub-County negatively. Students in most cases are not able to pursue careers of their choices in tertiary institutions due to low entry grades. The purpose of the study was therefore to investigate the influence of selected personal variable on academic Performance of secondary school students in Rongo Sub-County. The objectives of the study were: To find out the influence of self-concept on academic performance. Person-centered Theory of Rodgers was used to inform the study. A sequential explanatory research design was employed with a sample size of 46 form four students, 23 teacher counsellors in 7 Public Secondary schools. The population comprised of 460 form four students from 7 Public Secondary Schools, 23 teacher counselors from 23 Public Secondary Schools. Simple random sampling was used to select student participants; stratified sampling was used to select secondary schools while purposive sampling was used to select teacher counselors. Self-Concept Questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data while qualitative data was collected using interviews. Validity of the questionnaires was ensured through expert judgment by university lecturers while reliability of the instruments were ensured through Cronbach alpha and a reliability coefficient of r=0.7513 was reported. Quantitative data was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlations. Qualitative data was analysed using Thematic Analysis. The results indicated a strong positive relationship of r = 0.794; p<0.05 between self-concept and students' academic performance. Teacher counselors should utilize appropriate therapy techniques to help students with negative and low self-concept to improve in academics. The Teachers Service Commission -Kenya can use the findings to advice its teachers on the best ways of handling learners with different self-concept in a manner that can motivate them to achieve their full academic potentials.

Keywords: academic achievement, self concept, student

1. Introduction

Academic achievement among students remains a concern worldwide. According to Shaukat (2014) on analysis of academic achievement of Lahore students, many students secured top positions in the Cambridge International Exams 2013. Pakistan in particular had some of its students getting the Outstanding Cambridge Learners Award in 2013. However, the strategies used to achieve the educational outcome were not clearly outlined therefore the current study sought to find out the influence of self-concept on academic performance.

Richardson (2012) study in USA found out that both in-school factors and out- school factors influence the academic achievement of students and that the learning factors outside the school were weighted more heavily, in part, due to the increased time that students spend at home and in their communities compared to the amount of time spent in school, and that the out-of-school factors influencing children in poverty differ significantly from those typically affecting middle income children. However, the findings were not specific to self-concept but rather environmental, social and economic factors.

In another study by Calaguas (2011) on academic achievement and academic adjustment among college freshmen as reflected in the General Weighted Averages (GWAs) of 32 college freshmen from Pampanga Agricultural College in Mabalang, Philipines were correlated with their scores in the Academic Adjustment. GWA is the average of grades in all subjects taken, whether passed or failed and serves as an indicator of students' academic achievement in a given school year. It is reflected in the fourth year high school report cards of college freshmen. However, there was no clear indicator as to whether self-concept contributes to the entry behaviour and whether it affected the overall academic performance.

Morelli (2015) in the Open Universities of Australia (OUA) in contrary presented ways of enhancing academic achievement which included; Online Readiness Assessment tool, to assist prospective students to understand what was required for online study and how to prepare themselves for that, Preparatory studies delivered online to prepare students for tertiary studies and in which tutors used educational technology to connect, communicate and enhance engagement and learning on a tutor-to-student as well as student-to-student basis, online tutorial services in which students could submit drafts of assignments for feedback and advice and could also participate in synchronous or asynchronous discussion with tutors in a wide range of subject areas. On the other hand the current study demonstrated that, by such means, we could improve the academic outcomes for students in open-entry online environments.

In contrast, Kavum (2014) study on strategies of improving academic performance in schools. In 2007, Uganda in particular had an increase in enrolment in schools due to the introduction of Free Secondary Education. At the same time, the scheme appeared to have increased the migration of students from village schools to better-performing urban ones which resulted in some rural schools barely being able to find enough students. The study however, did not account for other factors which could have contributed to that. The factor in question is self-concept.

In another study by Nwike (2013) in Nigeria, the findings revealed that students taught with instructional materials performed better than those taught without instructional materials. There was no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of male and female students. The recommendations were that instructional materials should be used in teaching in secondary schools because it had positive impact on students' academic performance.

Kimani, Kara and Njagi (2013) on the other hand, in Nyandarua County, Kenya found out that teachers' age, gender, professional qualifications and teaching experience were not significantly related to academic achievement. Teachers job group had significant and positive relationship with students' academic achievement in secondary schools. Teachers' weekly teaching workload, administration of students classroom assignments, evaluation of students Continuous Assessment Tests (CATs) results, provision of individualized attention to weak students, time of completion of Form Four syllabus and setting performance targets for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education significantly affected students' academic achievement.

Another study by Lydia and Nasongo (2009) reiterated that head teachers' role was to promote academic performance. That the schools could make a difference to student achievement and the head teachers' leadership was one factor determining that success. It was therefore important that the performance of a school was appraised against the performance of the person who led it. Head teachers should use quality improvement measures, teamwork and ensuring that the staff was well established as organizational skills that influenced academic achievement. The head teachers should also be involved in academic activities by observing and checking the students' and teachers' work, monitoring students discipline and helping in eradicating cheating in examinations. It could also be possible that personal variables could as well influence academic achievement among students. The personal variable in the present study was self-concept.

Report from Rongo Sub-County Education Office- Kenya, 2016 indicated that Rongo mean grade for academic performance for the years 2012, 2013 and 2014 in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination was below the average C+ required for the entry into Kenyan Universities.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Globally, academic achievement among students is of a great concern and in Kenya, academic achievement is mostly measured by use of examinations. It is expected that secondary school students should obtain a minimum university entry grade upon completing secondary school curriculum. However, most students still score below the university entry grade. The entry mean score for a degree course in Kenyan Universities stood at 7.00(C+) while the average mean score for Rongo Sub- County as has been highlighted was below it which was likely to negatively affect the student concerned as they would not pursue lucrative careers in Kenyan universities and the wastage would be greater. Academic success has been attributed to good use of relevant instructional resources, teacher factors influencing students' academic achievement and the principals' roles in enhancing students' academic achievement. However, scarce information was available on how the self-concept among students would contribute to academic achievement. The present study therefore sought to find out the influence of self-concept on academic performance of secondary school students in Rongo Sub-County, Kenya.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of self-concept on academic performance of secondary school students in Rongo Sub-County.

1.3. Specific Objectives for the Study

To find out the influence of self-concept on academic performance of form four students in Rongo Sub- County.
1.3.1 Null Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant influence of self-concept on academic performance.
1.3.2 Alternative Hypothesis: There is statistically significant influence of self-concept on academic performance.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The study has potential contributions. The study findings would help the Ministry of Education (MOE)-Kenya to come up with strategies that enhances self-concept of students. The study findings may benefit the Teachers Service Commission (TSC)-Kenya to advice its members on the best ways of handling learners to achieve their full academic potentials. Teacher counselors may utilize the findings to come up with therapy techniques to help students with academic problems to cope up with the challenges and improve where possible. The study can also add to the body of knowledge the strategies of improving self-concepts among students.

2. Research Methodology

A sequential explanatory research design which includes both quantitative and qualitative components was decided upon in the study to best address the research objective stated. The sequential explanatory research design employed mixed methods which involved collecting and analysing quantitative data and then qualitative data in two consecutive phases within one study then the results are integrated (Wankova, Creswell and Stick, 2006). Sequential explanatory research design was preferred since data required was based on questionnaires followed by interviews. The population of the study was 506 while sample size was 76 participants.

Schools	Target population	Sample Size	Percentage Sampled
Total number of schools	23	7	30%
Form four students	460	46	10%
Teacher counselors	23	23	100%
Total	**506**	**76**	**140%**

Table 1: Target population and Sample size of participants

3. Data Analysis, Interpretation and Presentation of Findings

Statement		S A	A	N	D	SD
I am satisfied with the secondary school I am learning at.	F	24	11	06	02	03
	%	52.2	23.9	13.0	4.3	6.5
I rarely depend on other students for my academic excellence.	F	23	12	08	02	09
	%	50.0	26.1	17.4	4.3	4.6
If I fail in a test, I still find it easier to work harder.	F	26	16	01	01	02
	%	56.5	34.8	2.2	2.2	4.3
So far, I think I have achieved every important academic goal I have set for myself.	F	18	17	08	02	01
	%	39.1	36.9	17.4	4.3	2.6
I think I have no difficulty in passing any of my subjects.	F	21	18	05	01	01
	%	45.7	39.1	10.9	2.2	2.2
In order to carry out a private study, I rarely need other students' cooperation.	F	26	14	04	02	00
	%	56.5	30.4	8.7	4.3	4.1
I consider myself to be a very uptight and highly focused student	F	22	15	06	02	01
	%	47.8	32.6	13.0	4.3	2.2
I have yet to achieve anything I consider to be important in my life after school.	F	20	19	05	01	01
	%	43.5	41.3	10.9	2.2	2.2
I think I am a boy/a girl of my word.	F	26	16	04	00	00
	%	56.5	34.8	8.7	0.0	0.0
I find it easy to embark on private studies without other student's support.	F	25	14	03	02	02
	%	54.3	30.4	6.5	4.3	5.6
I am more sensitive to academics than the majority of students.	F	19	15	07	02	03
	%	41.3	37.9	15.2	4.3	3.1
I have always overcome any difficulties I have encountered in my school life.	F	17	19	11	01	00
	%	36.9	32.6	23.9	2.2	4.1
I am usually honest when doing exams.	F	18	23	02	01	02
	%	39.1	50.0	4.3	2.2	1.0
When taking a decision on matters pertaining my academics, I depend too little on other students' opinions.	F	24	13	09	00	00
	%	52.2	28.3	19.6	0.0	2.1
If I could start my schooling over again, I would not change my performance very much.	F	09	06	08	12	11
	%	19.6	13.0	17.4	26.1	3.6
I try not to do anything that might make other students fail in exams.	F	27	13	06	00	00
	%	58.7	32.3	13.0	0.0	0.0
I find it easy to take decisions on my own regarding my future career.	F	25	12	07	01	01
	%	54.3	26.1	15.2	2.2	2.2
I am an emotionally strong student.	F	24	13	05	04	00
	%	52.2	32.3	10.9	6.5	3.1
I feel proud of how I am managing my academic life.	F	22	14	03	02	01
	%	47.8	30.4	9.7	4.3	2.2
I hardly suffer psychologically when I fail in exams.	F	07	06	04	15	12
	%	15.2	13.0	6.5	32.6	6.2
My academic performance is good.	F	18	13	04	06	05
	%	39.1	32.3	6.5	13.0	10.9
I know how to look after myself so as not to suffer while in school.	F	25	12	03	03	03
	%	54.3	26.1	9.7	9.7	9.7

Table 2: Influence of Self-Concept on academic performance (N=46)
Researcher, 2016

In establishing the self-concepts of the students, the study found that majority of the respondents (students) at 52.2% strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the schools they were learning at. Half of the respondents at 50.0% also strongly agreed that they rarely depend on other students for academic excellence. Concurrently, Ghazvini (2011) found out that there is a close relationship between academic self-concept and measures of academic performance brought about by the type of school a student is learning at while 26.1% just agreed with the statement. This shows that cumulatively, over three quarters of the respondents at 76.1% were independent hence were not relying on their fellows to achieve in academics.The findings supported that of Dramanu (2013) who found out that there is a positive relationship between academic self-concept and academic performance. It was also found that nearly half of the respondents at 47.8% strongly agreed that they were proud of how they were managing their academic lives, while 30.4% agreed with the statement. This shows that cumulatively, majority of the respondents at 77.1% were confident with the way they were managing their academic lives. The findings concurred with Ghazvini (2011) who found out that there is a close relationship between academic self-concept and measures of academic performance.

The study also documented that self-concept students were able to organize themselves adequately for private studies without the influence of their fellow students or teachers, as supported by most of the students cumulatively at 86.9%. Besides, the study revealed that the best predictor and for that matter the strongest and unique contributor that explains the variance of academic performance was academic or educational orientation self-concept. Majority of the students at 80.4% cumulatively also confirmed that they considered themselves to be upright and highly focused. This indicates that they were confident of themselves and could work hard to achieve more in academics with little external influence. The study also found that self-confident students would make independent choices and decisions regarding their future career as were confirmed by over half of the respondents at 54.3% who strongly agreed with this statement. Similarly, Sahranavard, (2014) also found that the general self-concept; science self-concept could influence on science performance among the students. In another study by Bacon (2011), the results indicated that there is a significant relationship between academic self-concept and academic performance. However, Zahra (2010) contradicts the findings by concluding that physical self-concept and social self-concepts are unrelated with academic performance but that academic self-concept is related with academic performance.The findings concur with that of Sagar (2014) who found out that there is no significant relationship between self-concept and academic achievement.

From the findings, it can be generally deduced that most of the students experienced self-concept and therefore perceived themselves as having strong and positive psychological entity, feelings and good attitudes towards themselves which assist their academic endeavors. The study therefore, sought to investigate how this self-concept relate with the academic performance. Table 3.2 shows the response.

	Performance Mean Grade	Self-Concept	
		Frequency	Percentage
1	A	06	13.0
2	B	09	19.6
3	C	20	43.5
4	D	11	23.9
5	E	00	10.9
	Total	**46**	**100%**

Table 3.2 Self-Concept and Academic Performance
Key: A=Excellent; B=Good; C= Average; D=Bad; E=Poor.

Using the performance mean grade of C as the pass mark, the study found that although only 13.0% had a mean grade of A, 19.6% had B and 43.5% had C whileonly 23.9% had D and according to Marsh (2011) findings there is an indirect influence of self-concept on academic performance but there is a direct influence of academic self-concept on academic achievement hence the reason for the grade. This shows that cumulatively, majority of the respondents at 76.1% had a mean grade of C and above. It can therefore be interpreted that self-concept had a positive influence on academic performance of students with such personalities. The findings also concur with that of Matiti (2012) who found out that there is a statistical significant relationship between self-concept and Music academic performance though the findings were only based on Music academic performance.

3.1. Correlation between Self-Concept and Academic Performance
A two tailed Bivariate Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to establish whether a relationship exists between self-concept among the students and their academic performance. The results are shown in the table 3.3

	Statistic	Students' Academic Performance
Self-Concept	Pearson Correlation	.794[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	46

Table 3.3 Correlation Self-concept and Academic Performance
**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)
Source: Researcher's Analysis, 2016

The results in Table 3.3 indicate a strong positive relationship of r = 0.794; p<0.05 between self-concept and students' academic performance. Since P value obtained was 0.0< 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, it was concluded that there was statistically significant influence of self-concept on academic achievement of secondary school students. This implies that when a student shows more self-concept, he or she is likely to pass exams and perform well in academics. This is also supported by the findings of Dramanu (2013) from who also showed a positive relationship between academic self-concept and academic performance of students. Similarly, Choi (2005) in USA found out that self-concepts are predictors of college students academic performance however, the findings contradicts that of Adebule (2014) who found that self-concept did not influence academic performance. The above results also concur with that of Veas, Cilar and Minano (2016) all concluded that regulated self-concept significantly predicted academic performance. However, Zahra (2010) in Pakistan documented that there is no significant relationship between self-concept and academic achievement.

Qualitative data from the interviews indicated that respondents (teacher counsellor) also found a significant influence of self-concept on academic achievement. The findings appeared thematically and one of the themes that came up was cognitive and emotional outcomes.

3.2. Cognitive and Emotional Outcomes
Cognitive and emotional outcomes are a state of individual's self-confidence with a conviction that one is well conversant with the appropriate problem solving techniques. It was noted that students with self-concept had good cognitive and emotional outcomes of academic achievements, given that they were in a position to easily solve their academic problems. In one of the interviews with the Teacher Counselors, one of them had to say that:

- "Self –concept students are confident and have the right attitude towards academic issues. This implies that they are capable of self-handling their academic welfare and as such, they are able to perform well in academics" [Teacher Counselor, 3].

Similarly, it was found that self-concept of the students helps them perceive themselves with respect to their experience with the environment and this ultimately makes them be in a better position to manage their academic problems in the best way they know possible. This was also supported by one of the teacher counselors during the interview who expressed that:

- Students exhibiting strong self-concept also show self-schemas, which interacts with self-esteem, self-knowledge, and the social self to form the self as whole. These type of students are aware of their past, present, and future selves, where future selves (or possible selves) represent students' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, or what they are afraid of becoming and all these collectively influence positively their academic performance [Teachers Counselor, 6].

Another response from one of the teacher counselors shows that students with self-confident have the ability to realize their mistakes and quickly adjust towards solving them. They also have the confidence to approach different situations which was justified when one of the teacher counselors said that:

- Self-confident students believe in themselves and abilities. This state is changeable according to the situation the students are currently in and their responses to events going on around them. It is also influenced by past events and how the students remember them; recalling a former success has a very different outcome in terms of their confidence levels than thinking about an occasion when they failed [Teacher Counselor, 11]

Another Teacher Counsellor also voiced his opinion that the students with self-concepts feel good about themselves and their abilities and are the ones who will most likely succeed in academics. The Teacher counselor said that:

- " Studies have found children's self-concept and self -esteem to be associated with academic achievement, performance in sports, quality in peer interactions and adoptions of specific coping skills" [Teacher Counselor, 16]

From the Teacher counsellors 3, 6, 11 and 16, it can be noted that Academic self-concept helps the students understand their personal beliefs about their academic abilities or skills, hence influencing their academic prowess. This is also supported by the findings of Bong and Skaalvik (2003) who also found out that self-concept acts as precursor of academic performance. Ghazvini, (2011) in Middle East also supported that there was close relationship between academic self-concept and measures of academic performance. The study also found that academic self-concept powerfully and positive predicts general performance in literature and mathematics. Bacon (2011) in USA also found a significant relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement measures of Iowa Test of Basic Skills composite scores and cumulative General Point Average. However, Adebule (2014) in Nigeria contradicts these findings when he found that self-concept did not influence academic performance of students.

4. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1. Summary
Summary of this study is presented in the following order; purpose of the study, objectives, methodology, major findings, conclusionsand recommendations. The purpose of the study was to; investigate the influence of selected personal variable on academic performance of secondary school students in Rongo Sub-County. Objectives to guide the study was developed. This was to find out the influence of self-concept on academic performance of form four students in Rongo Sub- County. The study adopted sequential explanatory research design with both quantitative and qualitative type of data. The researcher therefore employed the use of both simple random sampling to obtain the student participants from the sampled schools, stratified random sampling to sample the schools and purposive sampling to identify teacher counsellors. Only 7 public secondary schools were included in the study, 23

teacher counsellors participated in the study and 46 form four students were considered for the study. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis techniques, as well as inferential statistics such as Pearson Correlation and regression analysis, while qualitative data was analyzed through thematic framework. According to the major findings on the influence of self-concept on academic performance, the study found that cumulatively, majority of the respondents at 76.1% had a mean grade of C and above, considering C as the pass mean grade. Applying the Pearson correlation to establish this correlation, the results indicated a strong positive relationship of $r = 0.794$; $p<0.05$ between self-concept and students' academic performance. This implies that when a student shows more self-concept, he or she is likely to pass exams and perform well in academics. Results from qualitative data also indicate a positive relationship between self-concept and academic performance.

4.2. Conclusion
In conclusion, it was found out that students with positive self-concept were always independent hence were not relying on their fellows to achieve in academics, could always organize themselves adequately for private studies without the influence of their fellow students or teachers, considered themselves to be upright and highly focused and could work hard to achieve more in academics with little external influence and would always make independent choices and decisions regarding their future career. Linking these characteristics with academic performance, applying the Pearson correlation to establish this correlation, the conclusion was that there was a positive correlation between self-concept and academic performance.

4.3. Recommendations
This section stipulates the recommendations to be implemented for practice and policy so as to enable students perform well in academic activities. The following were the recommendations:
The Ministry of Education- Kenya should come up with appropriate policies and strategies that encourage self-concept of students and the best ways of motivating students. MOE should organize forums to share views with parents, teachers and the specific students on various ways of improving their academic performance. The MOE should also enhance teachers on self-concepts of students since the study findings indicated positive relationships between self-concept and academic performances, Teacher Service Commission-Kenya should advice its teachers on the best ways of handling learners in a manner that can motivate them to achieve their full academic potentials. This has been indicated in the study findings that whenever a student has positive self, he/she excels in academics. Principals should put in measures that encourage self-concept of students by making the learning environments friendly because self-concept has been found to have influence in academic performance, Teacher counselors, should adopt therapy techniques that enhance the development of self among students because the study findings indicated positive relationships between self-concept and academic performances while teachers should be enlightened on techniques of enhancing the students to develop their selves positively as the study found out that there is positive relationships between self-concept and academic performances while Parents should also be advised to deal with their children in a manner that promotes self- concept of their children.

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