

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

The Relationship between Educational Aspirations and Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) Performance in Mombasa County, Kenya

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Abstract:

The Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) performance plays an important role in determining the educational pathway of students. This examination is done in Kenya at the end of four years of secondary schooling. Those who excel are able to join institutions of higher learning and become valuable human resource who are able to play their rightful role in nation building. The declining level of KCSE performance in Mombasa County is a cause for concern among education stakeholders; the study therefore sought to address this concern by finding out if there is a relationship between educational aspiration and KCSE performance. The study was carried out in Mombasa County. Mombasa County is located in the southeastern part of the coast region of Kenya. It is the economic hub not only of the coastal region but also of the entire nation because it is the gateway to East Africa. Educational aspiration is expressing a desire to achieve in the academic domain. High educational aspiration in this study is when students show a desire to achieve in school academic performance and strive for progression whereas low educational aspiration indicates that a student shows no desire to achieve in school academic performance and progression for higher education. Education Aspiration level was measured by using educational aspiration Likert scale. The study adopted correlation research design and exploratory research design. It was conducted in Mombasa in all the six sub counties namely Mvita, Kisauni, Nyali, Jomvu, Changamwe and Likoni. The target population had 8648 form four students in 126 secondary schools, 126 academic Masters and Mistresses and six sub county Directors of education. Purposive sampling was used to select 864 students 21 academic Masters/Mistresses and six sub county Directors of Education. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to divide the student population to private and public. The two categories were further stratified to sub groups that included; boys' day schools, girls' day schools, boys' boarding schools, girls' boarding schools, mixed day schools and mixed boarding schools. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Quantitative data was analyzed with aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 20 and qualitative data applied thematic analysis Results from correlation analysis on the relationship between educational aspiration and KCSE performance ($r=0.404$, $N=864$, $p<0.001$) illustrates a positive and significant relationship between educational aspiration and students KCSE performance

Keywords: Educational aspiration, KCSE performance, Mombasa County

1. Introduction

Educational aspirations are ideas and hopes of what a person would like to become or achieve. It is a determinant of an individual's performance level in the future and it reflects educational goals an individual set for himself (Fraser & Garg,2011). Educational aspiration is an important variable in predicting academic achievement and may be seen as an element in academic achievement motivation focussing on achievement in education endeavours (Kaur,2012).

Studies have found educational aspirations to be one of the most significant predictors of education and career attainment for young people (Garg, Melanson & Levin, 2007). More specifically, there is empirical evidence that indicates that the level of education aspiration is predictive of persistence in schooling (Bui, 2007). However, findings on the association between educational aspirations and academic achievement remain inconclusive.

Educational aspirations have been found to be a function of ethnic, racial and socio-economic backgrounds and are unrelated to present or future academic achievement. Goodman (2011) found out how children from poor families show lower education attainment as compared to children from affluent families. Some students tend to hold high aspirations even beyond what the labour market can support which challenges the assumption that raising aspirations will enhance educational achievement (St Clair & Benjamin, 2011). There is conclusively a strong causal relationship between aspiration and educational outcomes of children from poor background. (Carter-Wall & Whitfield, 2012). Additionally, having high aspirations without being able to achieve them would negatively influence students by causing disappointment, frustration and arguable social withdrawal, or at least would result in a 'lost talent' (Hanson, 1994).

Studies from Africa on the extent to which educational aspirations predict achievement are scarce and conflicting; while Tafere (2015) argues that the high aspirations students hold are a valuable asset that needs to be utilized for the transformation of the nation and breaking the cycle of poverty in Ethiopia, Mugo and Kibera (2014) found differences in motivation, academic expectations and aspirations of students in secondary schools in Laikipia West District, Kenya across age, order of birth and gender.

Research conducted in Mombasa on the relationship between educational aspiration and academic performance is minimal. In a study of influence of teacher motivation in Mombasa, Muema (2015) attributed teacher motivation as indirectly affecting students' aspiration. When teacher motivation is low then they do not go an extra mile to ignite students' aspirations. Chivatsi (2014) attributed students' lack of aspiration on absence of performance target in pupils. The current study sought to go deeper in understanding whether these aspirations that have been predetermined have any influence on the KCSE performance of the students so that corrective measures can be adopted to help alter the educational levels of students in Mombasa.

2. Literature Review

Level of aspiration is defined as a psychological construct which reflect a cognitive type of motivation of the individual. In another way it is taken as a level of future performance in a future task which when an individual knows his level of past performance explicitly undertakes to reach it. It shows the estimation of an individual's ability for future performance based on the strength of his past experience, his ability and capacity, the efforts he can make towards attaining the goal and the consequences of his past experiences, whether failure oriented or success oriented level of efforts made by him in that direction, and his capacity to pursue the goal. Educational aspiration reflects educational goals an individual set for himself. It is important as it encourages and energizes the individual to achieve those (Singh & Sharma, 2017).

There are three groups of factors of educational aspiration: background factors, personal factors and environmental factors. Background factors comprises of social and demographic attributes such as age, gender, socio-economic status and family structure. The personal factors are psychological in nature and are composed of an individual's personal attitude towards education, school and work. The environmental factors include aspects of social support as parental involvement affecting the individual (Garg, Kauppi, Lewko, Urajnik, 2002). Christofides, Hoy, Milla and Stengos (2012) conducted a study to explore the forces that shape the development of aspiration and achievement of grades and how other variables play a role in the education outcomes of students such as going to the university and graduating. The study revealed that having aspiration to attend university during high school increases probability of attendance to university. Individual high school GPA and the aspiration for further education held during high school were seen to be important determinants of the probability of attending university. Further research using sample from secondary school student in Kenya was found necessary in order to generalize the findings.

Aspirations begin to be shaped early in a child's life but are modified by experience and the environment. Aspirations tend to decline as children mature in response to their growing understanding of the world and constraints imposed by previous choices and achievements (Kaur, 2012). In attempting to identify factors that influence the development of educational aspiration, research has also explained how other aspects of education engagement predict school outcomes. For example, in a longitudinal study that used a wide scale representative data 1103 students in Middle school in Maryland, Wang and Eccles (2011) demonstrated that drops in school participation, sense of school belonging and self-regulated learning were linked to drops in educational aspiration. The study does not give a clear indication whether educational aspiration affects performance in any way. Furthermore, the study was conducted in a developed nation warranting need to conduct a similar research in a developing nation like Kenya.

In a study on the relationship between educational achievement and educational aspiration for Latino middle and high school students, Moore (2014), analyzed group differences between Latino students' educational aspirations and academic achievement during eighth and tenth grade, as well as gender differences in aspiration level. The findings of the study indicated that during eight grade participants with educational aspiration of Bachelors or Master's degree had better academic outcomes based on California Standard Test performance, than student's participants with higher educational aspirations of a professional degree. This was not the case with tenth grade findings which yielded non-significant results between educational aspirations after transition to high school. When analysing aspiration level based on gender, there was no significant relationship. Regression analysis to assess the predictability of tenth grade GPA was reviewed using independent variables eighth grade GPA, California Standard Test performance and educational aspiration. The results showed that eighth grade GPA had the strongest relationship to tenth grade GPA. These findings suggest there are factors beyond educational aspiration contributing to students' persistence and academic achievement in high school, with eighth grade GPA having the strongest relationship to tenth grade GPA. Based on this the perception students have about their possible education attainment level may be developed based upon educational experiences from middle school. Therefore,

students' relationships, self-efficacy beliefs and academic performance in this period are critical for educational attainment levels beyond high school.

As people can only achieve what they have aspired, aspirations are important inputs for achievements. Aspirations are an individual's desire to obtain stated objectives or goals such as levels of education or particular occupation (Kao & Thompson, 1987). Rothan, Arephin, Klineberg, Cattell and Stansfeld (2011) looked at the relationship between aspiration and achievements at the General Certificate of Secondary Education in a deprived area of London. The results showed education aspirations are associated with individual characteristics. Girls are more likely than boys to express a wish to remain in education beyond age 16. Social psychological factors were shown to be of importance particularly self-esteem and psychological distress. Importantly, education aspiration had a strong association with actual achievement. The study took place in London thus making it hard to generalize its findings in Kenya in general and Mombasa in particular hence the need of conducting this study to be able to deduce whether similar or different findings will be realized.

Educational aspirations are influenced by multiple intrapersonal and systematic factors (Gottfredson, 2002). Some individual factors related to students' aspiration include their level of intra personal skills, self-reliance, self-control, self-concept, and own mature responsibility (Marjoribanks, 2002). In a study on educational aspiration of adolescents in relation to their intelligence, Kaur (2012) conducted a study on a sample of 200 adolescents studying in secondary schools of Amritsar District. The results indicated that gender and type of school do not influence educational aspiration of adolescents, but different levels of intelligence influence the educational aspiration of adolescents. The prevailing inconsistencies require a study using a sample from the mainstream population that establishes whether there is any relationship between educational aspiration and KCSE performance.

Conflicting and contradicting results are apparent in a more recent study, Singh and Sharma (2017) sampled 600, ninth class students of Jammu District in a study on how educational aspiration of secondary school students in relation to academic achievements. Education aspiration scale form of Sharma and Gupta was used to measure educational aspiration level. Findings revealed that education aspiration has a very low relationship with academic achievements. The futility of enhancing aspiration has been emphasized when no relationship was found between aspiration and performance at school level. Findings made by different researchers are yielding different and conflicting results hence a need to conduct this study was found in order to shed more light on the relationships between educational aspiration and academic performance more specifically KCSE performance.

Educational aspiration is an important variable in predicting academic achievement and may be seen as an element in academic achievement motivation, focusing as they do on the desire of success and the development of goals to succeed in particular educational fields (Kho & Ainsley, 2005). In a study of self-efficacy among secondary school students in relation to education aspiration and academic achievement in India, Ahuja (2016) sampled 106 boys and 104 girls in class 9. Girls had significantly higher scores in self-efficacy, education aspiration and academic achievements than boys. A statistically significant positive correlation was found between self-efficacy and educational aspiration of students. The study closely looked at self-efficacy and its influence on educational aspirations. A broader study needed to be conducted to extend a little bit further and see if there is any relation between educational aspiration and academic performance.

Garg, Kauppi, Lewko and Uranjik (2002) developed and tested a model to predict educational aspirations of Canadian adolescents. Participants were a national sample of 4034 students from grade 8-13, 2037 males and 1973 females. Results of a modified structural model include 3 sets of influences namely background factor comprised of parental occupation and education, a family involvement factor consisting of parental personal and school-based involvement with adolescents and a personal factor with school marks, school and course perception and extracurricular reading and parental educational expectations as indicator measures. Educational aspiration was the main outcome variable. The findings indicated that personal factors had a strong direct influence on educational aspirations.

Additionally, Rothan, Arephin, Klineberg, Cattell and Stansfeld (2011) looked at the relationship between aspiration and achievement at the general Certificate of Secondary Education in deprived areas of London. Findings revealed that educational aspirations are associated with individual characteristics. Girls are more likely than boys to remain in education beyond age 16. Socio psychological variables were seen to be of importance particularly self-esteem and psychological distress. Educational aspiration had a strong association with actual achievement at age 16, remaining associated even after controlling for a number of other variables including prior achievement.

Correspondingly, in a study on the aspiration to success in school and the need of performance to the pupils in Romania, Valerio (2015) looked at the type of attitudes and abilities of pupils, level of aspiration for progress and the need of performance of the pupils. The importance of aspiration and need of performance of pupils for ensuring school programs and the major role that school plays in promoting motivation and influencing efficient school results. The study looked at the need of aspiration and not the relationship between educational aspiration and performance, this study sought to establish the relationship.

The concept of aspirations refers to the students' academic desires, that is the number of years they intend to study and the academic level they intend to reach (Hour & Leung, 2011). In a study on students' engagement in school, academic aspiration and sex Veiga, Robu, Moura, Gaulao and Galvao (2014) examined students' engagement in school, attending to academic aspiration and sex differences as part of a larger research project on the differentiation and promotion of students' engagement in schools. The sample included 685 students attending sixth, seventh, ninth and tenth grade. Results showed a positive correlation between level of student's engagement in school and the level of academic aspirations. The study sought to further extend to establishing whether a relationship exists between educational aspiration and KCSE performance.

Additionally, in a study of education aspiration of students in Ethiopia, Tafere (2015) finds out that students from Certain Ethiopian communities hold high educational aspirations. Despite living in poverty, school children do not have any deficit of aspirations. The paper draws on survey data (collected in 2002, 2006 and 2009) of children born in 1994 ($N=980$) sampled from the 20 sites (8 urban and 12 rural) and qualitative data from 30 children from 5 sites, gathered in 2007, 2008 and 2011. The study sites were selected from five regions (Amhara, Oromia, SNNP-Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples, Tigray and Addis Ababa) where the majority (95%) of Ethiopian children lives. For the qualitative study, one site was selected from each region. The two urban sites are situated in the capital city (Bertukan) and the capital city of the SNNP region (Leku). The three rural sites are from the regions of Amhara (Tach-Meret), Oromia (Leki), and Tigray. There was a need to extend the study by understanding the relationship between educational aspiration and KCSE performance.

Furthermore, Kisilu, Kimani and Kombo (2012) in a study conducted on factors influencing occupational aspirations among girls in secondary schools in Nairobi region, Kenya. Sample consisted of eighty-seven form four girls' students. Findings confirmed that factors that affected aspiration included not only academic performance but also family settings, parenting, siblings and other relatives, school environment, personality and self-esteem, school environment and role models.

Moreover, a study on factors affecting motivation and academic expectations, aspirations of students in secondary schools in Laikipia West District, Laikipia County, Kenya Mugo and Kibera (2014) sampled 349 students. The findings indicate that students' characteristics were influential in determining level of motivation and that students in single sexed schools have a slightly higher academic aspiration compared to students in co-educational secondary schools. The need to extend the study to find out relationship between educational aspiration and KCSE performance became apparent as the preceding study just looked at aspiration and type of schools.

Likewise, Mungara (2012) looks at the factors affecting career aspiration of girls, emerging issues in Thika West Kiambu County. The sample of the study consisted of 320 secondary school girls where the findings established that students aspired to go to university after completing high school, parents support children's aspiration for further education but there are social economic factors and cultural practices that have a negative influence on girls' educational aspiration.

In summary the weight of evidence on the research on influence of educational aspiration on academic performance of students are shaky and inconclusive therefore there was a need to conduct more research on this area.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample of the Study

Type of School		Population			Sample		
Public Schools	No of Schools	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Boys Boarding	2	190	-	190	19	-	19
Boys Day	9	850	-	850	85	-	85
Girls Boarding	2	-	233	233	-	23	23
Girls Day	8	-	839	839	-	84	84
Mixed Day	14	660	620	1280	66	62	128
Mixed Boarding	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	35	1700	1692	3392	170	169	339
Private Schools							
Boys Boarding	2	26	-	26	3	-	3
Boys Day	1	29	-	29	3	-	3
Girls Boarding	4	-	131	131	-	13	13
Girls Day	2	-	33	33	-	3	3
Mixed Day	81	2495	2370	4865	251	235	486
Mixed Boarding	1	70	102	172	7	10	17
Sub total	91	2618	2638	5256	262	263	525
TOTAL	126	4318	4330	8648	434	430	864
N=864							

Table 1: Sampling Framefor Students

The sampling guidelines given by Tromp and Kombo (2006) of 10% to 20% to be appropriate size to draw a sample from a population was used.

3.2. Data Collection Procedures

The study employed three sampling procedures; purposive sampling, stratified simple random sampling and simple random sampling. Purposive sampling allows a researcher to use cases that have the required information with respect to objectives of the study (Mugenda, 2008). Purposive sampling was used to select 2017 form four students in

secondary schools in Mombasa County. Four students were selected because they have already gone through four year of studies and are just about to sit for the KCSE examination.

Samples were drawn from all the six sub counties in Mombasa. Stratified simple random sampling was used to achieve the desired representation of various subgroups. Where the population has a number of distinct categories of different sizes subjects are selected in such a way that existing subgroups in the population are fairly but randomly represented within the sample (Mugenda, 2008). This technique is used when there is fear that certain groups within the population may be under represented in the sample or misses out completely. Stratified simple random sampling was used to classify the 126 secondary schools in Mombasa County into two categories that is public and private schools. There are 35 public schools and 91 private schools in Mombasa County. A total of 7 public schools representing 20% of public schools sampled and 14 private schools representing 15.38% were sampled. According to Tromp and Kombo (2006), a sample of between 10 and 20 percent is appropriate. Stratified simple random sampling was again used to further divide the two main categories that is public and private into sub groups or strata that are very important in guaranteeing a representative sample. The sub groups or strata in each of the two categories that is public and private schools were boys boarding, boy's day, girls boarding, girl's day, mixed boarding and mixed day. A majority of the schools in the population are mixed day schools as indicated in table1 this necessitated to draw a larger sample from the mixed day school subgroup to ensure that the majority in the population are represented proportionally (Mugenda, 2008).

In charge of academics in the 21 schools were also purposively sampled. Each of the sampled schools had one teacher in charge of academics sampled making a total of 21 teachers. Total population sampling which is a type of purposive sampling (Laerd, 2018) was used to select all the six sub county Directors of education from the six sub counties in Mombasa County. This type of sampling technique was found necessary as sampling the entire population of six sub county Directors of education in Mombasa County was found appropriate as the population is very small posing a risk of missing out important information for the study if a segment of the population was left out of the study.

Simple random sampling was used to get the required number of students' respondents per school, a register of all form four students in the school was used. Paper folds of desired group of students were marked "yes" while the rest were left blank. The pieces of papers were kept inside an empty tin and were mixed. The students were asked to pick the paper folds randomly. The students who picked blank paper folds were asked to leave the room while those who picked paper folds marked "yes" were asked to remain behind to fill in the questionnaire. The desired representation of male female sub group was done in mixed schools, in single sexed schools the register was not categorized.

More specifically 339 students and 7 academic Masters/Mistresses were selected from public schools, 525 students and 14 academic Masters/Mistresses from private schools and 6 sub county officers of education from each of the 6 sub counties in Mombasa that is Mvita, Likoni, Changamwe, Jomvu, Nyali and Kisauni respectively.

Category	Population	Sample size	Percentage
Students	8648	864	10%
Academic	126	21	16.6%
Masters/Mistresses	6	6	100%
Sub County Directors	8780	891	10.4%
Total			

Table 2: Summary Sample Size for Study

3.3. Instrument of the Study

Three main instruments were used to collect data namely student's questionnaire, 2017 KCSE results analysis score sheets, teachers in charge of academics and sub county directors of education semi structured interview schedules. The questionnaire was administered in September 2017, a month before the KCSE examination commenced to collect data on self-esteem, educational aspiration and attitude towards education. The KCSE results analysis sheets were collected immediately after the KCSE results were released in December 2017. The semi structured interview for teachers in charge of academics was done before the KCSE examination commenced in the months of September and October, 2017 while the interview for sub county Directors of education was done in the month of February after the release and analysis of the 2017 KCSE results.

The Attitude towards Education Scale (AES) is a 15-likert item scale developed by the researcher to measure the attitude towards education level of the respondents. The Likert scales items are on different types of issues in which the respondents are expected to respond from strongly agree to strongly disagree (refer to Appendix B).

To score the AES scale numerical values were assigned to each response. The lowest possible score per item is 1 and the highest is 4. The lowest total score on AES was 15 and the highest was 60. Three categories were developed to assess the level of attitude towards education. The categories are high, average and low. Respondents who score 15-30 are assumed to have low attitude towards education, a score of 31-44 indicates a moderate attitude towards education and a score of 45-60 indicates a high attitude towards education (refer to Appendix B).

4. Significance of the Study

The findings may be of significance to the policy makers, school administrators, teachers, parents and all other stakeholders in the education sector. The findings are expected to explain how KCSE performance can be greatly affected by psychological determinants. In particular, the study may help school administrators, teachers and teacher counsellors realize the importance of the psychological determinants that is self-esteem, setting aspirations and acquiring appropriate

attitudes in determining KCSE performance. The policy makers specifically in the education sector may have an opportunity to have a better understanding on how psychological determinants that affects KCSE performance especially in the recent past where the government and the general public have continued to express concern in deteriorating performance in the national examinations.

School administrators, teachers, teacher counsellors, in the school system and parents may utilize information from this study to encourage students in realizing academic excellence by nurturing them towards attaining healthy psychological wellbeing in order to attain excellent KCSE performance. Specifically, by creating the best environment to raise students' self-esteem, attitude and aspirations. Students may use findings of the study to recharge and redirect their self-esteem positively, change their attitude and aim to have higher aspirations in order to perform well not only in the KCSE examinations but also in the continuous assessment tests and end of term examinations at all levels of assessment and testing.

The study may add on to the already existing research locally and internationally and may encourage more research work in the area of establishing existence of relationships between psychological factors and school performance.

5. Findings and Discussion

Grade	Frequency	Percentage
E	143	16.6
D-	240	27.7
D	119	13.8
D+	83	9.6
C-	61	7.1
C	58	6.7
C+	52	6.0
B-	40	4.6
B	21	2.5
B+	27	3.1
A-	20	2.3
Total	864	100.0

Table 3: Students' Performance in KCSE

Data obtained for respondents KCSE performance is summarized in Table 3. It shows that generally, more than half of the students sampled (67.7%) scored D+ and below and could be presumed to have performed poorly in KCSE in 2017 consistent with performance of students in the summative examinations generally within the country. Less than a fifth (18.5%) attained quality grades (C+ and above) and were expected to get placement to pursue university education under government sponsorship. A further 13.8% scored C and C- and would get placement in various tertiary colleges offering diploma and certificate courses.

5.1. General Educational Aspiration Level

The objective of the study sought to find out the relationship between educational aspiration and students' performance in KCSE. In order to achieve this, sampled students were provided with 20 statements aimed at assessing their educational aspirations which would then be correlated with their achievement.

Data obtained from students' score on their educational aspiration were as summarized in Table 4.

Statements	SD		D		A		SA		T	
	F	%	F	%	f	%	F	%	F	%
I want to go to university/college to study.	17	2.0	262	30.3	344	39.8	241	27.9	864	100
I do not think I can perform well to go to university/college.	100	11.6	289	33.4	289	33.4	186	21.6	864	100
My teachers encourage me to aim higher in my studies.	161	18.6	242	28.0	343	39.7	118	13.7	864	100

My parents are against the idea of me going for higher education.	131	15.2	393	45.5	217	25.1	123	14.2	864	100
I am self-motivated to excel in my studies.	132	15.2	341	39.5	302	35.0	89	10.3	864	100
I receive career guidance at school.	129	14.9	298	11.3	325	37.6	112	13.0	864	100
I am greatly inspired to aim higher in my studies.	167	19.3	202	23.4	284	32.9	211	24.4	864	100
Going to university/college is a waste of time.	112	13.0	357	41.3	267	30.9	128	14.8	864	100
I feel like I know enough of higher education to help me make a decision about going to university.	76	8.8	363	42.0	311	36.0	4	13.2	864	100
I have decided not to go for further education.	213	24.7	261	30.2	262	30.3	128	14.8	864	100
Most of my friends will probably go on to higher education.	28	3.2	314	36.4	320	37.0	202	23.4	864	100
I probably will not go straight to higher education when I leave school but I may go in the future.	186	21.5	386	44.7	138	16.0	154	17.8	864	100
I will improve my chances of getting a better job if I went in to higher education.	132	15.3	219	25.3	412	47.7	101	11.7	864	100
My parents/guardians want me to go to university/college.	113	13.1	242	28.0	101	11.7	408	47.2	864	100
I know what I want to study at the university/college.	123	14.2	411	47.6	211	24.4	119	13.8	864	100
None or not many of my friends will go into university/college.	133	15.4	300	34.7	234	27.1	197	22.8	864	100
Higher education will really help you develop your skills.	137	15.9	294	34.0	239	27.7	194	22.4	864	100
The cost of university/college may stop me from attaining higher education.	119	13.8	376	43.5	217	25.1	152	17.6	864	100
Higher education broadens your outlook of life	130	15.0	233	27.0	435	50.4	66	7.6	864	100
I do not think my results will be good enough to get me in to university/college.	198	22.9	196	22.7	303	35.1	167	19.3	864	100

Table 4: Educational Aspiration

The vast majority of the students have a desire to pursue higher education. Specifically, more than two third of the respondents or 584(67.7%) want to go to university/college to study where 27.9% strongly agreed and 39.8% agreed. About 32.3% or 280 do not want go to pursue higher education where 30.3% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed. This indicates a longing of some of the students to eventually proceed with their studies and at the same time indicates that some students have reservations of pursuing higher education due to reasons best known to them.

More than half of the respondents or 475 (55%) do not think they can perform well enough to go to university where 21.6% strongly agreed and 33.4 % agreed. This indicates that a majority of the students who participated in the study doubt their academic abilities and admit that even if they complete high school, they may not be fully prepared to join higher education. Less than half or 389(45%) think they can go to university where 11.6% strongly disagreed and 33.4% disagreed. This indicates that some of the respondents feel prepared to work hard and get good grades in order to join college. This finding further indicates that despite 584(67.7%) saying that they want to go to university/college to study where More than half of the respondents or 475 (55%) do not think they can perform well enough to go to university. This shows a desire with no willpower to pursue higher education.

About more than a third or 338(39.2%) affirmed that their parents are against the idea of going for further education where 14.2%strongly agreed and 25.1%agreed. This indicates that pursuit of higher education could be losing prestige or that the costs of higher education are increasing. A whopping majority confirmed that their parents want them to go for further education or 526 (60.8%) where 15.2%strongly disagreed and 45.5% disagreed. This indicates that most parents want to secure the future of their children by encouraging them to pursue higher education.

Less than half or 391 (45.3%) were self-motivated to excel in their studies where 10.3% agreed and 35% agreed. This indicates that fewer students are enthusiastic and self-driven in their studies. The majority of the respondents or

473(54.7%) are not self-motivated where 39.5% disagreed and 15.2 %strongly disagreed. This is an indication that the majority of the students are unmotivated and unengaged in academic pursuits.

Slightly more than half or 437 (50.6%) confirmed that they receive career guidance at school where 13 %strongly agreed and 37.6% disagreed. About slightly less than half or 427 (49.4%) ascertained that they do not receive career guidance at school. This indicates that not all the students get an opportunity to information as they navigate through the process of finding their niche in the career world so that they can work hard in the KCSE examination to be able to get into careers that will interest them. It is only through provision of career guidance that students can easily be ignited to get the right grades to venture into suitable careers after high school.

Slightly more than half or 437(57.3%) are greatly inspired to aim higher in their studies where 24.4% strongly agreed and 32.9%agreed. This shows that a good number of the students have an array of motives that inspires them towards their school work. Less than half or 427 respondents do not feel inspired (42.7%) where19.3% strongly disagreed and 23.4%disagreed. This indicates that there are still learners who have no stamina and show no enthusiasm in their school work.

Similarly, more than half of the respondents or 469 (54.3%) were categorical that going to university/college is not a waste of time where 13.0 %strongly disagreed and 41.3% disagreed. This indicates that pursuit of higher education is a general expectation of many students. Less than half were of a different opinion or 395(45.7%) where 14.8% strongly agreed and 30.9% agreed. This shows that there are students who have different alternatives after high school and are not interested to pursue higher education.

On the contrary, less than half of the respondents or 425 (49.2%) feel like they know enough of higher education to help them make a decision about going to university where 13.2% strongly agreed and 36% agreed. More than half (50.8%) or 439 feel they do not know enough to help them make a decision on higher education where 42 %disagreed and 8.8 %agreed. This indicates that information on opportunities available in higher education is not provided to all students. There are students who are greatly disadvantaged as they have no guidance and direction on issues of post-secondary education opportunities.

Less than half or 389(45.1%) have decided not to go for further education where 14.8%strongly agreed and 30.3% agreed. Majority or 475 (54.9%) where 14.8%strongly agreed and 30.3% agreed. More than half (54.9%) or 475 are aiming to pursue further education where 24.7%strongly disagreed and 30.2% disagreed that they are not ready to go for further education. This shades light on how students perceive higher education. There are within their midst students who desire to further their education after high school and others who care less and have other plans for themselves.

More than half or 521 (60.4%) had friends who would probably go on to higher education where 23.4%strongly agreed and 37% disagreed? Slightly more than a third or 343 (39.6%) were of contrary opinion where 36.4% disagreed and 3.2% strongly disagree. The influence of peers is important in academic achievements. Influence from friends can easily bring in academic achievement or the contrary. Friend's relationships are very important determinants of student's decisions including pursuit of higher education.

Slightly more than a third or 292 (33.8%) will probably not go for higher education when they leave school but may go in future where 17.8% strongly agreed and 16% agreed. This indicates that some of the students are willing to pursue further education but their enrolment is planned to be postponed, the choice is to delay college enrolment until later in life. The majority or 572 (66.2%) were of contrary opinion where 44.7% disagreed and 21.5% strongly agreed. This indicates that the college dream reigns supreme amongst the students. It is evident that more students are becoming inherently aware of the benefits of higher education and are showing a lot of interest to pursue it.

A majority or 513 (59.4%) are in agreement that chances of getting a better job will improve if they go for further education. This shows that the students appreciate the role higher education plays in finding a good job and getting engaged in a stimulating career where 11.7% strongly agreed and 47.7 %disagreed but others or 351(40.6%) are of contrary opinion where 25.3 % disagreed and 15.3% strongly disagreed, indicating that there are convinced that you can excel in the job market without higher education.

Slightly more than half or 449(52%) know that they want to study at the university where38.2 %agreed and 13.8% strongly agreed. Categorically less than half or 415(48%) were of a different opinion where47.6% disagreed and 14.2% strongly agreed. This indicates that quite a number of the students have no idea of what to pursue in higher education even as they are getting nearer to complete their secondary school education.

Furthermore, almost half of the respondents or 433 (50.1%) thought that higher education would really help them develop their skills where 22.4% strongly agreed and 27.7 %agreed. On the contrary slightly less than half (49.9%) or 431disagreed where34% disagreed and 15.9% strongly disagreed. This indicates that most of the students appreciate the role of higher education in skills development but we still have other students who think that they can acquire skills not necessarily through pursuit of higher education.

About one fifth or 369 (42.7%) were categorical that the cost of university/college will not stop them from attaining higher education where 17.6% strongly agreed and 25.1% agreed. Majority or 495 (57.3%) agreed that the cost of university education will stop them from attaining higher education with 43.5% disagreed and 13.8% strongly agreed. This indicates that the cost of higher education will make it hard for a majority of the students to proceed with their studies. The rising fees will shut out many students from furthering their education.

Many feels that higher education broadens one's outlook of life or 501 (58%) where 7.6% strongly agreed and 50.4% agreed. Some or 363(42%) were of contrary opinion where 15 %strongly agreed and 27 %disagreed. This indicates that majority of the students appreciate the role of higher education in broadening your prospects that may include

thinking abstractly, communication acumen and other skills imparted but a considerable number of the students do not think that higher education broadens one's mind.

Ultimately, slightly less than half of the respondents or 394 (45.6%) were sure that their results will be good enough to get them in to university/college where 22.9% strongly disagreed and 22.7% disagreed. This shows that we have students who are focused and are prepared to excel in order to move up the academic ladder. Majority or 490(54.4%) were of contrary opinion agreed where 19.3% strongly agreed and 35.1% agreed. This indicates that many students are uncertain about their KCSE performance.

The study undertook a rating of the students' educational aspiration based on a comparison of the average score and actual score in the scale of educational aspiration. Consequently, with a minimum score of 19 and a maximum of 69 on the scale, those who scored 35 or less in the scale were classified as having low educational aspiration, those who scored between 36 and 51 were classified as having moderate levels of educational aspiration while those whose score were 52 and above were classified as having high levels of educational aspiration yielding data as summarized in Table 5.

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low	172	19.9
Average	637	73.7
High	55	6.4
Total	864	100.0

Table 5: Levels of Educational Aspiration

Information contained in Table 5 shows that slightly less than one out of five of the sampled students or 172 (19.9%) had low levels of educational aspiration, more than half or 637 (73.7%) indicated that their level of educational aspiration was average while very few or 55 (6.4%) had high educational aspirations.

The general KCSE results of the respondents closely corresponds with the general results of the educational aspiration level. Less than a fifth (18.5%) scored grade C+ and above while only 6.4% of the students scored high on levels of educational aspiration. of the respondents scoring high on educational aspiration level. A majority of the students scored have average levels of educational aspirations. Whereas students who scored grade E plain which is the lowest grade that one can attain in the KCSE are 16.6%, this is relatively close to the percentage of students who had a low score in self-esteem at 19.9%. This is an indication that not only students who score high in educational aspiration level have a probability of scoring highly in the KCSE examinations. Students with average level of educational aspiration can also excel.

5.2. Qualitative Analysis

On provision of career counselling services; qualitative data from teachers in charge of academics from the public schools confirmed that all the schools provide periodic career guidance to all their students. Some have fortnight brief career presentations at the assembly hall while others have teachers in charge of careers. One of the public schools organizes for students in form three and form fours to attend career fares. One of the schools engage students to choose a career they wish to pursue from the first day they report to school in form one. From the private schools, seven have robust career advisory programs for their students. Out of the seven, four of the schools have frequent and elaborate career programs for all their students but the rest of the private school have very minimal career orientation training for students. Pupils are in some schools not exposed at all to career issues. This implies that not all students get an opportunity to receive career guidance which is the beginning of a process of exploring the options that may interest students to the world of work. Career guidance is necessary in supporting students in gaining a better understanding in making decisions about careers hence aspire to get the right grades to venture into desired career path.

On mentorship programmes; out of the 21 schools only six have started mentorship programmes for students especially form fours. From public schools two of the schools have very good mentorship programs, three have but not very active while two have none. For private schools three have very elaborate programs, three have some sort of mentorship programs while eight have none. Most of the mentorship programs revolve around dividing students in to smaller groups and assigning a teacher mentor or engaging former students who did well and either are at the university or are pursuing different careers to closely mentor the students. This according to the schools prove to be a challenge as most of those students are out of town or are very busy and hard to engage. One public school has a strong and vibrant alumni association that help coordinate these activities. An alumni association brings in former students who can easily help inspire the students who are currently in school. They are important also in bringing in their expertise and in making deliberate efforts to motivate and encourage the existing students.

On general aspirations of students; there was consensus among the academic Masters/Mistresses that most of the students are provided with little direction and minimal guidance that has a huge impact on their aspiration and school performance. There isn't much emphasize laid on nurturing the educational aspiration of students noted the respondents. More emphasis is placed on teaching and completing the syllabus. Students come from various background, others have educated parents, and some are orphans while others have parents and guardians who have never been to school. Teachers and school administration need to be more sensitized on tapping on students' potentials that will encourage them to have high educational aspirations advised some of the respondents.

All the teachers in charge of academics were in agreement that school environment and teachers support plays a big role in shaping up the student's educational aspirations. It was coming out clear and loud that students coming from well performing schools have higher levels of educational aspirations and recorded better KCSE performance as compared to students from non-performing schools who had lower educational aspiration and lower KCSE performance.

Most of the academic teachers or 18 of them (85%) indicated that social and economic trajectories were also linked to educational aspiration levels and KCSE performance with students in schools located in rich neighborhoods recording higher levels of educational aspiration and eventually performing better in the KCSE examination. All of the academic Masters/Mistresses were in agreement of this. Educational aspirations were seen to be hidden under economic wellbeing, back ground and forces associated to them. All the respondents however insisted that these forces can be ameliorated via school support system and other internal and external sources.

On the relationship between aspiration and KCSE performance; all the teachers in charge of academics agreed that there was a kind of relationship between the variables. Fifteen out of the 21 teachers in charge of academics said that students who have high aspiration work very hard to attain good grades so that they can pursue their dream careers. Six of the teachers were of different opinion arguing that most students fail not because they do not aspire to be successful in pursuing various careers but because of laziness. Most have very few role models. Many just want to go through the KCSE exams and get a certificate. How good the certificate is does not matter too many of them according to some of the academic Masters/Mistresses. This indicates that many of the students lack zeal and enthusiasm in their academic endeavours. The disengagement in school work generally and KCSE performance in particular reflects lack of interest.

It was evident from the study that schools differ in setting up programmes for advancement of student's educational aspiration levels. There are schools that have set up elaborate academic track programmes that nurtures student's educational aspirations while other school have no arrangements at all to for student's educational aspirations. This confirms that the 'playing field' in preparation of candidates for the KCSE performance is unbalanced, depending on the student is enrolled in the educational aspiration level will be raised, left where it is or be deflated yet there was a consensus from the academic Masters/Mistresses on the positive influence of educational aspiration level on KCSE performance.

The Sub County Directors of Education had interesting input on the relationship between educational aspiration and KCSE performance. All the respondents were concerned that there are very few role models who can inspire and ignite students 'aspirations. Most of the role models are uneducated people who have prospered to become very rich tycoons. As respondent B puts it;

"The situation is peculiar in Mombasa because most of role models these students see in the community who have become successful was not through education. We have rich tycoons who never made it through education but through business. Some have even become politicians and they command a lot of respect. These students idolize such role models and find it very difficult to believe that scoring high grades in KCSE will guarantee them success. Many are in school just to get the KCSE certificate, how good or bad it is does not matter too many of them..."

Mombasa being a tourism destination has complicated the situation. Kisauni and Nyali are located at the North Coast while Likoni is at the South Coast. These areas have a very high number of hotels where tourists from different parts of the world flock. Many of these young men and women either aspire to work as 'beach boys' as respondent B puts it or aspire to 'hook' a rich tourist and be 'kept' so as to provide sexual services for the rich 'wazungu' confirmed respondent B. These 'kept' young men or women live in leafy suburbs of Mombasa and live expensive lives. They are seen as role models by these young school boys and girls. The easiest way out of poverty. Some end up living abroad with their benefactors.

Respondent A argues out that it is common to find youth idling away in the streets of Mombasa in places that are referred to as 'maskani' (dwellings) as they have very low KCSE grades and are unable to transit to colleges. Many in his sub county find it difficult to enroll for artisan and craft courses because they will end up getting low pay. The respondent blames escalating crime rate in Mombasa to these idle youth who are not properly engaged. Groups like 'wakali wao', 'wakali kwanza' and 'wajukuu wa bibi' are involved in crime and are terrorizing locals. Respondent F believes that it is the idleness of the youth that makes them use and abuse drugs. Respondent F elaborates that;

"These kids waste themselves in drug and substance abuse. Mombasa is notorious in this vice according to media reports. These days we have 'mugoka' leaves that come in cheap. These youth end up getting frustrated and it becomes a vicious circle of poverty. These are the same people who are easily lured into extremism and radicalization. The situation is dire, there is a need to have real role models to inspire these kids..."

Respondent B said that some of the students who come from affluent families. You may at times find some of these children not keen enough because either they are lazy or they just want to clear their studies so that they can be absorbed into family businesses recons respondent D while others have set lower standards for themselves aspiring to be 'matatu' drivers, touts or 'tuktuk' (three wheeled motorcycles) drivers, 'tuktuk' operation is what many youth are hoping to engage in exclaimed respondent C. While others are hoping to secure employment in the Middle East or Arabia as house helps and drivers.

Concern was raised by respondent E, F and Aof girls either dropping out of school to get married or showing no interest to school work because they have been engaged to marry. The option of marriage immediately after completing school is very common stressed respondent E. Many parents want their daughters to marry early because of fear of getting into bad company or getting pregnant. Some of the girls marry even before the KCSE results are release exclaimed respondent these types of students definitely show no interest in school work and mostly find no reason to channel their energy towards studies. We do however have some of the girls performing exceptionally well in the KCSE examination but

there dream of proceeding to university is crushed because some of the parents find no need to educate girls up to that level. What has saved some of the girls coming from conservative families to proceed with their education is the mushrooming of university satellite campuses in Mombasa confirmed respondent F.

Support from various non-governmental organizations and some youth groups have created some awareness on the students on the importance of aspiring to succeed in school said respondent B. The emergence of these groups has complemented efforts made by schools in fostering students' aspirations. Some of these groups offer bursaries to needy and bright students and offer career guidance for free. I know of others who offer free tuitions during vacations to KCPE and KCSE candidates said respondent C. Respondent D raised the same compliments to the groups that offers candidates support in Mombasa County. This has greatly assisted disadvantaged students in the County. Respondent A raised concern that many parents from poor families are probably not aware of the various bursaries that are available for needy students like the County Development Fund and the National government fund. Sensitization of availability of these funds is done often in public schools but concern was raised on trickling of this information in private schools where some of the school Principals are non-committal.

Despite the gloomy picture we do have students who are dedicated and have very high aspirations expressed respondent A, B and E. Some have high aspirations especially those who get a lot of support from home but end up underachieving while others have high aspirations and it is reflected in their performance. Those who manage to perform well end up getting into Universities to pursue various degrees. There is a growing trend of more girls getting into careers that were predominantly thought to be male dominated like Engineering and Medicine concluded respondent A.

6. Conclusion

The findings reveal that educational aspiration to be an important factor that determines students KCSE performance. Students who have high educational aspirations levels tend to be more inclined to seek better KCSE results than students who have limited educational aspiration levels.

7. Recommendations

Promotion of formative learning in schools is imperative. School teachers should give special attention to students with low educational aspirations to enhance their performance. Students completion should be encouraged and high academic standards should be maintained. Students educational aspiration should be stimulated and be an important part in ensuring that students have educational plans that will enable them progress and transit into institutions of higher learning.

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