

# Relationship between Self-esteem and Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) Performance in Mombasa County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** -In Kenya, the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE) is done after completion of secondary school education. Performance in the KCSE has implications that plays out across life stages and at multiple levels. It can enhance or can derail ones educational and occupational trajectories. Passing the KCSE examination enables one to pursue higher education, as entry into institutions of higher learning for various programmes is paged on KCSE performance.

The declining level of KCSE performance in Mombasa County is a cause for concern among education stakeholders; the study therefore seeks to address this concern by finding out if there is a relationship between psychological determinants and students KCSE performance in Mombasa County, Kenya. The study's main objective was to find out the relationship between self-esteem and KCSE performance in Mombasa County, Kenya. 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.

**Keywords:** KCSE, Mombasa, Performance, Self esteem

## I. INTRODUCTION

Blascovitch and Tomaka (1991) define self-esteem as an individual's sense of his or her value or worth, the extent to which a person values, approves of, appreciates or likes him or herself. Self-esteem is generally considered as the evaluative component of the self-concept, a broader representation of the self that includes cognitive and behavioral aspects as well as evaluative or affective ones. Self-esteem affects the thinking process, emotions, desires, values and goals in a person (Sandra, 2009).

High self-esteem helps individuals to view themselves as active and capable persons to promote changes through effort and be able to set higher goals, which cause learning of new things. Interestingly, numerous researchers have demonstrated that the best way to improve student achievement is to raise their self-esteem (Rubie, 2004).

Globally a lot of research has been conducted on self-esteem. Studies in the United States of America and other Western

countries has revealed a relationship between students' self-esteem and academic performance. However, findings remain debatable and inconclusive (Naderi, 2009). Additionally, research is inconclusive regarding the directional influence of self-esteem especially in connection to academic achievement for early adolescents who have been shown to experience fluctuations in self-esteem because of school climate change and domain-specific school success. It is not clear whether high self-esteem leads to better school performance or it is counterproductive and has no relationship at all with school performance (Baumeister, Campbell, Kruger & Vohs, 2003). This being the case it was important to conduct the study and determine whether self-esteem has any relationship with academic performance, specifically KCSE performance. KCSE performance is important as the test results define the occupational direction of the students.

On the other hand, research shows that high self-esteem predicts educational performance. Improved academic self-concept and motives will lead to better academic achievement, better academic self-concept and academic motivation (Green, Nelson, Martin & Marsh, 2006). Further evidence was provided in a study of 838 secondary students in the United States by Alves, Peixoto, Gouveira and Amaral (2002) which found a significant relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement for seventh-grade students, but not for ninth-grade. In a longitudinal study by Trautwein, Ludtke, Koller and Baumert (2006) among a large sample of East and West German seventh-graders, prior self-concept significantly predicted later achievement and prior achievement significantly predicted later mathematics self-concept. Contrastingly, a reciprocal relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement was found in the study. Similarly Juyandegan (2016) found a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and reading.

At the same time some studies have failed to find evidence of a relationship between self-esteem and achievement within particular populations. For instance, Ross and Broh (2000) have found in an analysis of data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study in the United States that a sense of personal control affects subsequent academic

achievement but self-esteem does not. This suggests that self-esteem has no effect on students school performance. This study was imperative to be able to explore further whether self-esteem has a relationship with academic performance of students or not.

In Africa, research on the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement is minimal; however, related research points to a positive relationship between overall self-esteem and study habits in studies made in Ghana on the relationship between academic self-concept and academic performance of high school students (Dramani & Balarabe, 2013) and correspondingly in Zimbabwe in a study on students self-concept and academic achievement (Gwiwari & Shumba, 2007).

Several studies conducted in Kenya generally points out a positive relationship between self-esteem and academic performance. For example, in Nairobi, (Nyamu, 2007) points to an association between self-esteem and organizational citizenship behavior, which is related to academic achievement. Correspondingly, Okoko (2012) found a positive relationship between self-esteem and performance in Homa Bay. In a study carried out in Mombasa of academic misidentifications among Form Three students in Mombasa County, Otanga (2016) found out that academic self-esteem partially mediated relationship between academic achievement and devaluing.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed correlation and exploratory research designs. Correlation design was preferred because it investigates the relationship between variables and is based on the premise that if a statistically significant relationship exists between two variables, then it is possible to predict one variable using the information available on another variable (Mugenda, 2008). The exploratory design has also been used as the design is suitable when collecting qualitative data. Collection of qualitative data in this study has been found necessary as qualitative data provides insights into the research problem and is used to uncover trends in thoughts and opinions. (Kothari, 2004). These two designs complemented each other and enabled to establish any relationships that may exist between the psychological determinants that is; self-esteem, educational aspiration and attitude towards education (independent variables) and performance in KCSE (dependent variable) in Mombasa County. 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. Form 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, boys day, girls boarding, girls day, mixed boarding and mixed day. A majority of the schools in the population are mixed day schools as indicated in table 1 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).

Teachers in charge of academics in the 21 schools were also purposively sampled. Each of the sampled schools had one teachers 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.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

KCSE performance in this study refers to the overall mean grade obtained by pupils on the total number of subjects done in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary School Education (KCSE). A score of C+ and above is high grade and grade C and below is low grade.

Generally, respondents' performance by grade is as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Students' Performance in KCSE

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
<b>Total</b>	<b>864</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Data obtained show 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.

#### *General Self-esteem Level*

The objective intended to determine the relationship between self-esteem and students' performance in KCSE. In order to achieve this, sampled students were provided with 10 statements aimed at assessing their self-esteem which would then be correlated with their achievement. Data obtained from students' score on their self-esteem were as summarized.

Respondents scored moderately in self-esteem. Specifically slightly less than a half or 420 of the respondents categorically stated that they are satisfied with themselves (48.7%) meaning that they appreciate who they are and their accomplishments

where 13.7% strongly agreed, 35% agreed and the remainder or 444 (51.3%) are not satisfied with themselves where 38.5% disagreed and 12.8% strongly disagreed. This is an indication that many of the respondents are not content and fulfilled with themselves.

Categorically, more than half of the respondents or 504 (58.4%) feel good about themselves where 10.1% strongly agreed, 31.5% agreed while the rest feel otherwise (41.6%) where 43.6% disagreed and 14.8% strongly disagreed. This indicates that a majority of the respondents feel good about themselves. When students are unable to feel good and appreciate themselves then their general esteem is affected.

More than half or 491 (56.9%) have feel that they have a number of good qualities where 23.3% strongly agreed, 33.6% agreed while the others (33.1%) think otherwise where 17.1% disagree and 2.7% strongly disagreed. These results indicate that an average number of students acknowledge that they have good qualities while the rest do not recognize this at all.

A considerable number of respondents or 529 (61.3%) agreed that they are able to do things as well as most other people where 11.3% strongly agreed and 50% agreed while around one third were of a different opinion (38.75) where 17.1% disagreed and 2.7% strongly disagreed. This indicates that many of the respondents are more positive about their abilities though we still have others who doubt their abilities. This is detrimental in a learning set up.

Some of the respondents or 197 (22.9%) do not have much to be proud of where 2.0% strongly agreed and 20.9% agreed but a majority (77.1%) are of different opinion where 49.3% disagreed and 27.8% strongly disagreed. This points out that most of the respondents are happy of their achievements.

Slightly less than half or 417 (48.3%) certainly feel useless at times where 16% strongly agreed and 32.3% agreed while a majority (51.7%) feel worthwhile where 27% disagreed and 24.5% strongly disagreed. This indicates that a substantial number of respondents have self-doubt and do not value themselves, this again can create obstacles in the learning process.

At the same time more of the respondents or 493 (57.1%) felt that they are persons of importance where 13% strongly agreed and 44.1% agreed while less respondents felt they were people of importance (42.9%) where 29.1% disagreed and 16% strongly disagreed. This bespeaks that more of the respondents value themselves but also a substantial number do not value themselves and have low personal worth.

A third or 263 respondents (30.5%) wish they could have more respect for themselves where 14.2% strongly agreed and 16% agreed while a majority (69.5%) where 56.6% disagreed and 12.8% agreed said they have respect for themselves this is an indication that a majority of the respondents have respect for themselves, those who have no respect for themselves may find it hard to prosper.

About one third of the respondents or 263(35.8%) feel like a failure where 17.2% strongly agreed,18.6% agreed while the majority(64.2%)where 39.4% disagreed and 24.7% strongly disagreed. This connotes that the majority of the students do not feel like failures and are inclined to achieve although we do have some who psyched themselves to fail, very little is expected from such students.

More than half of the respondents or 492 (57%) take a positive attitude towards themselves where 6.6% strongly agreed and 50.4% agreed while the rest of the respondents have a negative attitude towards themselves where 29.1% disagreed and 13.6% strongly disagreed. This shows that a majority of the students believe in themselves. When students have positive attitude towards themselves then it becomes easy to achieve in the education realm as the mental blocks would have been removed but for students who have negative attitude towards themselves then they easily give up and disengage in education pursuits.

The study undertook a rating of the students' self-esteem based on a comparison of the average score for self-esteem and actual score in the scale of self-esteem. Consequently, with a minimum score of 13 and a maximum of 40 on the scale, those who scored 20 or less in the scale were classified as having low self-esteem, those who scored between 21 and 30 were classified as having average levels of self-esteem while those whose score were 31 and above were classified as having high self-esteem yielding data as summarized in Table 8.

Table 2: Level of Self-esteem

Level of Self-esteem	Frequency	Percentage
Low	167	19.3
Average	521	60.3
High	176	20.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>864</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Information contained in Table 9 show that about one out of five of the sampled students or 176 (20.4%) had high self-esteem, more than half or 521 respondents (60.3%) indicated that their level of self-esteem was average while slightly less than a fifth or 167 of the respondents(19.3%) had low self-esteem. This indicates that a majority of the students sampled have moderate self-esteem level with a few showing high or low self-esteem respectively.

The general KCSE results of the respondents closely corresponds with the general results of the self-esteem level. Less than a fifth (18.5%) scored grade C+ and above which closely corresponds with 20.4% of the respondents scoring high on self-esteem. 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 19.3%.This is

an indication of a relationship that exists between self-esteem and KCSE performance.

Qualitative data gathered from the academic Masters/Mistresses complements the quantitative data on self-esteem levels based on gender and KCSE performance. All the 21respondents were in agreement that gender difference does not affect performance. Data collected from the academic Masters and Mistresses indicates that boys are generally more confident than girls insinuating that their esteem are higher than girls. Most of the respondents (66%) or 14 teachers in charge of academics felt that girls have lower self -esteem. There are however seven respondents (34%) who firmly and categorically stated that generally girls esteem is higher than boys.

The sub county Directors of education concurred with the academic Masters/Mistresses on performance based on gender. Boys used to perform better than girls in previous years but the trends have changed as girls are said to catch up very fast. The statistical records provided by respondent B confirm these facts. Generally it was confirmed by all the officers that performance in the KCSE examination results in the previous year's indicate a small difference in performance mean when comparing by gender. What was evident was that gender differences are there but minimal and they vary across sub counties according to the respondents.

The study established an insignificant relationship between students' gender and self-esteem. This finding contradicts that of Twinomugisha (2008) who in a study among students of United States University International University in East Africa reported a negative relationship between self-esteem and gender. It also contradicts the study findings of Wanjiru and Gathongo (2014) who found out that self-esteem is influenced by gender. Similarly, Bhagat (2016) reported positive and significant correlation between negative self-esteem of females and academic achievements. In Kenya, Okoko (2012) a study of self-esteem and academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Ndhiwa District, Homa Bay County found out that age and gender have on influence on self-esteem and in turn academic performance of students.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Self-esteem is considered to be an important psychological construct that has a bearing on KCSE performance. Many of the students have low to average level of worthiness. This directly affects their KCSE performance as they do not believe in their abilities and are not inclined in seeking good performance.

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