

Influence of School Conduciveness on learners' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Murang'a and Kirinyaga Counties in Kenya

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Abstract: The influence of school conduciveness on learners' academic performance is not clearly known and documented in the world and especially in Kenya. However, the school conduciveness being a psychosocial variable significantly compliments the teaching and learning process. School conduciveness is believed to play an instrumental role on the acceptance, understanding and internalization of the learnt content by the learners. The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of the school conduciveness on learners' academic performance in public secondary schools in Murang'a and Kirinyaga Counties in Kenya. The study was guided by two objectives which were to; assess how students' attitudes towards schooling influences academic performance, and to examine how the psychosocial support systems influences academic performance in public secondary schools in Murang'a and Kirinyaga counties in Kenya. The study tested the null hypothesis Ho1: There was no significant difference between the attitudes of learners towards school psychosocial variables by gender, school category and county of origin of the institution from the two counties. The study adopted the correlational research design. The target population was 5879 consisting of all the form three students in national and extra-county public schools in Murang'a and Kirinyaga counties in Kenya. The national schools in the counties were purposively sampled, while a sample size of 7 extra-county schools was selected using the Gay's sampling criteria of 10-30%, where the upper limit of 30% of the 22 extra-county schools was used. The Yamane's formula was used to select a sample size of 412 students from the target population. The study selected respondents in three categories based on their academic performance forming three cadres; top cadre, middle cadre and bottom cadre. A questionnaire with 5-point Likert scale was used to collect data. Reliability of the instrument was ascertained using the Cronbach's reliability test which yielded r=0.808 which was higher than the basic recommended threshold of 0.7 proposed by Kerlinger. The findings showed that the students in national and extra-county schools scored school conduciveness highly at x=71.24%. This school conduciveness correlates significantly with academic performance with Pearson's correlation coefficient r=0.176, with a p-value=0.000 at a =.05level of significance. From the study findings, it is concluded that school conduciveness significantly influences learners' academic performance. The study recommends that there is need to strengthen and modify school conduciveness by ensuring the psychosocial support systems are appropriately catered for during the teaching and learning processes.

Keywords: school conduciveness; psychosocial support systems; psychosocial dynamics; psychological climate

I. Introduction

There are enormous factors considered to influence learners' academic performance. The most significant of these variables is the psychosocial support system of the school conduciveness (Onyara, 2013). The school conduciveness comprises of the physical infrastructure, social and psychological climate of the learning environment. The social and psychological climate of the learning environment especially the friendliness of the school environment underscores the school conduciveness. A conducive school environment manifests

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in the provision of appropriate infrastructure, social and psychological climate exemplified by reciprocal and respectful teacher-learner interactions which results in improved academic performance and maximization of learning outcomes (Korir & Kipkemboi, 2014). The perceived psychological climate of the school in the learners' minds has great influence in the academic outcomes.

A conducive school environment is also evidenced by qualified and motivated teachers. It promotes favourable academic interactions between teachers and learners which facilitates the modelling of high esteemed learners who possess effective study habits and academic focus (National Centre on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, 2019). A conducive school environment bolsters retention and engagement for both teachers and students. Among all the variables in school, the teacher has been theorised as the most influential factor in determining academic outcomes of secondary school students (Musili, 2015). The shortage, demotivated or unqualified educators who fail to provide conducive learning environments are believed to yield poor performance in learners. However, the teachers' shortage in Kenya has been cited more as a problem of distribution rather than scarcity. It has caused some schools to suffer tremendously, especially the day schools found in remote regions (Kamau, 2018). The psychology of teaching explains that it is one thing to have teachers and another to have educators who are passionate, self-driven and competent in promoting child-friendly schools. The notion of promoting conducive learning environment hence examines the competency and attitudes of teachers towards the learners, learning situation and the learning process.

Schools regardless of their category or level of performance have established strategies for improving the academic performance in their learners (Mwaura, 2010). However, maximization of learner academic achievements is bedevilled by inadequate resources and facilities, ineffective teaching methods, poor attitudes among teachers and inadequate supervision of curriculum implementation (Wanyama, 2013). The psychosocial dynamics in the school environment comprise of the attitudes of teachers and learners towards the instructional resources undoubtedly influencing academic performance of the learners. The instructional environment has a tremendous bearing on the school conduciveness and a critical role on the learners' outcomes.

School environment influences both the students' academic performance and the moulding of their personality. Personality encapsulates whom an individual really is, formed by the set of organized state of thoughts, feelings and behaviour that determine level of adjustment to their environment (McLeod, 2014). The combination of a person's thoughts, feelings and behaviour forms the personality and brings about individual differences among students. Personality manifests in predictable tendencies by addressing situations in life. For this reason, students react differently to similar or even the same learning experience because of their interpretation and the meaning drawn from their personality. Learners who consistently receive warm affection from caregivers develop strong bonds referred to as attachment with the caregivers (Ormrod, Anderman & Anderman, 2017). Such learners are more likely to develop amiable, self-confident and independent personalities who readily adjust to the environment and establish productive relationships with peers and teachers for effective learning. Otherwise students who fail to receive appropriate affection may result to attention seeking, immature, unpopular and aggressive behaviour. Learners use such experience to assess, interpret and react to situations in accordance with the derived meaning notable in their behaviour in specific life situations (Chowdhury, 2006). The school environment provides an opportunity where desirable personality can be improved in the learners, and consequently promote relationships in the teaching and learning process targeting better academic outcomes in learners.

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Despite the government's effort to increase funding based on the students' enrolment in all schools, the learner's academic performance between Murang'a and Kirinyaga Counties has remained conspicuously huge with Murang'a county trailing. Therefore, there is the need to conduct research with a view of unravelling the underlying causes of the poor performance and the disparities between the two counties. The situation is well illustrated by the KCSE results for the six years shown in table 1.

Table 1. KCSE results for Murang'a and Kirinyaga counties 2012-2017

County/Year		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Murang'a	Mean score	4.936	4.884	5.135	5.205	3.991	3.319
	% below C+	73.99	74.39	71.91	70.48	76.80	87.71
Kirinyaga	Mean score	5.341	5.109	5.372	5.511	4.403	4.025
. 0	% below C+	68.53	66.65	66.21	67.3	73.87	85.49

School conduciveness can be seen as characterized by reliable psychosocial support systems and positive attitudes towards schooling and learning. The confidence in friendliness of the school and students' attitudes are highly influenced by teachers, fellow students and the significant-others in the school, especially in the time of need (Korir & Kipkemboi, 2014). School conduciveness bolsters trusting relationships between teachers and students consequently fostering positive attitudes towards school and learning. School conduciveness being a perception in the learners' minds can be strengthened positively by inculcating in learners the appropriate psychosocial competencies. Students in the perceived conducive schools are able to invest more in the teaching-learning processes with minimal distress. When the psychosocial variables of school conducive learning environment are achieved, students are able to maximize their learning outcomes. The net effect is the realization of desirable academic performance among learners.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

There has been concerns regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of education in Kenya especially the secondary education. The concerns majorly focus on such parameters as quality, relevance, access, gender parity and retention rates. While providing support to secondary education to satisfy these parameters, the government has devised strategies such as enhancing subsidized tuition by funding schools directly proportionate to students' enrolment. Despite the increased funding, improvement of the physical infrastructure and innovations in providing motivation to teachers and learners, the problem of academic underachievement has remained persistent. Improvement of these resources are not commensurate with improvements in academic performance of learners. The apparent persistent dismal performance despite the government interventions and provisions could probably be attributed to overemphasis on physical infrastructure and resources at the expense of psychosocial dynamics in the schools. The psychosocial variables of the school conduciveness indicated by the reciprocal and respectful interactions between teachers and learners, the social and psychological climate of the learning environment has been neglected evidently. There is hence critical need to examine the influence of the school conduciveness on the academic performance of the learners in secondary schools in Murang'a and Kirinyaga counties with a view to generate practical guidelines to the stakeholders on how to improve the situation in Kenya.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives, which are to;

- 1. Assess how students' attitudes towards schooling and learning influences their academic performance in Murang'a and Kirinyaga counties in Kenya.
- 2. Examine how psychosocial support systems influence academic performance in public secondary schools in Murang'a and Kirinyaga counties in Kenya.

ISSN: 2685-4813 (Online), 2685-4805 (Print) Vol. 2, No. 1, March 2020, Page: 362-377

1.3 Hypothesis

The study tested the following null hypothesis;

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the attitudes of learners towards school psychosocial variables by gender, school category and county of origin of the institution from the two counties.

II. Review of Literature

The strained teaching-learning resources are said to compromise the quality and effectiveness of the teaching-learning process. The shortage of teachers and textbooks are evident in schools (Lee & Zuze, 2011). The relationship between learners with peers and their teachers dynamically influence the school conduciveness and the consequent outcome of the teaching-learning process (Korir & Kipkemboi, 2014). Looking at how much teachers prepare, the amount time taken to plan for a lesson, execute, review and evaluate the teaching process, it is evident that conduciveness of the learning environment gets a low deal which could account for the cause of poor performance in schools.

The greatest advantage a school can give to its students is to promote positive self-awareness and build a strong value system which facilitates enthusiastic pleasant personality with self-confidence and determination. These conditions enable learners to discover their potential and grow their capability and hence promote academic performance. Academic performance in schools is mainly measured by tests and examinations, but not holistic (Obeta, 2014). The increased emphasis on examination outcomes has caused a paradigm shift in the objectives and strategies of teaching and learning process. The process has reduced to simply coaching of students to answer questions and how to pass exams, other than the original holistic growth of intellectual, social, spiritual and physical (OECD 2012). These discrepancies in education should be addressed failure to which could disadvantage the students for life The major variables emphasized in the literature mainly focus on addressing the physical needs at the expense of psychological needs. However, when psychological needs are addressed, the sense of belonging, self-worth and curiosity are boosted. In the process psychosocial wellness enhance creativity, competence, self-expression, autonomy, inspiration, purpose, beauty and celebration (Morris & Maisto, 2016).

Although the studies have underscored shortage of physical factors in school as responsible for poor academic performance, it is arguable that it is not practically possible to provide virtually everything needed by the students in school. There is however, some basic minimum of the physical resources that students can appreciate and utilize complemented with the right mindset for academic excellence. It is accepted that provision of conducive learning environment does not imply that students are not held to account for their behaviour. Rather the teachers and students are made to internalize and understand their obligations as pertains to the teaching and learning requirements. While cognizance of the fact that rights goes together with responsibilities, provision of a conducive learning environment has the potential of inculcating learners with appropriate psychosocial competencies and promote desirable academic outcomes. However, desirable academic performance can be honed and sustained even in the reality of shortage of facilities and resources, especially if the school psychosocial conduciveness is adequate.

Every school, regardless of their state of performance, has strategies of improving academic performance. Mwaura (2010) observes that individual schools adapt strategies that are somehow similar when addressing academic problems. The difference however, occurs in the

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process of implementation of the strategies that causes differing performance trends year in year out. A combination of inadequate resources and facilities, poor teaching methods, low teachers' morale and their job dissatisfaction as well as inadequate curriculum supervision constitute school factors that negatively impact on academic performance. Wanyama (2013) recommended that more teachers should be recruited to address teacher shortage, garner a collaboration between the government and parents to increase funding towards learning resources and facilities in schools. The factors however, are notably inclined towards addressing physical needs, touching on quantity and quality of the facilities.

Some schools have had students performing quite well in national examinations even when they suffered inadequate facilities and resources. This suggests that there is more to academic performance than having adequate resources and facilities, and teachers with less workload but sufficient psychosocial confidence. There could be differences in schools in terms of facilities and staffing, but good students have been proven to succeed even in difficult circumstances (Eyong, David & Umoh, 2014). Students who appreciate what they are and what they have, are likely to be more productive than those who live a mournful life blaming poverty (Larser & McKibban, 2008). Students admitted to the same or similar schools, well-endowed with resources, have been seen to achieve differing outcomes. The differences can be attributed to psychosocial dynamics which need not to be huge because even small differences may cause all the difference in academic outcomes.

Onyara (2013) emphasizes that school environment plays a robust role in determining students' success in education. The school culture and climate has its place in determining the friendliness of the school environment (MacNeil, Prater & Busch, 2009). Improved teachers' motivation and students' discipline promote a good climate that encourage teachers and students to want to remain and work together in the school. School friendliness contributes to job satisfaction and higher productivity among teachers. The inside class factors such as class size and availability of teaching-learning facilities foster good academic performance especially if they appeal to the teaching-learning process (Korir & Kipkemboi, 2014).

Musili (2015) avers that the teacher is the most significant factor in the school and plays a pivotal role in determining students' performance. A good teacher is able to address the psychosocial needs and develop favourable mindset in learners. Students' indiscipline, inadequate learning facilities, chronic absenteeism and students' laxity negatively affects academic achievement. The teachers' perception towards the school, learners and resources go a long way in influencing their commitment in facilitating learning and quality interaction (Ormrod, et al, 2017). Guyo (2012) from Marsabit County counts security in the school and its surrounding as paramount in determining academic performance.

The teachers' professional qualification has been shown to have some effect on academic performance with different studies showing conflicting findings such as positive, negative or no effect (Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2005). However, having the first degree has shown consistency as necessary and sufficient condition for producing good academic outcomes. The qualification beyond bachelor's degree has shown no significant improvement (Kimani, Kara & Njagi, 2013). It is the teacher's readiness, competence and enthusiasm that define their commitment and their impact on academic performance. Teachers can facilitate establishment of solid school traditions that promote value system based on respect, hard-work and self-confidence. The sense of duty in the teachers make the system effective and efficient, consequently modelling students in positive psychosocial dynamics.

ISSN: 2685-4813 (Online), 2685-4805 (Print) Vol. 2, No. 1, March 2020, Page: 362-377

Kimani, et al, (2013), supports that the teacher is the most important factor in predicting performance of secondary school students. The teacher friendliness may change a lot in school or class. It determines how teachers dispense their knowledge, skills and values besides accompanying the learners in the teaching-learning as a sign of competence. The teacher-factor also determines instructional organization, utilization of teaching time and instructional resources. The teacher determines students' motivation and attitude towards education and schooling, enabling the physical facilities to play a supportive role in academic performance (Onyara, 2013). Some negative behaviour of teachers such as absenteeism, lateness to attending class, failure to give or checking assignment, failure to maintain learners' discipline, poor commitment in completing syllabi, failure to mark tests and promptly revising them are some predictors of poor academic outcomes (Musili, 2015; Kimani, et al, 2013). These variables are more of a teachers' attitudes as opposed to infrastructure or resources or equipment.

Ngulu (2015) study reported that most schools had inadequate trained teachers. Besides, inadequate physical resources and inadequate teaching-learning resources were also pointed out as contributing to poor academic performance. Though the study singles out the inadequacy of trained teachers as the cause of dismal performance, it is arguable that it is virtually not possible to provide everything that the learners need. However, the same learners can achieve some psychosocial satisfaction associated with provision of such resources even in their scarcity. Such satisfaction may be achieved when the school community identifies and appreciates whatever is available instead of focusing on the inadequacies, provoking negative energy instead of appreciating the available resources.

The reviewed available literature indicates that school-related factors underscores the importance of teacher, but they run short of identifying the teacher as a source of psychosocial competence that drives the education system. The teacher is expected to do a lot to produce results in form of academic outcomes. The teacher has many evaluators who mainly focus nowhere there is failure, something that has left the teacher, as a person condemned, humiliated and demotivated with damaged reputation. There is need for restoration and rejuvenation moments where the teachers are given chances to heal their burnouts to enable them build academic success. This study appreciates the work by Ngulu (2015), and builds on the role of school conduciveness. But instead on focusing on the teachers' shortage, the research focused on the role of teachers in promoting psychosocial wellness which is demonstrated to greatly play a pivotal role in influencing the academic performance of learners.

The school conduciveness is greatly considered in developing of centres of academic excellence. The importance of this conduciveness is to make the school environment friendly and to promote learners' good attitudes towards schooling and learning (Morris & Maisto, 2016). The conduciveness of the school is characterized by the psychosocial support systems that students enjoy from peers and significant others especially teachers in the school more so when faced by difficult circumstances. Unfortunately, the department which is charged with responsibility of addressing psychosocial needs in schools is defined as troubled. Toto (2014) noted that the guidance and counselling department is characterised by poor teamwork among its members. Though most of the teachers are involved in rendering psychological services, the study revealed that the services were ineffective while students were unwilling to seek the services.

2.1 Attitudes towards Schooling and Academic Performance

The concept of school conduciveness over the years has been thought in terms of adequate facilities that are external to the learner. The factors such as quality and quantity of

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available resources, size of classrooms, teacher-student ratios and student text-book ratios have therefore received immeasurable attention as influencing learners' academic performance (Marzano, 1992). The psychosocial dimension and its influence on learning outcomes has generally being scarcely researched in education. Veresova and Mala (2016) described the school conduciveness as promoting favourable attitudes towards schools and learning. Students who are filled with negative attitudes towards schools and schooling have their academic performance affected negatively (Mwakoro, Wasanga & Olaly, 2014). School conduciveness is clearly manifested during the teaching-learning process where learners exhibit acceptance and persistence to the academic programs with minimal distress (Korir & Kipkemboi, 2014). The school conduciveness hence plays an instrumental role in determining their commitment, academic focus and general attitude, passion and interest that leaners attach to the teaching and learning process and the schooling phenomenon.

Mwangi (2016) singled out students' negative attitudes towards learning as a cause for poor academic performance. He found that friendly learning environments greatly promoted effective learning. Conducive schools exemplified such characteristics as existence of appropriate and attractive infrastructure such as spacious, well ventilated and clean classrooms, washrooms, laboratories, adequate playing fields, rich library with relevant books as well as psychosocial tranquillity. Such an environment determines what and how the students will be doing in the school. Lack of such basic facilities and resources may compromise teachers' and students' effort to achieve their full potential which results in deficiencies in psychosocial competence (Onyara, 2013). Teachers are the basic promoters of the school conduciveness since they raise the learners' sense of acceptance and safety which leads to realization of desirable academic results.

This study focused on the role of the school pleasantness the development of psychosocial competencies of learners which has great implications on their academic performance. Inadequacy in school conduciveness may induce negative feelings resulting in resentment, helplessness and complacency which negatively influence academic performance in secondary school students.

The government in partnership with other stakeholders has belaboured to provide resources and facilities to schools. The increased funding to the Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) since the year 2007 has been used to establish centres of excellence in every sub-county to act as the model schools. Peer education programs such as strengthening Mathematics and science in secondary education (SMASSE) have been put in place with the aim of increasing academic performance of students in secondary schools (Wanyama, 2013). This effort by the government and other partners in education may have not appealed to the teachers' needs especially the psychosocial component hence failing to produce the desired impact.

2.2 Psychosocial Support Systems and Academic Performance

The psychosocial support systems have been demonstrated to play a critical role in the academic performance of the learners. Addressing the psychosocial needs of learners has proven a herculean task. This is because such needs are abstract, personal and unique to every individual which makes it difficult to provide die to the diversity of every person. The psychosocial needs are so diverse, random and dynamic which requires honed skills to identify and address them in good time and effectively. The needs in students are triggered by a wide range of incidents owing to the complexity of perception influenced by maturation and experience of their world (Morris & Maisto, 2015). This means that there is need for teachers to be appropriately grounded in the psychology of teaching that strives to equip teachers with the fundamentals of the teaching and learning process.

$Britain\ International\ of\ \textbf{Linguistics,}\ \textbf{Arts}\ and\ \textbf{Education}\ (BIoLAE)\ Journal$

ISSN: 2685-4813 (Online), 2685-4805 (Print) Vol. 2, No. 1, March 2020, Page: 362-377

The responsibility of addressing psychosocial dynamics in school rest upon teachers, mainly in the department of guidance and counselling. Njega (2007) observes that teachers have multifaceted roles which requires specific combination of skills for its effective provision. The institutionalization of guidance and counselling in schools is expected to help students to understand and improve their self-awareness, attitudes, social and psychological growth (Nyamwaka, et al, 2013). Provision of guidance and counselling in schools is enshrined in the Basic Education Act 2013 which outlawed the corporal punishment and in its place recommends use of psychological strategies in shaping behaviour of learners in schools (G.O.K, 2013). Guidance and counselling is thus recommended as an important strategy that can be harnessed in promoting the establishment of conducive schools and the development of psychosocial support systems in institutions of learning.

The psychosocial support systems in a school do not only depend on what happens in the counselling room, but also in the general realm of personal relationships of the diverse stakeholders in the teaching and learning processes. It might manifest in the form of general individuals expressing their concerns whenever they experiencing difficult situations. The psychological support builds confidence in the affected learners as well as to others when they observe their colleagues receive support in time of calamities. This may be availed by teachers, students, non-teaching staff, parents of the school or any other organized formal or informal system. A student who falls sick or is involved in an accident may pick a lot from how others respond to his or her situation. Receiving a visit or two from various groups, getting financial and moral support, and finding empathy in such times can go a long way in enhancing psychosocial support system. Building support blocks in a school system requires deliberate effort and specific strategies to prepare people to respond to rising needs of each other.

The Government of Kenya acknowledges the need for guidance and counselling in schools, but the implementation of its policies remains confused, slow and weak. Although not all challenges that face students can and should be eliminated, students should be assisted to cope well and draw the best out the prevailing conditions. Some hardships are not only necessary, but indeed important to inculcate some basic life skills in students such as problem-solving, decision-making and conflict-resolution. The bare minimum that school can do to students facing challenges is to provide favourable conditions for the students to interpret and respond to the prevailing circumstances positively.

It is assumed that all what is needed for teachers to serve in the counselling department is appointment and willingness. This is not true, since guidance and counselling as a helping profession calls for more than that. Possession of requisite skills and competencies by the teacher-counsellor goes a long way in promoting students' psychosocial needs. Essentially, every teacher during professional socialization is sufficiently equipped with basic guidance and counselling skills that they can effectively utilize in providing psychosocial support to learners. The nature of the challenges facing schools when addressing psychosocial dynamics surrounds the service provider and the environment within which they work. The ability of a school to offer conditions that are favourable for learners to discover their potential and grow their capability constitutes school conduciveness (Gradesfixer, 2018). The psychosocial support systems required in schools that are necessary in ensuring development of conducive school environment hence demands for a teaching force who possess passion, drive and commitment to offer assistance to learners. A well supported learner who is psychologically made to believe the school is concerned with their welfare has the potential of investing time and resources in education hence the likelihood of producing desirable academic performance.

III. Research Method

The study adopted the correlational research design. The study was conducted in Murang'a and Kirinyaga Counties in Kenya. The target population was the 5879 form three students from the national and extra-county public secondary schools from both counties. The national schools in the counties were purposively sampled, while a sample size of 7 extra-county schools was selected using the Gay's sampling criteria of 10-30%, where the upper limit of 30% of the 22 extra-county schools was used. The Yamane's formula was used to select a sample size of 412 students from the target population. The respondents were grouped into three cadres the top cadre, middle cadre and bottom cadre basing on their academic performance. (See table 2). A questionnaire with 5-point Likert scale was used to collect data. Reliability of the instrument was ascertained using the Cronbach's reliability test which yielded r=0.808 which was higher than the 0.7 recommended by Kerlinger as the threshold of acceptance.

Data was analysed using both the descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of the Scientific Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. The Pearson's correlation was used to test relationship between variables, linear regression to predict outcomes, ANOVA to test significance of the relationship between variables, t-test to test the significance in difference between means of two samples. The results were analysed and presented in line with the stated objectives that guided the study.

Table 2. Characteristics of respondents by gender, school category and counties

		School category			County						
		National	0/0	Extra-	0/0	Murang'a	0/0	Kirinyaga	0/0	Grand	0/0
				county						Total	
Gender	Male	88	21.4	95	23.0	86	20.9	97	23.5	183	44.4
Gender	Female	73	17.7	156	37.9	156	37.9	73	17.7	229	55.6
Total		161	39.1	251	60.9	242	58.8	170	41.2	412	100

IV. Discussion

The results were presented and discussed in accordance with the stated objectives that guided the study. The study received a 100% questionnaire return rate which was attributed to the fact that the researcher administered the questionnaires in person. Data was analysed according to the study objectives. The status of school conduciveness and its concepts were put into three categories which were; high, when the calculated mean is above 66.67%, medium when the mean is between 33.33% and below 66.67%, and low for the mean below 33.33%.

4.1 Attitudes towards Schooling and Learning

The first objective of the study sought to assess how students' attitudes towards schooling influences their academic performance. Analysis of the attitudes of students towards schooling and learning among the secondary school students gave an overall calculated mean of x=73.20% as shown in the table 3.

Table 3. School conduciveness and its constructs by gender, school category, county and academic performance

Cluster	Variables	attitude towards Schooling	PSSS	Overall School conduciveness
Gender	Male	73.56	69.74	71.61
	Female	72.9	68.92	70.96

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Vol. 2, No	. 1.	March	2020.	Page:	362-377

	Overall	73.20	69.28	71.24	
performance	Bottom	70.02	67.32	68.76	
academic	Middle	73.24	68.06	70.53	
Cadres	of Top	75.84	72.02	73.97	
	Kirinyaga	74.02	69.7	71.85	
County	Murang'a	72.62	68.98	70.82	
	Extra-County	72.34	68.96	70.68	
School categor	y National	74.5	69.78	72.13	

The mean of \bar{x} =73.20% corresponds with the category of high in terms of school conducivennes. The results suggests that students in Murang'a and Kirinyaga counties were highly positive towards their learning and schooling. The school environment determines students' attitudes towards schooling as explained by Obeta (2016). It can therefore be concluded that the environment in national and extra-county schools is favourable enough to the students' satisfaction.

Comparing the attitudes between male and female students, results indicated that male students scored higher in attitudes with a calculated mean of \bar{x} =73.59% in favour of schooling and learning compared to the female students with \bar{x} =72.91%. Although the male students scored higher, the difference between male and females was not statistically significant with a p-value=0.603 at 5% level of significance. The results suggest that any difference such as academic performance between them cannot be attributed to the gender difference. Therefore, gender factor cannot be used to account for the differences in attitudes towards school and learning as may exist among the students in national and extra-county Murang'a and Kirinyaga counties.

Verosa and Mala (2016) in their similar study observed that girls had significantly better attitude towards schooling and learning than boys, unlike in this study. The difference can be attributed to nature of the target population, where this study draws its population from national and extra-county county schools while Verosa and Mala's sample was from across all school categories in the Slovak Republic. This suggests that the students in the higher school categories have no disparity, perhaps those lower in the categories. Langat (2015) also concluded that attitude influence learners' engagement, interest and effort invested consequently determining academic outcomes of the individual learners.

The attitude towards schooling and learning was analysed between counties. Results indicated that the students in Kirinyaga county posted better attitudes than those in Murang'a county with a calculated mean of \bar{x} =74.02% and \bar{x} =72.62% respectively. The t-test analysis between the counties showed that the difference was not statistically significant with p-value=0.269 at 5% level of significance as shown in the table 4. This suggest that the difference may occur only by chance, and cannot be attributed to the counties.

Table 4. Testing the difference in attitude towards schooling between male and female students

			t-test for Equality of Means				
		t	t df Sig. (2- Mean Std.Erro				
				tailed)	Difference	Difference	
	Equal variances assumed	.521	406	.603	.32526	.62442	
Learning attitude	Equal variances not assumed	.527	400.429	.598	.32526	.61678	

Vol. 2, No. 1, March 2020, Page: 362-377

The attitudes of students towards the school and learning was analysed by the school categories. Results indicated that the students in the national schools reported better attitudes towards schooling than those in the extra-county schools which produced calculated mean of $\bar{x}=74.50\%$ and $\bar{x}=72.35\%$ respectively. Each school category scored an amount equivalent to high status. However, their difference did not qualify to be statistically significant with a p-value=0.09 at 5% level of significance as shown in the table 5.

Table 5. Testing significance of difference in students' attitude towards schooling between national and extra-county schools

		t-test for Equality of Means				
		t	df	Sig. (2-	Mean	Std.Error
				tailed)	Difference	Difference
Learning attitude	Equal variances assumed	1.698	406	.090	1.07436	.63267

The study analysed the attitudes towards schooling and learning along cadres of academic performance. Results indicated that students in the top cadre of performance scored the highest in attitudes in favour of schooling and learning with a calculated mean of $\bar{x}=75.84\%$. It was followed by the middle cadre with $\bar{x}=73.25\%$ while the bottom cadre had the lowest score of $\bar{x}=70.02\%$ as shown in table 3. These findings suggested a linear relationship between attitudes towards schooling and learning and academic performance, which was confirmed by the graph in figure 1.

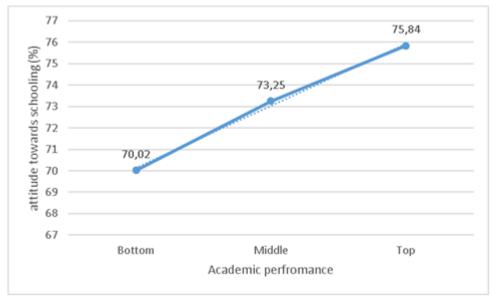


Figure 1. Graph of students' attitudes towards schooling against academic performance

The study correlated attitudes towards schooling and learning against academic performance. Results indicated that there was a statistically significant correlation between academic performance and attitudes towards learning with a Pearson's correlation coefficient r=0.19, and regression coefficient r=0.19 with p-value=0.000 at 5% level of significance as shown in the table 6. This shows that the attitude towards schooling and learning correlates positively with academic performance among the students in national and extra-county schools in Murang'a and Kirinyaga counties. The regression analysis indicates that attitude towards schooling and learning can reliably be used to predict academic performance of students in national and extra-county schools in Murang'a and Kirinyaga counties.

ISSN: 2685-4813 (Online), 2685-4805 (Print) Vol. 2, No. 1, March 2020, Page: 362-377

Table 6. Correlation between learners' attitude and academic performance

		Academic performance	Learning attitude
A 1	Pearson Correlation	1	.190**
Academic performance	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	412	408

^{**.}Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

These findings concurred with results by Verosa and Mala (2016) and Langat (2015) who found that attitudes towards schooling and learning is a strong predictor of academic performance.

The results in table 1 show that Kirinyaga County consistently performs better than Murang'a county students. Interpreting this on the basis that the attitude towards schooling and learning is a significant predictor of academic performance, then the overall attitudes of students in Kirinyaga County must be higher than that of students in Murang'a. the results confirm this only that there is no significant difference in attitudes towards schooling between Murang'a and Kirinyaga counties. This suggests that the performance in the national and extra-county schools between the two counties may not be significant, but the difference could be significant in schools of lower categories.

4.2 Psychosocial Support System and Academic Performance

The second objective sought to examine how psychosocial support systems influence academic performance in public secondary schools in Murang'a and Kirinyaga counties in Kenya. The results indicated that the overall status of psychosocial support system of students in national and extra-county schools in Murang'a and Kirinyaga counties was high with a mean of \bar{x} =69.27% as shown in the table 3. This suggests that the students in both counties strongly approved the psychosocial support systems in their schools with satisfaction.

Comparing the state of psychosocial support system in schools between counties, results indicated that Kirinyaga county students scored higher, with a calculated mean \bar{x} =69.70% while Murang'a county students scored \bar{x} =68.98%. A t-test indicated that the difference in psychosocial support system between Murang'a and Kirinyaga counties was not statistically significant with p-value=0.608 at 5% level of significance as shown in the table 7.

Table 7. Difference in psychosocial support system between Murang'a and Kirinyaga county students

	_	t-test for Equality of Means					
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference		
PSSS	Equal variances assumed	514	403	.608	35986		
P333	Equal variances not assumed	510	344.697	.611	35986		

Comparing the psychosocial support systems along the school categories, results indicated that the national school students rated their schools better with a mean of \bar{x} =69.77% while those in extra-county schools scored \bar{x} =68.96%. A t-test showed that the difference in psychosocial support system between students in the national and extra-county schools was not statistically significant with a p-value=0.570, at 5% level of significance as shown in the table 8.

ISSN: 2685-4813 (Online), 2685-4805 (Print) Vol. 2, No. 1, March 2020, Page: 362-377

Table 8. Difference in psychosocial support system between national and extra-county students

	_		t-test for	Equality of Mean	ns
	_	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean
					Difference
	Equal variances assumed	.569	403	.570	.40269
PSSS	Equal variances not assumed	.546	285.176	.586	.40269

Evaluating the psychosocial support system along the gender lines, results indicated that the male students in the counties poised their schools better with a mean of \bar{x} =69.74% compared to their female counterparts at \bar{x} =68.91%. This shows that the perceived psychosocial support system is better in male students than that of female students as shown in the table3. However, the difference in their response on psychosocial support systems was not statistically significant between male and female students with p-value=0.551 at 5% level of significance (table 9).

Table 9. Difference in psychosocial support system between male and female students

	± ,		•		
			t-tes	t for Equality o	of Means
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
PSSS	Equal variances assumed	.596	403	.551	.41392
	Equal variances not assumed	.606	397.478	.545	.41392

The status of perceived psychosocial support system was analysed along the cadres of academic performance. Results indicated that the students in the top cadre scored the highest with a calculated mean of \bar{x} =72.01%, followed by the middle cadre with \bar{x} =68.06% while the students in the bottom cadre scored the least with a mean of \bar{x} =67.32%.

The study correlated psychosocial support systems in school and academic performance. Pearson correlation coefficient between psychosocial support systems in school and academic performance of students in Murang'a and Kirinyaga counties gave r =0.142 with a p-value=0.004 at 5% level of significance as shown in the table 10.

Table 10. Correlation between psychosocial support systems (PSSS) and academic performance (AP)

		()		
	N	Correlation	Sig.	_
PSSS & AP	405	.142	.004	

The results indicate that academic performance is directly proportional to the psychosocial support systems in the school. This suggests that psychosocial support system can be used to predict academic performance of students in national and extra-county in Murang'a and Kirinyaga county secondary schools.

The results also suggest that there is a linear relationship between psychosocial support system in the school and academic performance which is confirmed in the graph in figure 2.

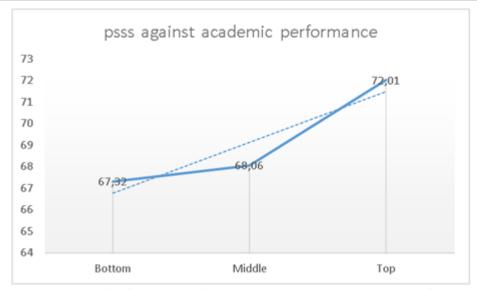


Figure 2. Graph of psychosocial support system against academic performance

4.3 School Conduciveness and Academic Performance

The study sought to find out the status of school conduciveness by combining the students' attitudes towards schooling and the nature of the psychosocial support system. Results indicated that the overall status of school conduciveness was high with a calculated mean of \bar{x} =71.24%. This suggests that the students in national and extra-county schools in Murang'a and Kirinyaga counties regarded their school conduciveness highly.

The study compared level of school conduciveness between counties, results indicating that Kirinyaga county students scored higher with a calculated mean of \bar{x} =71.85% compared to Murang'a county students with a mean of \bar{x} =70.82%. A t-test comparing the differences in the perceived school conduciveness between Murang'a and Kirinyaga county students, indicated that the difference was not statistically significant with a p-value=0.406 at 5% level of significance.

Analysing the perceived school conduciveness along the school categories, results indicated that the national school students rated their school conduciveness higher at \bar{x} =72.13%, compared to those in the extra-county schools with calculated mean of \bar{x} =70.68%. The difference in perceived school conduciveness between the students in national and extra-county secondary schools indicated that the difference was not statistically significant with a p-value=0.25 at 5% level of significance.

When school conduciveness was analysed along the gender basis, results indicated that the male students perceived their schools' conduciveness higher with a calculated mean of \bar{x} =71.61, compared to their female counterparts with a mean of \bar{x} =70.96%. Comparing the means using a t-test, results indicated that the difference was not statistically significant with a p-value=0.599 at 5% level of significance.

The study evaluated the students' perceived school conduciveness along the three cadres of academic performance. Results indicated that the students in the top cadre perceived the school conduciveness the highest with a calculated mean of \bar{x} =73.97%, followed by students in the middle cadre with a mean of \bar{x} =70.53 while those in the bottom cadre scored the least with \bar{x} =68.76. The Pearson's correlation analysis between school conduciveness and academic performance indicated that r=0.176, with a p-value=0.000 at 5% level of significance.

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Table 11. Correlations between academic performance and school conduciveness

		Academic performance	School Conduciveness
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.176**
•	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	412	401

^{**.} Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This implies that the school conduciveness correlates positively with academic performance. These results concur with Onyara (2013) that improved school conduciveness positive effect on academic performance.

Table 12. Regression model between students' school conduciveness and academic performance

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
			Coefficients		
	В	Std.Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.782	.238		11.668	.000
School Conduciveness	.012	.003	.176	-3.573	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Q8.6

V. Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that school conduciveness influences the academic performance of the learners. It is recommended that there is need to promote positive value systems and good attitudes towards school by enhancing strong psychosocial support system in schools. This can be achieved through the strategy of providing mentorship programmes to empower teachers and students with psychosocial competencies that are instrumental in promoting school conducive learning environments.

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