

Goal Setting and Students' Academic Achievement in Mixed Day Public Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

Research on how students' personal factors affect 14-August-2024 20-August-2024 academic achievement has mostly focused on family background, gender, and attitude, with less emphasis on goal setting. Academic performance in mixed day public secondary schools has been poor in Belgut Sub-County and other part of Kenya. Whereas efforts have been made by the government and stakeholders in the education sector to address disparities in achievement, most mixed day public secondary schools continue to perform below boarding schools. The purpose of this study was to examine goal setting on students' academic achievement in mixed day public secondary schools in Belgut Sub-County. The study was anchored on social cognitive theory. The study used quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and adopt a concurrent triangulation research design to establish predictive relationships among the variables. The study population were all students in mixed day public secondary schools in Belgut Sub-County. The target population were the 2213 form III students and 56 class teachers (in charge of Form III class) from which a sample of 306 students and 17 teachers were obtained using simple random sampling technique. Semi-Structured questionnaires were adopted for students. The interview guide for teachers were in semi-structure form to mainly collect qualitative data. Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyse the data. Specifically, regression analysis was used to test the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable. The results revealed that students were often able to set goals as well as develop daily and weekly schedules. Therefore, goal setting had positive statistical significant influence on academic achievement of students ($\beta_1=0.990$, $P=0.000<0.05$). The study concluded that goal setting had positive statistically significant influence on academic achievement of students. The study recommended that teachers should provide learning resource and assistance to students to improve their academic achievement.

Key Word: Goal Setting, Student's Academic Performance, Social Cognitive Theory, Quantitative and Qualitative Research Design.

INTRODUCTION

United Nations SDGs always pushes for high quality education especially as we approach the year 2030. Therefore, maximising and safeguarding students' academic achievement is a prime issue across the world (WHO, UNCF, WBG, 2018) where nations are making efforts to ensure that children in schools are provided with appropriate environment and support to realise their education objectives. Secondary education is one of the basic education systems which acts as a vehicle for advancement of knowledge and also a gateway for students to tertiary education (Oparaji and Ugwu, 2019).

Academic achievement is important in enhancing personal, social and economic prospects, and the economic growth of the nation at large [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2013]. Anthonysamy, Koo and Hew (2020) reported that academic achievement by students is the measure of a student's general academic achievement through examination results, continuous assessment test results and Grade Point Average (GPA). A non-academic outcome, which quantifies students' general attitude toward learning using subjective metrics like extent of student involvement, student happiness, and attitude toward learning, can also be used to measure academic achievement (Hakiki and Rembulan, 2018; Li, Ye, Tang, Zhou, and Hu, 2018). In

Kenya, academic achievement is mostly measured through end term results, regular exercises and tests outcomes and final examinations in standard eight and form four (Mungai, 2020). This study focused on academic achievement of students based on their examination scores in school for end term, regular examinations and continuous assessment tests (CAT).

Self-regulation, according to Albert Bandura (1967), is the capacity to start and stop important actions, to seize social and educational opportunities, and to put off completing a task or reaching a goal. Zimmerman was one theorist who made a significant contribution to the growth of self-regulation. According to him, self-regulation is the way in which a person controls their feelings or ideas, that are periodically planned and developed in order to accomplish one's own objectives (Zimmerman, 2013).

Strategies used in self-regulated learning are grouped into three which includes meta-cognitive, motivational and behavioural aspects (Hakiki and Rembulan, 2018). The techniques for self-regulated learning were suggested by Zimmerman (1989) are organizing and self-evaluation. Zimmerman also included planning, goal setting and transformation. Also, asking for help from others, and reviewing records is included. Anthonyamy, Koo and Hew (2020) states that self-learning has to be drawn from elements like motivation and environment. Other elements include peer-learning, time management and effort regulation.

According to Dignath and Buttner (2018), self-regulation also entails monitoring, instruction reinforcement and setting of goals independently among students. Furthermore, goal-setting, self-efficacy, goal orientation, meta-cognitive monitoring, and self-evaluation are make-up self-learning as stated by an article by Panadero (2017). According to Okafor (2022), secondary school students' self-reinforcement, self-instruction, self-monitoring, and goal-setting are all examples of self-regulation. This indicates that, as cross-national studies have shown, self-regulation occurs in a variety of contexts.

Thus, research examining how mixed day public secondary school students are self-regulating themselves in their studies is inadequate and especially in Belgut Sub-County, Kericho County, Kenya. It is clear that mixed-day public secondary schools perform poorer in KCSE exams than public boarding institutions. The researcher's investigation into the impact of self-regulation on students' academic achievement at mixed day public secondary schools in Belgut Sub-County, Kericho County, Kenya, was motivated by the state of educational achievement among these schools.

Despite secondary education's objective to foster self-regulation skills that enhance students' learning experiences, academic achievement in mixed day public secondary schools in Belgut Sub-County, Kericho County, Kenya, remains subpar. This study investigates whether employing effective learning techniques for active participation in diverse learning environments can reverse this trend. Evidence indicates that set goals students outperform those who rely solely on teacher direction. Consequently, goal setting may significantly boost academic success in public schools within the study area and potentially across the country. The study aims to determine how goal setting influence students' academic achievement in mixed day public secondary schools in Belgut Sub-County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura's (1997) theory of social cognitive learning served as the foundation for this investigation. According to Albert Bandura, a person's ability to achieve depends on how their behaviors, internal variables, and external circumstances interact (Matovu, 2020). According to Albert Bandura's social cognition theory of self-regulation, students have goals and observe, assess, and respond to their perceptions of goal processes during learning activities (Okafor, 2022). Self-regulation, in Bandura's view, is a self-directed strategy that helps pupils convert their mental skills into academic aptitudes. Furthermore, according to Bandura (1997), students who are self-regulated participate more readily, work harder, persevere longer, and experience fewer negative emotional reactions when faced with challenges than students who doubt their abilities (due to self-efficacy), which leads to high academic achievement.

According to Bandura (1997), students' personal achievements are linked to their effective learning, which also

lowers stress and depression vulnerability levels in them. According to the hypothesis, learning results would be significantly improved if students apply self-regulated tactics to their studies in an effective manner. The theory of social cognitive learning emphasizes the importance of observational learning, imitation, and modelling in acquiring knowledge and skills. Within this framework. Goal setting provides clear targets for students to strive towards, enhancing their focus and persistence.

Goal Setting and Students' Academic Achievement

Ejubovic and Puska (2019) investigated the potential impact of self-regulated learning components on students' academic achievement. Exploratory factor analysis was used in the study, and SRL was divided into five variables: social dimension, goal-setting, computer self-efficacy, environment structuring, and metacognition. The analysis indicated that, of the five variables, four had a favorable impact on students' academic achievement, with goal-setting showing the only statistically significant association. The current study examined goal-setting, self-efficacy, self-assessment and information seeking rather than social dimension, goal-setting, computer self-efficacy, environment structuring, and metacognition.

The association between students' academic success and achievement orientation goals was evaluated by Alhadabi and Karpinski, (2020). With the help of online surveys, 258 university students were the subject of the study. The findings indicated a favourable correlation between students' academic success and their mastery of approach goals. The study involved university students but the present study involves secondary school students to establish how they set their goals of learning.

Oparaji and Ugwu, (2019) looked into the relation between students' academic success in secondary school economics classes and their use of self-regulated learning practices. With 846 students in the population, the method that was applied was correlation study. There was a positive correlation between students' planning and goal-setting strategies and their academic success in economics. The results also showed a strong correlation between students' planning and goal-setting strategies and their academic success in economics. To increase students' academic achievement in the topic, they suggested that professors should instruct students in creating learning objectives and organizing their coursework.

The relationship between students' usage of self-regulated learning techniques and their academic success in secondary school economics classrooms was examined by Oparaji and Ugwu, (2019). The study employed a correlational research design with a group of 846 students. The findings demonstrated a significant and favorable relationship between students' achievement in economics classes and their planning and goal-setting techniques. The findings also demonstrated a significant relationship between students' achievement in economics classes and their planning and goal-setting techniques. They recommended that instructors teach students how to set goals for their coursework and create learning objectives in order to improve their academic success in the subject.

Kimani, Ndambuki and Mutweleli (2022) investigated the relationship between students' emotional self-regulation and academic achievement in Nairobi County. The target population was all the year 2019 Form II students. It was found that emotional self-regulation was positively and significantly correlated to academic achievement. The study recommended that educators could consider teaching students emotional intelligence skills to foster use of proper emotional control strategies in order to enhance academic achievement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher used a survey design which utilized mixed approach method. The design is suitable for quantitative data as well as qualitative data. The study was conducted in Belgut Sub-County, Kericho County, Kenya. The Sub-County is divided into five wards; Waldai, Kapsuser, Chaik, Seretut-Cheptorriet and Kabianga wards. Data from Sub-County Education Office (2022) showed that there were 27 mixed day public secondary schools serving a total of 9,113 students. With respect to this study, the research targets only 2213 Form III students and 56 Form III class teachers from 27 mixed day public secondary schools. The final sample size for the study consisted of 221 Form III students and 17 class teachers. The Form III students, instructors, and mixed-day public secondary schools were chosen using a straightforward random sample technique. In the end, a sample of 221 participants had been obtained from the 27 mixed day public secondary schools. The same procedure of

selection of students were used in selecting class teachers. Thereafter, randomisation method was used to select the 17 teachers required to be involved in this investigation. The purpose of using proportionate random sampling method is that it guarantees each person equal representation in the sample. The data collection instruments comprised student questionnaires, interview and document analysis checklist aimed at determining the pupils' achievement scores. Quantitative data from questionnaires were coded and entered in electronic spread sheet and analysis was done using the SPSS. Data obtained from interview schedule was analysed using thematic content analysis. Qualitative data was arranged thematically in order to identify essential features, themes and categories fitting various objectives of the study. Thematic analysis is a qualitative approach which analyses classifications and illustrates patterns that emerge from the data (Yin, 2014). It details the data set in detail and organizes it minimally. Tables and charts were used to display the data. The presentation mostly consisted of taken quotes from the interview, but it also included narrations. The data was analyzed using some inferential statistics as well as descriptive statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Goal Setting and Students' Academic Achievement

Goal setting was evaluated based on the frequency of the students' ability in goal setting. The results from the students' respondents were presented in frequency, mean and standard deviation as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Goal Setting

Goal Setting Areas	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean	S.D.
I set standards for my assignments given at school	1(0.5%)	104(50.0%)	94(45.2%)	9(4.3%)	0(0.0%)	3.47	0.59
I set goals to help me manage studying time	33(15.9%)	86(41.3%)	83(39.9%)	6(2.9%)	0(0.0%)	3.7	0.77
I choose the location where I study to avoid too much distraction	1(0.5%)	116(55.8%)	69(33.2%)	22(10.6%)	0(0.0%)	3.46	0.69
I try to schedule the time every day or every week for my personal study	19(9.1%)	57(27.4%)	129(62.0%)	3(1.4%)	0(0.0%)	3.79	0.62
I plan in advance on how to attain academic performance targets	14(6.7%)	68(32.7%)	119(57.2%)	7(3.4%)	0(0.0%)	3.43	0.67

Table 1 results revealed that majority of 50.0% respondents often set standards for their assignments given at school. However, quite a number of 45.2% respondents sometimes set standards. The mean of 3.47 implies that the students sometime set standards in their school assignment as there was low variance among them (standard deviation of 0.59). A considerable 41.3% of respondents often set goals to help them manage studying time while 39.9% of respondents sometimes do set goals. A mean of 3.70 and standard deviation of 0.77 implied that often set goals in order to manage their studies homogenously across the classes and schools.

Majority of 55.8% respondents often choose the location for studying to avoid too much distraction while 33.2% sometime choose the location. A mean of 3.46 with standard deviation of 0.69 implies that across different schools, the students sometime choose location to undertake their studies. The finding revealed that 62.0% of respondents sometime schedule their time every day or every week for their personal study. A mean of 3.79 which implies that majority of the students scheduled their time for personal study daily or weekly with low

variation across school (standard deviation of 0.62). Further results indicated that 57.2% of the respondents sometime planned in advance on how to attain academic performance targets. A mean of 3.43 and standard deviation of 0.67 were obtained which implied that sometimes students plan about their academic performance target across the schools.

The response from the interview agreed that learners were able set goals, time schedule and plan for their studies. This enabled them to achieve the desired goals within the set personal timetable. The response indicated that the teachers were able to encourage learners to set personal timetable and utilize well their time.

Students' Academic Achievement

A five-point Likert scale was adopted to examine the level of academic achievement of students. The data was presented in terms of frequency, mean and standard deviation. This was presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Students' Academic Achievement

Academic Achievement	Very High	High	Average	Below Average	Low	Mean	S.D.
CATs	16(7.7%)	72(34.6%)	114(54.8%)	6(2.9%)	0(0.0%)	3.47	0.68
End term exams	0(0.0%)	116(55.8%)	65(31.3%)	27(13.0%)	0(0.0%)	3.43	0.71
Monthly exams	0(0.0%)	116(55.8%)	72(34.6%)	20(9.6%)	0(0.0%)	3.46	0.67
Homework	48(23.1%)	126(60.6%)	34(16.3%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	4.07	0.63

Findings revealed that 54.8% of the respondents achieved an average mark in CATs. The mean of 3.47 indicate that the students had average CAT performance with low standard deviation across the schools (standard deviation of 0.68). According to the results the End term exams revealed that majority of 55.8% respondents had a high achievement. However, a mean of 3.43 and standard deviation of 0.71 showed that the student had average achievement in end term results.

In monthly exams, there were 55.8% who were high achievers which represent the majority. However, the mean was 3.46 which indicated the students had average performance which was slightly higher than end term exams with low variation across the schools (standard deviation of 0.67). Consequently, homework was performed better than CATs and Exams with 60.6% of the respondents getting high scores. A mean of 4.07 and standard deviation of 0.63 further revealed that CATs were well done with majority of the students performing above average or high achievement.

Table 3: Beta Coefficient

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	0.072	0.151		0.477	0.634
	Goal Setting	0.990	0.042	0.855	23.612	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Students' Academic Achievement

R= 0.990

R Square =0.730

F=557.515

P=0.000

H₀: There is no statistically significant influence of goal setting on students' academic achievement in mixed day public secondary schools in Belgut Sub-County.

The null hypothesis was rejected and alternative adopted. The results revealed that there was positive statistically significant influence of goal setting on students' academic achievement in mixed day public secondary schools in Belgut Sub-County (Beta=0.990, P=0.000<0.05). A variation of 73% in performance of mixed secondary schools was due to goal setting. This results concurs with interview results where the teacher responded that goals setting assisted the students to improve performance consistently through setting small attainable milestone.

The results concurred with Ejubovic and Puska (2019) who found that goal-setting was statistically significant variable influencing academic achievement. However, Ejubovic and Puska included additional variables like computer self-efficacy and environment structuring, which were not examined in the current study. Alhadabi and Karpinski (2020) evaluated the correlation between achievement orientation goals and academic success among university students, finding a favourable relationship between academic success and mastery of approach goals. The current study's focus on secondary school students broadens the understanding of goal-setting's impact across different educational levels, indicating that effective goal-setting strategies are beneficial from secondary education through to higher education.

Oparaji and Ugwu (2019) examined the relationship between SRL practices and academic success in secondary school economics classes, finding a significant positive correlation between students' planning and goal-setting strategies and their academic performance. This directly parallels the current study's results, reinforcing the idea that goal-setting is a crucial component of SRL that positively impacts academic achievement. Kimani, Ndambuki, and Mutweleli (2022) explored the relationship between students' emotional self-regulation and academic achievement, finding a positive and significant correlation. While their study focused on emotional self-regulation rather than goal-setting, both studies highlight the broader concept of self-regulation as essential for academic achievement. The findings suggest that fostering various self-regulation skills, including emotional intelligence and goal-setting strategies, can lead to better academic outcomes. This aligns with the current study's emphasis on goal-setting, further supporting the integration of diverse self-regulation strategies to enhance academic performance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The results revealed that the students often set goals for managing their studies and also used schedules to plan their every day or weekly personal studies. However, setting standards for assignments, choosing location for studies and planning in advance by setting academic performance targets was sometimes done by the students. Goal setting was found to have a positive statistical significant influence on student's academic achievement.

Conclusions

The study concluded that goal setting significantly affected the performance of students in mixed day public secondary schools. This was attributed by students continuously setting goals for personal study. The students were also able to schedule daily and weekly plan for reading and doing exercises. This plan contributed to higher academic achievement among the students in mixed day public secondary schools.

Recommendations

The study recommended that the students should be trained on how to set standards for assignment as well as set targets for their long term improvement of performance. The students are only able to set short-term goals which should be able to lead to long term goals. This will ensure sustainable high performance among mixed

day secondary schools.

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