

Relationship between Academic Goal Setting and Academic Achievement among Secondary School Students in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Academic success is regarded as a crucial component of both individual and societal success. Students who thrive academically have an opportunity to pursue higher education and have a high possibility of finding employment. A majority of the secondary schools in Sigowet/Soin Sub County have been registering below average mean scores in KCSE. The problem has continued to persist despite the abundance of research literature on the factors that can be addressed to improve academic achievement. This raises concerns on the external validity of the findings and the robustness of the methodologies used. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between academic goal setting and academic achievement among form three students in Sigowet/Soin Sub County. The study was guided by goal setting theory by Lock and Latham (2002). Correlational research design also guided the study. The target population for this study was 36564 form three students in 32 public secondary schools in Sigowet/Soin Sub County. Purposive, proportionate, stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 12 secondary schools and 380 students. Data were collected using academic self-goal setting scale. Academic achievement of the students was obtained from end of term examination results. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Pearson product moment correlation analysis and regression analysis were used to test the research hypotheses. The results revealed existence of a moderate positive and significant relationship between academic goal setting and academic achievement, $r(382) = .55, p < .05$. On the subscales of academic goal setting, the personal growth goals sub scale had a moderate positive and significant relationship with academic achievement, $r(382) = .50, p < .05$. On academic improvement goals, results revealed that there was a moderate positive and significant relationship with academic achievement, $r(382) = .57, p < .05$. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education and curriculum developers should incorporate academic goal setting in students learning content to enhance students' academic achievement.

Keywords: Academic achievement; academic goal setting; secondary schools

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

High-quality academic performance is considered essential to both an individual's and society's success. Academically successful students have a good chance of finding work and a chance to continue their education. It is impossible to overstate the value of excellent academic performance, which is why researchers and other education sector stakeholders have responded strongly to it. According to UNESCO (2015)'s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the world's socioeconomic development depends on the availability of high-quality education and lifelong learning. A pattern of subpar performance in the KCSE has been noted, despite Kenya's efforts to raise academic achievement.

Munyithya (2015) conducted a research to find out the factors associated with poor performance in KCSE. According to the findings, a significant portion of students did poorly on the KCSE as a result of the government's poor resource allocation, teachers' irregular training, and insufficient parental support. According to Kieti (2018), the majority of candidates who take the KCSE exams get scores that are below average. This type of performance was linked to low parental education and poverty. According to Oyoo and Mwaura (2018), academic burnout causes the majority of candidates to perform below average on the KCSE. According to the study, the majority of students scored a grade of D plus or lower on national exams. Although attempts have been made to address

this issue, a notable improvement has not yet been achieved. Similarly, the majority of students in Sigowet/Soin Sub County and Kericho County have been scoring below-average KCSE scores. According to Kipchirchir (2018), low academic achievement is very common in Kericho County as a result of poverty and a lack of parental involvement in their children's education. The majority of the students scored KCSE grades of D or lower.

Statement of the Problem

Academic achievement is a key element of both individual and societal success. Academically successful students are more likely to find work and have the chance to continue their education. Despite this, majority of Soin/Sigowet Sub County's secondary schools have been reporting below-average mean scores in the KCSE for the past four years. The majority of KCSE candidates have continued to perform below average, which is a concerning trend that demands attention from all education stakeholders. For example, 72% of students received a grade of D+ or lower on average over the course of the four years. Most of these students attend public secondary schools.

The sub-county's low educational standards is evidenced by the high number of applicants getting poor KCSE scores. Poor educational performance has significant effects on society at large in addition to individual students. The students lose out on chances to progress to higher learning levels. Additionally, their employability skills are low, which limits their opportunities for higher compensation. The majority of these students may therefore make the best possible contributions to the nation's social and economic advancement. If this pattern persists, it could sabotage attempts to fulfil the socioeconomic development goals of Vision 2030.

Academic goal-setting is linked to students' academic success. However, due to differences in the learning environments from which the samples were taken, these results might not be applicable to students in Sigowet/Soin Sub County. Additionally, there aren't many studies on academic goal setting in Kenya, and Sigowet/Soin sub-county in particular. It is important to note that although attempts have been made to address the problem of low academic achievement, it has not yet been adequately resolved. The research problem's persistence and the existing knowledge gaps necessitate more study in order to offer suggestions that could be applied to resolve this issue. The study investigated how Form Three students' academic performance is impacted by academic goal-setting.

Significance of the Study

The findings may help students understand how important goal-setting is to their academic success. The data could be utilised to improve these factors so that students perform better academically. The findings might assist educators in advising students on how to set realistic academic goals necessary to succeed academically. In order to improve academic results in schools, the Ministry of Education could use the findings to fortify policies that encourage psychological support for students. Other researchers may use the study's findings to conduct additional research in this field.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior research has examined the relationship between academic goal-setting and academic achievement outcomes. Sophia and McMillan (2019) investigated the relationship between goal-setting and students' motivation and academic success in South Carolina, USA, and found that well-established academic goals were positively associated with enhanced student performance. The experimental study collected data from a sample of 50 students using pre-assessment, post-assessment, and attitude surveys, and the results demonstrated that goal-setting had a positive effect on academic motivation and mathematics achievement. However, the study employed an experimental research design, which is subject to researcher bias in observational analysis, and the sample size was relatively small, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Bias can influence how results are interpreted. To address this, the present study employed a correlational research design and involved a comparatively larger sample to validate the findings of earlier research.

In another study, Hematian et al. (2017) examined the relationship between goal setting and academic performance and achievement motivation. A total of 40 students from Semnan City, Iran's eighth-grade secondary school participated. Both the ANCOVA and MANCOVA methods were used to analyse the data. The results showed that while goal-setting greatly improved self-directed learning, it had little effect on students' academic performance. As a result, the study recommended that educators need to encourage students to cultivate goal-setting skills throughout their academic careers. The study was conducted in Iran, a nation with a different educational system and social and economic circumstances that may have an impact on students' learning in a different way than in Kenya. Additionally, the study only included 40 participants, which limited how broadly the findings could be applied. A sufficient sample of 380 respondents was used in this study to improve the results' generalizability.

Cuevas et al. (2020) investigated the effects of goal-setting on elementary school students' motivation, self-efficacy, and mathematical performance in Turkey. Seventy third- and fourth-grade math students took part in the quasi-experimental study. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the experimental group's proficiency with multiplication facts. The students tracked their progress through a biweekly exercise that included reflection and graphing. The results demonstrated that elementary school students' ability to solve multiplication problems improved when they engaged in goal-setting. According to the study, students' motivation and self-efficacy were unaffected by goal-setting. However, the study's small sample size and reliance on a quasi-experimental design limited the findings' generalizability to Kenyan secondary school pupils.

Nalugwema (2022) investigated the impact of school culture on academic achievement in a sample of government secondary schools in the Luwero District of Uganda. The study aimed to investigate the connection between goal-setting and academic success, evaluate the impact of teamwork on academic outcomes, and investigate the relationship between teacher commitment and student academic performance. The findings showed that students' goal-setting improved their academic performance. Goal-setting has been shown to promote class coordination, assessment compliance, adherence to the teaching schedule, discussion group encouragement, and continuous student monitoring and supervision which contribute to students' academic success. Nevertheless, the study did not show how much goal-setting affected students' academic performance. To close the gap, the current study employed a correlational research design.

Ong'uti et al. (2019) examined goal-setting as a predictor of mathematics achievement in secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya. Lev Vygotsky's (1978) social development theory and Walberg's (1981) theory of educational productivity anchored this study. The Solomon Four pretest-posttest two-group design and a post-test-only control design were used in the study. Eleven Form Three math teachers and 360 Form Three students from public secondary schools participated. A combination of purposive and stratified sampling techniques were used to select the participants. Structured questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data, and interview guides were used to collect qualitative data. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, and the qualitative results were interpreted using thematic analysis. The findings showed that goal-setting and mathematical performance were positively correlated. Furthermore, students who set goals outperformed their peers in mathematics. In order to compare the findings, the current study concentrated on overall academic achievement as influenced by goal setting theory.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The nature of the relationship between academic achievement and academic goal setting was investigated in this study using a correlational design. A correlational research design makes it easier to explain relationships and make predictions between variables, claim Bloomfield and Fisher (2019). This design was employed by the researcher to gauge the degree to which academic achievement is correlated with academic goal-setting.

Target Population, Sampling Techniques and Sample size

The study's target population was 36,564. There are 32 public secondary schools in Sigowet/Soin Sub-County where Form Three students are enrolled. Researchers employ a variety of sampling strategies. Sampling strategies are chosen to help the researcher achieve the study's goals while taking into account the target

population's characteristics and the resources at hand. Students in form three, public schools, and the Sigowet/Soin subcounty were purposefully sampled. Purposive sampling strengthens the study's rigour and increases the dependability of the data and findings by enabling the researcher to better tailor the sample to the goals and objectives of the study (Campbell, 2020).

A stratified sampling method was used to select the schools that participated in the research. The students from each school were chosen using a simple random sampling technique, which ensured equal opportunity for all the students to participate in the study and also improved the validity of the findings (Noor et al., 2022). Public secondary schools were chosen for this study because they consistently performed poorly on national examinations.

Sample Size Determination

Using the Yamane (1967) sampling formula, 397 students were selected for the study. A total of 397 students were chosen proportionately from 12 schools to make up the sample size. There were eight coeducational secondary schools, two boarding schools for boys, and two boarding schools for girls. Twelve schools, or 38% of the target population, were chosen. Kothari and Garg (2014) state that a sample size of at least 10% is deemed representative.

Research Instruments

The research adapted academic goal setting questionnaire developed by Gaumer et al. (2017) with a reliability coefficient of .85 and the researcher sought permission to use the questionnaire. The scale consisted of 19 items. The scale consisted of items on goal setting for personal improvement which were measured by items 1, 2, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15 and 19 and academic improvement goals which were measured by items 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 14, 16, 17, 18. The scoring was done by summing the scores, with a minimum of 19 and a maximum of 95. A score below 57 implied ineffective goal setting while a score of 57 and above signified effective goal setting.

Data Collection

Questionnaires were distributed and after the participants had fully comprehended the instructions, the researcher gave them guidance and let them to fill them. The questionnaire was completed by the respondents in roughly twenty minutes. The mark sheet from the end-of-term exam was used to gather data on academic performance. Since secondary school students have little time for research, it was more appropriate to use questionnaires and mark sheets to gather data from them. Additionally, the data gathered using this method allowed researcher to test the hypotheses.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data was gathered by the researcher and entered into the SPSS Version 25 software. Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used in the data analysis process. Means, frequencies, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis were among the metrics used in descriptive analysis, and the study's hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics.

FINDINGS

Demographic Information of the Respondents

Table 1 presents the background information of the respondents.

Table 1 : Gender and Type of School Crosstabulation

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Type of school	Boys' Boarding schools	45(12%)	0	45(12%)

	Girls’ Boarding schools	0	50(13%)	50(13%)
	Co-educational schools	149(39%)	138(36%)	287(75%)
Total		194(51%)	188(49%)	382(100%)

According to Table 1, 194 (51.0%) of the respondents were female students attending coeducational schools, 188 (49.00%) male respondents from coeducational schools came next. Conversely, there were 45 (12.00%) respondents from boys' boarding schools and 50 (13.00%) from girls' boarding schools.

The researcher also obtained the descriptive statistics of respondents’ age and gender cross- tabulation as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Age and Gender Cross Tabulation

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Age	15.00	0(0.00%)	3(0.79%)	3(0.79%)
	16.00	27(7.07%)	32(8.38%)	59(15.45%)
	17.00	82(21.47%)	109(28.53%)	191(50.00%)
	18.00	74(19.37%)	37(9.69%)	111(29.06%)
	19.00	9(2.36%)	7(1.83%)	16(4.19%)
	20.00	1(0.26%)	0(0.00%)	1(0.26%)
	25.00	1(0.26%)	0(0.00%)	1(0.26%)
Total		194(50.79%)	188(49.21%)	382(100%)

According to Table 2, 191 (50%) of the respondents were 17 years old, which is a suitable age for third-form students. This consisted of 82 (21.47%) males and 109 (28.53%) females. Following this were 111 individuals (29.06%) who were 18 years of age or older, consisting of 37 (9.69%) females and 74 (19.37%) males. Third place went to 59 (15.45%) of the 16-year-olds, of whom 32 (8.38%) were female and 27 (7.07%) were male. The majority, 253 (66.23%), were under the age of 18, according to the data.

Relationship between Academic Goal Setting and Academic Achievement

The researcher analyzed the descriptive statistics for academic goal setting based on gender, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Academic Goal Setting by Gender

Gender	N	Min	Max	R	M	SD	Kur	Sk
Male	194	26.00	82.00	56.00	59.76	11.57	-.04	-.53
Female	188	28.00	91.00	63.00	60.61	9.96	.69	-.06
Total	382	26.00	91.00	65.00	60.18	10.80	.31	-.37

Female students achieved a higher mean of 60.61 ($SD=9.96$), as shown in Table 3. Additionally, they obtained a maximum score of 91 and a minimum score of 28. However, the mean score for male students was 59.76 ($SD=11.57$). Additionally, they obtained the highest score of 82 and the lowest score of 26. This suggests that academic goal-setting varied by gender.

Hypothesis Testing

This study's objective was to investigate the relationship between academic achievement and academic goal setting among Form Three students in Sigowet/Soin Sub-County. To achieve this, the researcher tested the corresponding null hypothesis using the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis:

H_{01} : Academic goal setting is significantly associated with academic achievement among Form Three students in Sigowet/Soin Sub County.

The results of the test are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlation between Academic Goal Setting and Academic Achievement

		Academic Achievement
Academic goal setting	Pearson Correlation	.55**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00
	N	382
Personal growth goals	Pearson Correlation	.50**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00
	N	382
Academic improvement goals	Pearson Correlation	.57**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00
	N	382

The results from Table 4 showed that there was a moderately positive and significant relationship between academic goal setting and academic accomplishment ($r(382) = .55, p < .05$). This suggests that students who set more academic goals are more likely to achieve academic success, and vice versa. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between academic goal setting and academic accomplishment among form three students in Sigowet/Soin Sub County was rejected. Among the academic goal setting subscales, the personal growth goals subscale had a moderately positive and significant relationship with academic achievement ($r(382) = .50, p < .05$).

The results show that students' academic achievement increases with their personal growth goals and vice versa. Results showed a moderately positive and significant relationship between academic achievement and academic improvement goals ($r(382) = .57, p < .05$). The findings show that students' academic achievement increases with their goals for academic improvement and vice versa. Regression analysis was performed by the researcher to predict academic achievement based on academic improvement and personal growth goals.

The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Model Summary Prediction of Academic Achievement from Personal Growth Goals and Academic Improvement Goals

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.58 ^a	.34	.33	8.17
a. Predictors: (Constant), AIG, PIG				

Based on the findings in Table 5, the model's R² value was 0.34, indicating that 34% of the variation in academic performance among Form Three students in Sigowet/Soin Sub-County, Kenya, could be explained by academic goal setting. The combined impact of academic improvement goals and personal growth goals is reflected in this variance. To determine whether the predictive values of academic achievement from academic goal setting were significant, the researcher used an ANOVA test. Table 6 presents the findings.

Table 6: ANOVA Test for the Prediction of Academic Achievement from Academic Goal Setting

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12830.38	2	6415.19	96.22	.00 ^b
	Residual	25269.62	379	66.67		
	Total	38100.00	381			

The results in Table 6 reveal that both personal growth goals and academic improvement goals had a joint significant relationship with academic achievement, $F(2, 379) = 96.22, p < .05$.

The researcher conducted regression analysis to establish the predictive values for both personal growth goals and academic improvement goals as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Regression Coefficients for prediction of Academic achievement from Emotional Personal Growth Goals and Academic Improvement Goals

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	17.595	2.37		7.41	.00
	PIG	.27	.11	.16	2.51	.01
	AIG	.77	.11	.45	6.92	.00

Academic improvement goals had a positive and significant link with academic achievement, $\beta = .77, t(381) = 6.92, p < .05$. In the regression model, personal growth goals had a positive and significant association with academic accomplishment, $\beta = .27, t(381) = 2.51, p < .05$. This suggests that a unit change in academic improvement goals leads to a .77 change in academic accomplishment, while holding academic growth goals constant, $t(381) = 2.51, p < .05$.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

This study's objective was to ascertain how academic achievement and goal-setting are related. According to the findings, students' academic achievement and the practice of creating academic goals were positively correlated. This implies that students who set more academic goals typically succeed academically, and vice versa. These findings also applied to the academic goal-setting subscales, with the personal growth goals subscale showing a

moderately positive and significant correlation with academic achievement. According to the research, students who set more ambitious personal development objectives are more likely to succeed academically, and vice versa.

The findings revealed a somewhat positive and significant relationship between academic achievement and academic improvement goals, suggesting that the more students focus on their goals, the higher their academic achievement will be, and vice versa. These findings align with Lock and Latham's (2002) Goal Setting Theory, which holds that in order to motivate and guide an individual or group of individuals towards a goal, an action plan needs to be developed. The theory describes how goal setting affects behaviour, highlighting the ways in which factors like the goals' nature, degree of commitment, goal relevance, self-efficacy, feedback, and task complexity can all have an impact.

It also implies that goal-setting-focused interventions can assist students in successfully addressing these elements, increasing their chances of success. The theory states that goal-setting helps students focus more on their academic performance because it allows them to push themselves to meet their objectives based on assessments of their prior academic performance or goals. In line with the findings of the current study, Marieke (2018) employed goal-setting theory to investigate its impact on success and discovered that goal-setting is a highly reliable indicator of an individual's success. Goal setting theory was also applied by Jeong and Laura (2021), who found that goal setting had a major impact on people's success levels.

The study's findings also support those of Chak and Carminati (2020), who showed that goal-setting could improve academic achievement. In a different study, McMillan (2019) examined how goal-setting affected the academic performance and motivation of students in South Carolina, USA. In line with the results of the current study, the results showed that goal setting had a positive impact on students' motivation to learn as well as their achievement in mathematics. The findings of this study were also in line with those of Hematian et al. (2017), who investigated the relationship between academic performance, achievement motivation, and goal setting among Iranian secondary school students. The results of the study showed that goal-setting significantly improved self-directed learning.

There are few studies in Africa that demonstrate the role of goal setting in academic achievement, but Nalugwema (2022) conducted a study in Uganda and found that goal setting encourages class coordination, assessments, adherence to the teaching schedule, encouraging discussion groups, and ensuring ongoing monitoring and supervision of students, all of which support students' academic achievement. Similarly, Cuevas et al. (2020) evaluated the impact of goal setting on motivation, self-efficacy, and math achievement among elementary learners in Turkey and discovered that goal-setting improved the students' ability to solve multiplication problems.

Few studies have also been conducted in Kenya and Sigowet/Soin Sub County in Kericho County that demonstrate the importance of goal-setting for academic success. However, Ong'uti et al. (2019) examined goal-setting among Kisii County public secondary school students as a predictor of mathematical achievement and discovered a positive correlation between goal-setting and mathematical proficiency. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that students who set goals performed better in mathematics than their peers who did not. Setting academic goals is positively and significantly correlated with students' academic achievement. Therefore, in order to improve students' academic performance, goal setting must be ingrained in the learning process.

Few studies focused on the role of goal setting in academic achievement were found by the researcher in Sigowet/Soin Sub County in Kericho County, Africa, and Kenya. The results of the current study thus significantly add to the body of literature and close the gap of limited information regarding the contribution of academic goal setting to academic achievement among students in Africa, Kenya, and Sigowet/Soin Sub County in Kericho County.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study demonstrated a significant and positive relationship between academic achievement and academic goal setting. This suggests that students who set more academic goals are more likely to succeed

academically, and vice versa. Thus, the study comes to the conclusion that academic achievement and academic goal setting have a moderately positive and significant relationship.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. The Ministry of Education and curriculum developers should incorporate academic goal setting in students' learning content to enhance students' academic achievement.
- ii. Teachers and educators should incorporate strategies in teaching and learning that will enhance students' academic goal setting skills to improve students' academic achievement.

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