

STUDY HABITS AS CORRELATES OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AMONG STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA

OMARE JUSTINE MOMANYI

PO BOX 43844, NAIROBI, KENYA

Corresponding Author: omaremomanyi@gmail.com

Abstract: English language has become one of the crucial languages among learners in many educational institutions worldwide. It has become a channel of instruction in all learning centers and an official language in the teaching learning process and a mandatory subject in some institutions. However, in Kenya there is unresolved concern of poor academic performance in the subject for several years. Studies have linked poor academic performance results in English language; to teacher quality, curriculum related issues, parental engagement and scarcity of facilities in schools among others. Endeavors towards improving the academic performance in English have been exerted, but the problem of deplorable results remains unending concern. The aim of this study was to establish the relationship between study habits and performance in English language among students in public secondary schools in Kenya. The study employed a correlation design and stratified random sampling technique. The study sampled two hundred and ten (210) form four students from public secondary schools in Kisii Central, Kisii County. Document analysis and study habit questionnaire were used to collect data. The results from Pearson Product Moment Correlation indicated a positive statistically significant relationship between study habits and academic performance in English language among students in public secondary schools. The study recommended that teachers and parents should increase awareness and motivate the students to develop effective study habits to improve the performance.

Keywords: Correlates, Study habits, academic performance, students.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction to the Study

Many countries are striving to improve the quality and levels of education provided because of its role in propelling socio-economic development. To realize this goal many countries have accepted to use English language as a channel of instruction and medium of communication as well as an official language in local and global platforms. In Kenya, English plays a pertinent role in communication at every level in the teaching-learning process although is regarded as second language because it is taught after the vernacular languages in lower primary schools from which it becomes a compulsory and requisite subject in other levels of learning. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum syllabus (KIE, 2005) stipulates that the key rationale of teaching English language is to facilitate efficient acquisition and communicative competence among students in and after schools and not simply passing examinations. To realize this goal, there has been

much emphasis to prepare students towards sound teaching and learning in the subject to enable students the learners communicate proficiently, read varied materials to obtain information, pass examinations and for pleasure. Despite the efforts made to propel improved academic outcomes, many learners still experience several challenges leading to the decline of academic performance. The poor academic performance comes at a time when the demand for quality education is on the rise all over the world because of the realization that education is key to meaningful socio-economic development in any country. The quality of education is reflected through the grades attained by the learners in different subjects at the end of the learning course. Study habits are defined as well-planned conscious learning behaviors of acquiring knowledge which have attained some degree of consistency on the student's level (Bashir, 2010). The rationale of employing study habits is geared towards understanding the academic subject under study and excelling in the examinations. Studying requires effective study habits which are necessary for learners to attain good grades/points at the end of the learning cycle. Additionally, study habits are useful in improving learning and academic performance among the students. According to Ogbodo (2002) students' study habits that require consistent practice include; note taking and reading, teacher-consultation, time management, study procedure, homework and assignments, test taking among others. Studies have pointed out that regular and systematic practice of study habits enables learners to make informed and efficient decisions regarding their studies. Likewise, studies have observed that success is not always connected to socio-economic students and intelligence of learners but other factors (Singh, 2011). The apparent discrepancy between successful and unsuccessful students in English language examinations has presented a challenge to educators and parents throughout the world. According to Muriungi (2011), poor academic performance in English language is worrying because it limits the learners' choice careers aspirations especially where the subject is a requirement. Several studies have documented the causes of poor academic performance such as; shortage teachers, attitude inadequate provision of facilities and pedagogical challenges among others according to Ouma (2006), Abdullahi (2010) and Ndanu (2007), but it has not been exhaustive particularly in English language in Kisii County from the student's perspective because the results are still discouraging. Many learners fail to cope with the daily demands of the academic work in English language especially in the secondary school education because they encounter different distractions which interfere with their ability and inclination to pay attention to the academic assignments, lessons, time management and various activities in school and by extension to subject areas. As a result, they experience low academic results and the student's academic achievement is not done at the very best effort of a learner, thus poor academic performance. The deteriorating academic performance among many students in public secondary schools has raised a concern from parents and other education stakeholders (Kurgat, 2008; Makokha, 2011). Studies have been documented on the causes of poor academic performance such as; of limited resources, chronic teacher and student absenteeism and student indiscipline (Ndanu, 2007; Tella, J. & I, Chisikwa, 2011). In addition, a study by Abiri (2012) observed that low achievement in the subject was attributed to teacher's professional competence. The low academic achievement has occasioned to several studies, however the findings have not yielded much improvement. Some parents and teachers insist on students attending school, however learning is a complex issue which demand proactive and consistent learning tendencies, hence the need to focus on study habits employed by learners in studying English language.

Good study habits are pertinent towards meaningful learning among students. However, studying in whatsoever manner presents problems in various forms making learners to stumble in their learning activities. Some students have shown the casual approach towards their academic activities because they seem to have inappropriate study habits to employ in their learning leading them to stumble and incapable of producing better results. The problem of deplorable academic results in English language among students is a rising concern among all educational stakeholders including teachers and parents which have raised concerns regarding the persistent and low academic performance because most learners have experienced a challenge to communicate in writing in English language in examinations (Siringi, 2009) and (KNEC Report, 2011). It was out of this background that the present study was justified to conduct this study on the relationship between study habits and academic performance in English language among students in public secondary with the intent of seeking amicable interventions to address the problem.

The low achievement in English language remains to be a major issue in Kisii Central Sub County. The purpose of this present study was to find out whether study habits correlate with the academic performance in the subject in an effort to improve the results achieved in the area under scrutiny. The purpose of the study was to establish whether study habits have significant relationship on the academic performance in English language among the public secondary school students in Kisii County. The aim of the study was to find out whether there is relationship between students' study habits

and academic performance in English language in public secondary schools in Kisii Central Sub-County. The main research question was; to what extent is there a relationship between students’ study habits and academic performance in English language among students in public secondary schools in Kisii Central-County? On theoretical framework, this study was informed by cognitive learning that was developed in Jean Piaget in 1958. The theory explores on how individual differences in thinking of knowledge and experience occur and the way they perceive and interpret the environment during the learning process. Cognitive learning theory emphasizes on the learners being active participants in learning process while the role of teachers is to facilitate the learners to unfold the main aspects of information on their own. The conceptual framework of the study was based on the understanding that study habits have influence on English language performance. Learners that are familiar with processing information have the potential to excel. The awareness of cognitive theory would help the learners and teachers to develop the instructional strategy that would support efficient studying routine(s). The conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1.1;

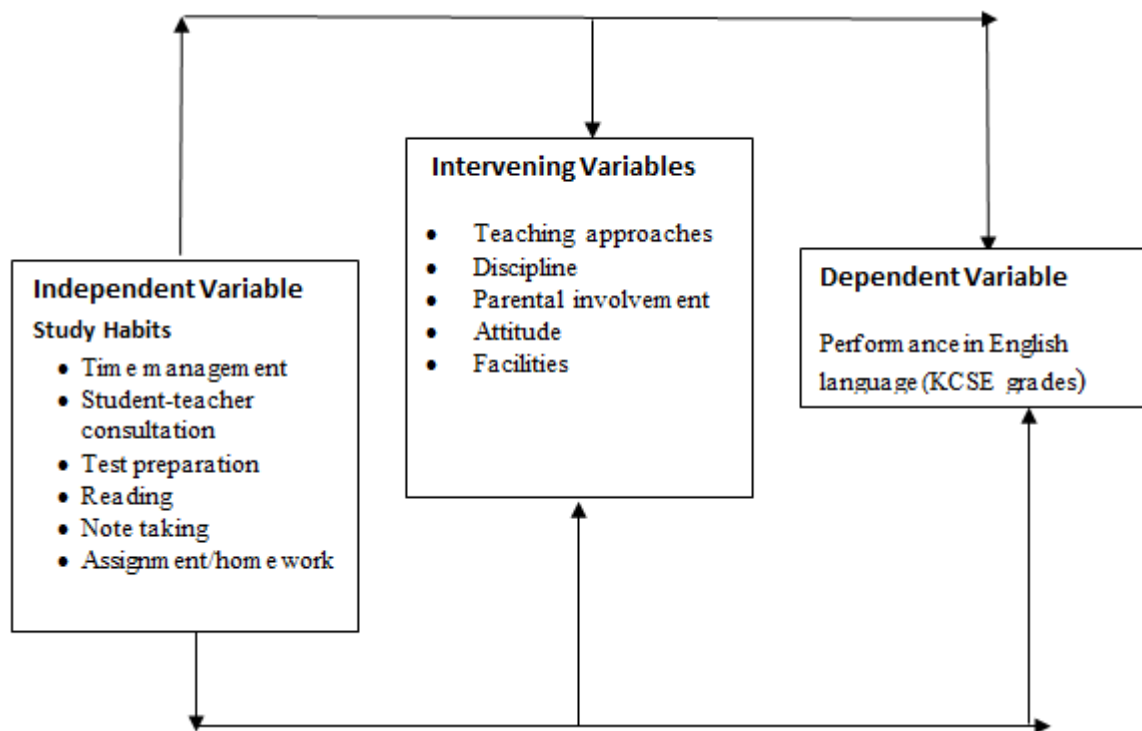


Figure 1.1: Relationship between Study Habits and English Language Performance

The figure 1.1 indicates the relationship between student’s study habits and academic outcome in English language. The independent variables are study habits; reading, taking notes, consultation, time management plans, prepare and take tests and do the assignment/homework among others. Study habits are perceived to influence the student’s ability to learn and perform well in studies. The intervening variables mediate in the achievement of success between performance and study habits. Such factors include; the institutional commitment, motivation, attitude, students’ self-efficacy and self-concept among others. Academic performance is the dependent variable. This is the output achieved at the end of study period and is measured mainly through examinations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been conducted on study habits and its association with academic performance. A study by Sheikh (2002) highlighted that effective study habits enables learners to search, obtain, organize and remember new information learnt and establish links with other aspects in the course of learning hence improving masterly and learning outcomes. In India, Anwar (2013) studied on the link between good and bad study habits and academic achievement students in the senior secondary school level. To determine the study habits employed by the students, a study inventory was used to obtain the required data. The study sample was selected using purposive sampling. The study found a strong positive relationship between study variables. The analyzed evidence pointed out a significant difference in performance between

students with poor and good study habits with those with good study habits scoring higher scores and vice versa. The reviewed study focused on participants in India which experienced different socio-economic background with Kenya where the present study was conducted among high school students. In Canada, Kong (2012) examined the predictive ability of reading habit and academic performance in English language. The study sampled 500 students through simple random sampling technique. Data was gathered through standardized tests. The findings averred a positive correlation between effective reading habit and academic achievement. A study by Afful and Hogrey (2010) in Ghana surveyed a study on the predictive ability of study habits on academic performance in secondary school students. Data were collected using a study habit questionnaire. The study sampled 112 form two students. The data were analyzed by the use of multiple regression analytical and bivariate correlation techniques. The findings revealed that out of the ten (10) study habits used to assess the relationship with academic performance, only two that is assignment and correction emerged as the only predictors of academic performance. The reviewed study was not subject specific unlike the present study that was directed to English language. A study by Bashir (2010) in Nigeria examined on study habits and academic performance among the adolescents. The study focused on variables such as; concentration, task orientation, drilling, recording and comprehension. The findings indicated that there was significant correlation between study habits and academic performance. In a related study, Singh (2011) found that there was a strong correlation in study habits and academic performance. Mashayekhi and Raftal (2014) reported that study habits have a positive correlation with the student academic achievement and recommended that educators should take effective steps to improve to the quality of student's education although the study was limited the undergraduate students and not at school level. In summary, the reviewed literature has revealed that good study habits are assets to the learners because they help them acquire knowledge and attain mastery of the subject. In addition, the reviewed studies have shown that indicated that good study habits are vital in increasing the academic performance while poor study habits can lead to low achievement in the subject. However, some of the reviewed literature covered on the overall academic performance and were not subject specific as it was the case in the present study in which English language was under scrutiny. Similarly, there are minimal studies that have focused on the study habits and academic performance in English language in Kenya, particularly in Kisii Central Sub County where the problem of poor results in English seems to persist and yet it is an indispensable subject towards achieving instructional objectives among students in the secondary schools. Therefore, the present study sought to fill the identified gaps and add insight to the available literature. Regarding the relationship between time management, reading and note taking and academic achievement in Pakistan, Fazal (2012), sampled 300 college students in a study which revealed a statistically significant association between study variables. Data were collected through questionnaires. The reviewed study was done among college participants, however the present study was conducted among high school students and the findings from this study would add valuable knowledge to the existing literature. In a related study on study habits by Abdullahi (2010) among secondary school students reported that extensive reading without proper consultation with instructors has no positive effect on test achievement. In addition, the study revealed that boarding schools outperformed day schools in the level of achievement. The findings from a survey in Uganda from a study by Nalusiba (2010) attested that poor reading patterns resulted to low achievement in English. This was attributed to learners focus on reading on only recommended textbooks and inadequate learning materials and inadequate study habits from the student's perspective. On test-taking and preparation study habit, Gettinger and Seibert (2002) pointed out a significant evidence which supported the view that effective test preparation was correlated with examination performance. Although this study habit enabled students to be familiar with test format and understand the instructions, it also observed that this study habit worked better in a relatively mature learners compared to young ones.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a correlational research design. The study targeted 474 form four students from ten (10) public secondary schools in Kisii Central Sub County. Most of the students were obtained from schools which had a mixed setting of boys and girls and were drawn from urban and rural environment. This was critical because the data which were collected provided rich information from respondents from rural and urban schools because the settings had varying contexts and situation. The participants in the study were selected through stratified random sampling technique from which every set stratum had an equal probability of being included in the study without bias (Diana, 2009). A sample size of two hundred and ten (210) form four students was drawn from the ten (10) selected public secondary schools in Kisii Central Sub County. The number of boys and girls in the study was equal. (N=210,105 boys, 105 girls). The main

research tools were document analysis and study habit questionnaires. The study analyzed various examination documents from schools which provided data on the student’s academic achievement in English language in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examinations (K.C.S.E). Regarding the collection of information on the student’s study habit characteristics in English language, study habit questionnaire was used. The study habit inventory (SHI) was rated using the 5-point Likert scale; Strongly Disagree=1 Disagree=2, Neutral=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5. The questionnaire consisted of 43 items; time management (6 items), test preparation (9 items), doing assignments / homework (8 items), reading (7 items), teacher consultation (7 items), and note taking (6 items) to which the students were required to react to by completing in the questionnaires. On the validity of the questionnaire, the supervisors from the Department of Educational Psychology in Kenyatta University were engaged to establish content and face validity of the tool in use. The supervisors from the University analyzed the questionnaires to convenience of the instrument and advised on how to they could be improved so that they could respond to the objectives of the study. Test-retest reliability of the study habit inventory was done and the correlation coefficient of was obtained 0.82. Concerning data collection procedures, the study sought permission from the concerned authorities. The first visit was made to familiarize with the school administrators and students and establish a conducive rapport. This was followed by distribution and administration of the already prepared questionnaires to the students and the final visit was to collect the filled questionnaires in their respective schools. The students were required to fill the questionnaire during their free time within the school timeframe. The teachers of English language assisted in administering of the questionnaires to ensure high return rate and clarify any ambiguities which might have risen during data collection process.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to establish the study habit preference in English language among students in public secondary schools. The results were shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.1: Study Habit Preference in English Language

Study Habit						No. of items	Total Score	Mean	SD
	SA 5	A 4	N 3	D 2	SD 1				
Test Preparation	12	63	81	28	16	9	627	69.67	22.8
Assignment/Homework	7	28	64	70	31	8	510	63.75	
Time Management	54	82	30	18	16	6	742	123.67	
Reading	15	58	60	43	24	7	597	85.29	
Teacher Consultation	10	51	72	47	20	7	584	83.43	
Note taking	3	8	37	68	84	6	378	63.00	
N=6						43	79.95	81.483	22.8

The results in the Table 4.1, indicated that the mean preference for the study habits in English language among students in public secondary schools. In regard to the results the mean rating for test preparation study habit was 69.67, the mean rating for the doing assignments/homework was 63.75 while the mean for time management stood at 123.67. In addition, the mean rating for reading habit was 85.29, teacher consultation was 83.43 and note taking was 63.00. From the findings it was logical that time management was most preferred with the highest mean score followed by reading, teacher consultation, test preparation, assignments/homework and note taking study habit respectively. The range between the most and least preferred was 60.67 while the overall mean score for all the six study habits was 79.95, standard deviation stood at 22.80 (Mean=79.95, SD=22.80). In view of the present study findings, individual students preferred specific study habits which made them to be engaged academically, remain focused towards learning tasks and retain information learnt for a longer period which might result to improved academic performance.

4.1. Study Habits and Gender in Academic Performance in English Language

The study sought to find out the association between study habits and academic performance in English language in Kisii Central Sub-County. To realize this goal, this study computed Pearson Product Moment Correlation and the results were presented in the Table 4.2;

Table 4.2: Relationship between Study Habits and Academic Performance

		Study habits	Sig. Level
Study habits	Pearson Correlation	1	.414
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.134
	N	6	6
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.414	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.134	
	N	6	6

* Significant level at 0.05 (2-tailed)

Table 4.2, presents the findings on the relationship between study habits and academic achievement in English language. Based on the calculated results from Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient, the study revealed that there was a weak positive correlation between study habits and academic performance in English language ($r=.414$, $n=210$, $p=0.05$).

The present study findings assented with a number of studies (Bashir, 2010; Singh, 2011; Anwar, 2013) which found a positive statically significant association between study habits and academic attainment in English. Based on the present study results, it was evident that students which embraced better study habits scored higher scores in English language. Therefore, students should be motivated to develop the most effective study habits which could accelerate the performance in English language in public secondary schools. In view of the findings, it was logical to conclude that students have employed various study habits in English language, that there was a difference in study habits between boys and girls, the exist a significant correlation between study habits and academic performance in English language in public secondary schools in Kisii Central Sub-County. The study recommended vitality and the role of students in implementing of the study habits and teachers to continuously keep assigning, sensitizing and guiding the all learners towards successful learning

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International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

 Vol. 7, Issue 6, pp: (40-47), Month: November - December 2020, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

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