



Relationship between teacher affection and students' academic adjustment in public boarding secondary schools in Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract

Student adjustment in school is a major predictor of their successful academic and psychosocial preparedness to school life and its demands. However, there is a high frequency of pupils who exhibit rebellion against rules, truancy as well as delinquent tendencies which are a manifestation of maladjustment despite guidance and counselling programs in schools. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between teacher affection and students' academic adjustment in public boarding secondary schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The study adopted Ex post facto research design. To gather data, a developed questionnaire was administered to secondary school students in Form one and two who at this time are in the process of adjusting to school. To get a general understanding of student school adjustment, 24 class teachers were interviewed. The study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's Bio ecological systems theory, Ceci, and Connell's Self-Determination theories. The target population was 7,123 students. Stratified random sampling was used to obtain a sample of 692, among them were 335 boys and 357 girls. To ensure validity, the researcher sought the expert opinion of her supervisors who checked the face and content validity against the stated objectives. Reliability of instruments was established by use of Cronbach Alpha and a reliability coefficient of 0.7 or higher was considered acceptable. Student questionnaire was administered by the researcher with the help of class teachers of the six sampled schools. The interview schedule was administered personally by the researcher. The collected data was then organized and summarized by use of descriptive statistics and analyzed by use of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) computer programme version 21.0 and presented in percentages, means, in tables and figures. Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between variables and a significance level of 0.05 was used to test the null hypothesis. Data from interviews was analyzed based on emerging themes and reported in a narrative form. The study found that adjustment to boarding school is a challenge to form one and form two students. The findings may be used to improve student adjustment in public boarding secondary schools. It may also form a base for further research on affective teacher-student relationship.

Keywords: teacher affection, students' academic adjustment, public boarding secondary schools, Kenya

Introduction

Adjustment to school routine, academic adjustment, emotional adjustment and social adjustment do not operate in isolation, but rather, they are understood as interwoven and dynamic. For example, Crede and Niehorster (2012) ^[2] found that college adjustment is predictive of college academic performance and a very good predictor of college retention. Student relationships with teachers, their academic activities and social self-views form part of a dynamic system of reciprocal causation. It therefore, means that a student who adjusts to school routine is likely to engage fairly well in academics, fit in the school social environment and maintain emotional stability. Conversely, lack of adjustment in one aspect is likely to negatively affect adjustment to all other aspects of school life.

Logan & Skamp (2008) ^[5] in Maryland, USA conducted research using pre-experimental design to determine if building positive relationships between teachers and students impacts students' academic engagement in the classroom. He used convenience sampling to obtain a sample of 12 boys from a mixed public secondary school of age 14-15 years. Baseline data was gathered over a two-week period followed by the intervention, which lasted four weeks. The researcher designed behavioral observations chart that was used to record the participants' off-task

behaviors. The findings showed that the mean number of off-task behaviors per student during the baseline period (mean=44.33, Sd =14.89) was significantly higher than the mean number of off-task behaviors during the intervention period (mean=31.08, Sd 9.68) ($t(11) = 5.90$). It was significant at $P < .001$. She concluded that, the teacher-student relationship building intervention yielded positive results in reducing the total number of off-task behaviors throughout a class period. Although the research was conducted only among boys who are under achievers and with strained student-teacher relationship, the intentional teacher intervention yielded positive results. Form one and two students are basically in their adolescence, a crucial time for them to know that their teachers care and have genuine interest in them. This gives them the confidence to engage actively in class by asking and answering questions, engage in discussion, and do their assignments because they experience a safe environment with the teacher (Koles, O'Connor and Collins (2013) ^[4]).

Winga *et al* (2011) ^[10] in Kisumu, Kenya used a cross section design to investigate the level of school adjustment and its relationship with academic achievement. Cluster and stratified sampling techniques were used to obtain a sample of 450 form four students consisting of 230 boys and 160 girls with mean age 18.38. School adjustment was

understood as engagement and satisfaction with school and academic achievement. Data was collected by use of questionnaires as well as KCSE examination results and analyzed by use of descriptive statistics. The results showed that there were no significant differences between girls and boys in school adjustment, but there were significant differences between high achievers and low achievers in dedication, absorption, engagement and school adjustment. However, this study used cluster sampling method which is prone to higher sampling error than the samples formed using other sampling methods.

Johnson and Melissa, Jan (2020) ^[3] conducted a longitudinal study to establish the effects of teacher and student perceptions of teacher-student relationship qualities on academic adjustment in public elementary schools in Texas, USA. The sample consisted of 714 underachieving students. Data was obtained each year from teachers' questionnaire and children's interviews and standardized achievement testing. The children's interviews schedule used was an adopted one, Network of Relationship Inventory (NRI; Furman and Buhrmester, 1985) and it measures teacher-student relationship qualities. The findings showed that teacher support is positively associated with mathematics self-efficacy and a sense of school belonging. Child reports of conflict are predictive of reading and mathematics achievement, as well as a sense of belonging.

Kamla-Raj (2012) investigated the academic and social adjustment experiences of first year students in a University in Zimbabwe. He used purposeful sampling to select willing respondents. The participants consisted of 3 female and 4 male students with a mean age of 24.4 years. A semi-structured interview guide was used to gather in-depth information on social and academic problems experienced by the students. Content analysis was used to analyze data. The data was categorized and consolidated into themes that were subsequently compared. In the academic sphere the study revealed that fear of failure was a major concern and a cause of anxiety, lack of courage to ask questions, teaching methods that were different from what they were used to in secondary school and lack of permanent venue were cause of stress among first year students. The social experiences themes that emerged strongly includes a new University culture, separation from family, disengaging high school friends, finance, dress and food. The researcher therefore concluded that first year University students face a myriad of academic and social problems. This means that if the students are to go through their studies successfully, adjustment is indispensable. Empirical studies support the view that college adjustment is predictive (Cetin, 2013) ^[1] of college academic performance and a very good predictor of college retention (Crede and Niehorster, 2012) ^[2]. However, the sample size was too small to make generalization beyond the sample itself.

In yet another study, there is a strong link between Guidance and Counseling and; adjustment to school academic environment. Mugambi (2017) investigated the effectiveness of Guidance and Counseling services in enhancing students' adjustment to school academic environment in public boarding secondary schools in Kenya. Purposive and random sampling was used to obtain a sample of 720 Form three students, 18 class teachers and 18 teachers in-charge of Guidance and Counseling. A questionnaire was used to collect data from students and analyzed by use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences

(SPSS) version 17.0 program. The findings showed that the majority 85.4% of the students and 94.4% of the class teachers identified time management as an issue addressed in Guidance and Counseling to enhancing student adjustment to school academic environment. Other factors within Guidance and Counseling programs mentioned as enhancing school adjustment included academic trips (83.5%, guidance on how to attain their goals 88.9%, balance between co-curricular and curricular activities 88.3% among others. On average 72.7% of the respondents suggested that in the overall Guidance and Counseling was effective in enhancing students' adjustment to the school academic environment.

However, other studies have shown lack of relationship between school adjustment and academic achievement. Beda (2015) examined school adjustment and academic achievement among tribal adolescent students in two districts Imphal and Ukhrul in Manipur, India. The sample consisted of 629 grade XI students. A standardized School Adjustment Inventory for adolescent students developed by the researcher was used. It contained 30 items related to school area of adjustment. Public examination marks were used as the index of academic achievement. Coefficient of correlation was used to test the two variables and the results were $R = 0.24$ and 0.23 in Imphal and Ukhrul respectively. The results indicate a low positive correlation, an indication of a very weak relationship between school adjustment and school achievement. Other empirical studies with similar findings include Yellaiah, (2012) who found a low positive relationship between adjustment and academic achievement. The foregoing reviewed literature reveals mixed findings with regard to teacher affection and academic adjustment while some are implied conclusions. Some studies revealed that there was a significant difference between high achievers and low achievers in dedication, engagement and school adjustment. Other studies concluded that teacher support was associated with mathematics self-efficacy and a sense of school belonging. Other studies documented that teacher support through guidance and counselling on time management contributed positively to adjustment to school academic environment. Some studies revealed that College and by extension school adjustment predicted retention and academic performance. Conversely some empirical studies showed lack of relationship between school adjustment and academic achievement.

The study hypothesized that stated there is a negative significant relationship between teacher affection and students' academic adjustment in boarding public secondary schools in Nairobi County, Kenya. It assumed that respondents have some knowledge on teacher affection and how it relates to their school adjustment in boarding school. The findings are expected to equip school administrators with ideas, knowledge and skills to enable them provide leadership that is geared to socializing students toward better school adjustment.

Methodology

This study adopted an Ex post facto research design which is a Quasi-experimental design where participants are not randomly assigned. Kerlinger (1964) defined Ex post facto research as: that research in which the independent variable or variables have already occurred and in which the researcher starts with the observation of a dependent variable or variables. He then studies the independent variables in retrospect for their possible relations to, and effects on, the dependent variable or variables.

The study was conducted in three Sub-Counties in Nairobi City County, Kenya. These included Dagoretti, Langata and Makadara sub-counties. It is within these Sub-county’s boarding schools that issues of student maladjustment have greatly been witnessed.

The researcher used random sampling technique which allowed each individual in the population to have an equal probability to be selected. It also provided the ability to generalize to the population.

Stratified random sampling was used to ensure equal representation of boys and girls. The selected Sub-counties have 16 public boarding secondary schools that satisfied the researchers’ criteria.

The researcher used purposive sampling based on the schools’ residential status to select only boarding secondary schools. This was followed by stratified random sampling based on gender to ensure adequate representation of both girls and boys secondary schools in the Sub-Counties with unequal number of boarding schools of boys and girls.

In obtaining the sample size that would increase population validity of the study, the researcher adhered to the guidelines given by Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) and Kombo and Tromp (2006) which gives selection process of an appropriate sample size from a particular population. They recommend 10% to 20% of the target population which will yield a relatively larger sample size.

Table 1: shows the final sample distribution

Sub-County	Name of school	Class Population		Sample		Sample size across gender		Sampled Class Teachers
		FI	FII	FI	FII	Boys	Girls	
Dagoretti	Dagoretti High	389	363	79	73	152	-	4
	Precious Blood	360	272	73	55	-	128	4
Makadara	Buruburu girls	324	330	65	67	-	132	4
	Ofafa Jericho	237	219	48	44	92	-	4
Langata	Langata Boys	250	200	51	40	91	-	4
	Nembu girls	253	227	51	46	-	97	4
				367	325	335 boys	357 Girls	24
						48.41%	51.59%	
		Sample size				692 (100%)		

Final sample distribution

Two male and two female class teachers were sampled from each school from the six sampled schools to participate in the study. This gave a sample size of 24 teachers. The researcher collected information about the general atmosphere of student school adjustment of their respective schools from the sampled class teachers.

Student questionnaire that consisted five sub-scales of 20 items each to measure the components of students’ school adjustment. An interview schedule with 6 open-ended questions was developed by the researcher and used to elicit information from class teachers on students’ school adjustment.

Descriptive statistics that is percentages, means, mode, standard deviation and skewness were derived. The descriptive statistics helped to summarize, describe the data with reference to demographic variables (gender and class) and the dependent variables that is adjustment to school routine, emotional adjustment, academic adjustment and social adjustment. The results of the analyses were presented in figures. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to make predictions about the target population. Pearson correlation Coefficient was chosen because the nature of the study does not require to fit in a normal distribution, the data is interval and finally, the statistic is used to measure relationship between variables as is the case in this study. The results of the analyses were presented in form of figures.

Pearson Correlation test at 0.05 level of significance was used to determine the relationship between teacher affection and students’ academic adjustment in public boarding secondary school.

Research Findings

The total number of participants as shown in table 1 were 692 whereby 332 (48%) were male while 360 (52%) were female students. The sample had participants drawn from

form I classes, who were the majority (53%) and form II were (47%). Analysis was also done on the level of academic adjustment across gender and class of the respondents as shown in figure 1 below.

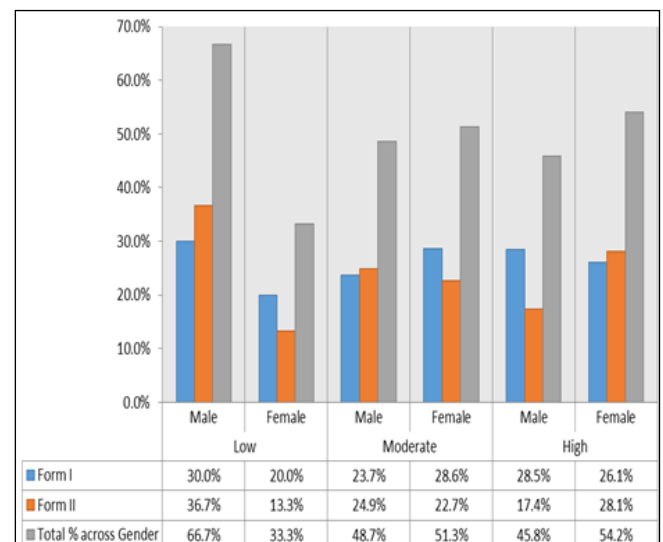


Fig 1: level of academic adjustment across gender and class of the respondents

Female students were within moderate (52%) and high (55.2%) level of social adjustment compared to male who scored (47.2%) in moderate and (44.8%) high level of social adjustment. However, majority of the form II male students fall within low bracket of social adjustment (27.0%) compared to those in high bracket who recorded only (15.3%) in the same class. On the other hand, form II and form I female students recorded 30.1% and 25.1% respectively within high levels of social adjustment.

Teacher Affection and Students’ Academic Adjustment

The descriptive analysis of the academic scores are presented in the table 2 below.

Table 2

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Teacher affection Total Score	57.9263	14.91467	692
Academic Adjustment Score	68.9162	12.03824	692

The scores were subjected to Pearson correlation. The results of the analysis in table 8 indicates that there is a significant and positive relationship between students’ academic adjustment and teacher affection scores ($r(692) = 0.65, P < 0.05$). It was significant at 0.01 level of significance.

Pearson product moment correlation test for the relationship between teacher affection scores and academic adjustment scores are presented in table 3.

Table 3

		Academic Adjustment Score
Teacher affection Total Score	Pearson Correlation	.654**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	692

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

Following these findings, the null hypothesis was rejected. Students with high scores in academic adjustment had high scores in teacher affection. These results on the relationship between student academic adjustment and teacher affection concurs with Pavlov’s classical conditioning theory suggesting the manner in which to elicit desirable behavior. Students who experience affection from their teachers are likely to engage more effectively and meaningfully in academic pursuits.

The results of this study relates very closely with previous findings on teacher-student relationships which established that good teacher-student relationships are important, and can be a protective factor for students who are at-risk of school failure (Rajeswari and Eljo, 2013) [7], such as students from low socio-economic background and ethnic minorities (Vasalampi, Salmela-Aro and Nurmi, 2009) [9]. Explaining the dynamic link between teacher emotional support and student engagement in class, Ruzek (2016) [8] noted that students were more likely to have positive peer relationships and more opportunities for choice in those classrooms.

Omodan and Tsotetsi (2018) established that there was a significant and positive relationship between student-teacher relationships and academic performance of high school students. Even though their work centered mainly on performance which is an aspect of academic adjustment, their findings are closely related to the results of this study which revealed that teacher affection has a significant and positive relationship with student academic adjustment. It was significantly related to teachers’ ability to listen, mediate warmth and exude firmness on students’ future educational aspirations and wellbeing. Sabol and Pianta (2012) has it that supportive teacher-student relationships are an educational asset from pre-school through secondary school and buffer students at risk for school failure. From the structured teacher interview schedule, the crucial role that teacher affection plays in student academic adjustment,

does not replace individual students’ clear sense of purpose, right disposition and intrinsic motivation to engage in academic activities and therefore to shape their future self-aspirations of education. It means that students cannot be passive recipients in academic adjustment.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, adjustment to boarding secondary school is a challenge specially to form one and form two students. The complexity of a school routine disorients new students. High academic demands in secondary school and stringent measures attached to it can be a source of stress. For new students, social relations with peers and with teachers take energy and time and this take toll on students’ emotional well-being.

Students with high scores on school adjustment had high scores on teacher affection. The findings correlate with reviewed literature and it can be concluded that students with positive relationship with teachers are motivated to be more engaged in academic activities because the quality of their relationship influence their level of freedom to interact, openness to find help, to share and to engage productively in academics. Teacher affection can be a vehicle that can deliver and maximize opportunities for students to engage more deeply in academic activities.

It recommends the need to sensitize students with knowledge that peers play a dynamic role in students’ school adjustment. Both positive friend characteristics and close relationships affect students’ school adjustment in a constructive manner.

From the structured interview schedule with class teachers on the role of teacher affection on student academic adjustment, one respondent commented that; students are motivated to engage in academics when they know and feel that their teacher cares about them and will help them to succeed, however, it does not replace individual students’ clear sense of purpose, right disposition and intrinsic motivation to engage in academic activities and therefore to shape their future self-aspirations of education.”

It means that students cannot be passive recipients in academic adjustment. Therefore, going by the above findings, it can be said that academic adjustment is largely a function of the student and teacher affective characteristics with the latter playing a pivotal role.

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