INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SAKHU CONSTITUENCY, MARSABIT COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Academic performance among secondary school students is influenced by a combination of educational, social, environmental and psychological factors. In marginalized settings, students may experience additional challenges that affect their motivation, emotional well-being, self-esteem and access to psychological support. This study examined the relationship between psychological factors and academic performance among secondary school students in Sakhu Constituency, Marsabit County, Kenya. Specifically, the study examined the level of students' academic performance and determined the relationships between motivation, emotional well-being, self-esteem, psychological interventions and academic performance. The study was guided by Self-Determination Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design using a mixed-methods approach was adopted. The target population comprised 2,711 participants drawn from 12 secondary schools. A sample of 393 participants was selected using stratified random sampling, purposive sampling and census approaches. Data were collected using student questionnaires and semi-structured interview schedules. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. A total of 322 students and 50 key informants participated in the study, giving an overall response rate of 94.7%. The findings showed that students' academic performance was moderate, with an overall mean of 3.09 (SD = 1.28). Students recorded their strongest performance in completing assignments, while examination performance and confidence during examinations were comparatively lower. Motivation had a significant positive relationship with academic performance and explained 29.2% of its variation ($R^2 = .292$; $\beta = .540$, $p = .001$). Emotional well-being also had a significant positive relationship with academic performance and explained 23.0% of the variation ($R^2 = .230$; $\beta = .480$, $p < .001$). Self-esteem explained 26.2% of the variation in academic performance ($R^2 = .262$; $\beta = .512$, $p < .001$), while psychological interventions explained 24.0% ($R^2 = .240$; $\beta = .490$, $p < .001$). Qualitative findings supported the quantitative results, with key informants highlighting the importance of motivation, supportive relationships, counselling, mentoring and teacher support. However, limited counselling time, shortages of trained personnel and students' reluctance to seek assistance were identified as challenges. The study concludes that psychological factors form an important part of students' educational experiences and are significantly associated with academic performance. Strengthening school-based counselling, examination support, life-skills programmes, teacher and peer support, and access to trained counselling personnel may help schools respond more effectively to students' academic and psychological needs.

Keywords: Academic performance, emotional well-being, motivation, psychological interventions, secondary school students, self-esteem, Sakhu Constituency, counselling