

Quality of the Level of Relationships Within the School and Students' KCSE Performance In Public Secondary Schools of Kibwezi Sub- County, Makueni County

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Abstract: The aim of this study was to establish the relationships that exist between quality of the level of relationships within the school and students' KCSE performance in Kibwezi sub-county, Makueni County. A descriptive survey design was used targeting all principals, heads of curriculum departments and KCSE graduates in the 61 secondary schools in Kibwezi Sub- County, Makueni County. Stratified sampling was used to select 12 schools, comprising 6 schools from the top performing category and 6 from the bottom performing category. Purposive sampling was used to select the informants. The study participants comprised 12 principals, 13 Heads of Curriculum departments and 12 KCSE graduate students in the 12 selected schools. The researcher used descriptive survey design for the study. Questionnaires, interview guide and document analysis were used as data collection instruments. Results from both the low and high performing schools were compared at the three categories of respondents. The results revealed that Students, HODs and Principals from high performing schools perceived their social environment to be more positive as compared to the low performing schools. Indeed, a positive relationship for social environment and academic performance was deduced which was statistically significant. Hence, positive social environment is related to students' performance in KCSE performance in public secondary schools of Kibwezi Sub- County, Makueni County. The study recommends education stakeholders should be encouraged to promote positive social environments in schools, since this can improve the performance of the students in KCSE exams.

Key Words: Relationship between Quality of Relations and KCSE Performance

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

To survive and out do their competitors, organizations constantly seek to improve their performance. The organizational climate in organizations is becoming more important than ever before because organizations need to ensure that those individuals who add value to their bottom line want to stay in the organization and want to continue pouring their effort into their work to the benefit of the organization⁹.

Education system in Kenya has been stressing on performance as integral part of quality education emphasized in the Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005. The provision of quality education and subsequent high performance in school is inevitable for the realization of millennium development goals and the vision 2030. The value of performance was envisaged to lead to white collar jobs immediately after independence³⁹. This is the time when the contribution of education to individual development was increasingly recognized, especially in trained man power. Hence, priority was accorded to the higher academic performance, economic growth and development.

National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government in 2001 introduced free day secondary Education fund. It also established national secondary schools as centers of excellence in each constituency in Kenya. This was a move to enhance students' performance. The government funding in secondary schools is also intended to improve infrastructure, teaching and learning and subsequently performance in national examinations.

Free Secondary Education Policy in 2008 has reduced the cost of education, increased enrolment and reduced wealth biases in education. However, the rapid increase in enrolment required supplemental provision of facilities and extra man power in order to maintain quality through provision of conducive school climate by

keeping teachers motivated, maintaining good learning environment, effective communication among school members and their involvement in decision making.

Everyone agrees that schools should have a positive school climate. There is less agreement, however, about what this means and how to accomplish it, especially when the call is for developing a safe and supportive environment that also is nurturing and caring and that provides all students with an equal opportunity to succeed.

Teacher to student relationship

The process of learning and teaching is fundamentally relational. The patterns of norms, goals, values and interactions that shape relationships in schools provide an essential foundation for school climate. One of the most important aspects of relationships in school is how connected people feel to one another.¹² define school connectedness as the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals. There is a growing body of research that suggests that school connectedness is a powerful predictor of and/or is associated with adolescent health and academic outcomes by the students^{40, 46} violence prevention⁴², student satisfaction and conduct problems³⁴. Further, it is a protective factor against risky sexual, violence and drug use behaviours^{11, 29}.

Moreover, a series of studies revealed that a positive school climate is correlated with decreased student absenteeism in school²² and with lower rates of student suspension in high school⁴⁷. A growing body of research indicates that positive school climate is critical to effective risk prevention^{3, 10, 23} and health promotion efforts^{14, 36}. Safe, caring, participatory and responsive school climates tend to foster a greater attachment to school and provide the optimal foundation for social, emotional and academic learning for students³⁷.

According to³⁸, interpersonal relationships are the heart of an organization's culture that shapes everyone's expectations and behaviours. School leaders who successfully promote leadership build and maintain trust, communicate more openly, build commitment and support for change⁷. They demonstrate personal interest in staff and make themselves available to them³⁵. Indeed, effective school leaders maintain trust, spur motivation, give empowerment, and enhance collegiality⁷. This in turn motivates teachers and learners, who dedicate and direct their efforts towards the attainment of the school vision, enhancing academic performance. Interpersonal relationships at school are typically measured by student perceptions of caring, involved teachers and/or positive peer relationships in school^{2, 13, 34}. Studies have used terms such as teacher-student relationships, intergenerational bonding, teacher involvement, teacher support, positive and negative peer interactions to represent interpersonal relationships at school^{6, 13, 26}.

A school's academic norms, expectations, and beliefs are considered part of the school climate^{8, 8} conducted one of the first thorough studies into the relationship between school climate and student achievement. Questionnaires were given to fourth- and fifth-grade students, fourth- and fifth-grade teachers, and members of the administration at each school. Ninety-one schools in Michigan were used in the research sample: 61 of the schools had a White student population of over 50% and 30 of the schools had a Black student population of over 50%. This study viewed school climate through the lens of the student demographic variables of socioeconomic status and ethnicity as well as the mean achievement of students based on the school level state achievement test annually administered to the public school students in Michigan⁸.

⁸ showed that school climate is related to student achievement. The behavior of teachers and administrators was determined to influence the behavior of students greatly. It was also noted that the socioeconomic and racial composition of the schools played a part in the student achievement variances between schools, but even those parts were influenced by the social-psychological climate that produces the school climate. They concluded that school composition does not have a predominant influence over school climate and that is the creation of a favorable climate that has the most impact for high student achievement⁸.

A study of 10 secondary schools in Lagos, State of Nigeria was conducted by¹ to determine the relationship between school climate and student achievement, as well as teacher productivity for sustainable development. Each school had randomly selected participants from each of the following groups: one principal, seven teachers, and seven students.¹ concluded that school climate can directly influence academic performance and teacher productivity. They also found that this significant relationship between school climate, performance, and productivity is an evidence of the need for ensuring a positive school climate in order to assure sustainable development. There is, as these researchers found out, need to improve the social climates in our public secondary schools to improve on their KCSE performance. This is the basis for my study.

Interpersonal relationships at school are typically measured by student perceptions of caring, involved teachers and/or positive peer relationships in school^{2, 13, 34}. Studies have used terms such as teacher-student relationships, intergenerational bonding, teacher involvement, teacher support, positive and negative peer interactions to represent interpersonal relationships at school^{6, 13, 26}.

Although some researchers conceptualize student perceptions of positive teacher-student relations as a form of emotional engagement¹⁹, the present study views interpersonal relationships as a separate aspect of the school climate that has a potential positive association with student engagement in school.

A caring relationship from the teachers and support for students' autonomy increases motivation and self-regulation in students. This, in turn, improves learning and success among students¹⁷.⁴⁴ found that supportive teacher student relationship promotes social and emotional health of early adolescents with disabilities. A growing body of research suggests that strong student-teacher relationship, characterized by caring and high expectations for students' success, may be promotive of universal benefits, such as academic achievement and progress in students⁴⁵.

³¹ carried out a longitudinal study to investigate teacher support to students' engagement and achievement. Their results revealed that students who perceived their teachers as creating well-structured learning environment, in which expectations were high, clear and fair, were likely to report engagement in school. In turn, high levels of engagement were associated with higher attendance and test scores.

⁴³, in their study, also found that interactions of teachers with students predicted students' behavior and emotional engagement in the class room. Numerous studies have indicated that positive teacher student relationship lead to increased academic performance of the students, whereas negative teacher student relationship result in decreased motivation, self-regulation and autonomy and ultimately lower performance.

A review of literature indicates that although several studies have examined interpersonal relationships between teachers and students within the context of the classroom²¹, little attention has been given to interpersonal relationships within the context of the entire school. Nevertheless, research has shown a positive association between interpersonal relationships at school and school sense of belonging²⁷.³⁴. School sense of belonging has received a lot of attention by researchers³⁷ and has been used interchangeably with interpersonal relationships, relatedness, connectedness, and sense of community²⁷.⁴¹.

Student to student relationship

In addition to teacher-student relationship, student to student relationship is also very important in a classroom setting.²⁵ report discovered that the bonding the students feel towards each other in a school community is one of the several internal development assets that encourage positive development²⁵. Studies have revealed that school connectedness is reliably linked to higher academic performance (test scores and grades) and school behavior³¹. A sense of "belongingness" has also been closely linked to engagement within the school setting.¹⁵ in the field of social and emotional education suggests that improved classroom and social climate can create an environment where learning optimally takes place. Motivation of students is also influenced by attitudes of other students and the absence or presence of bullying⁴.

True collaborative environment at school has been observed to create powerful learning environment that promote cooperative learning, group cohesion, respect, and mutual trust, which are important for the development of a sense of belonging²⁰.²⁸.²⁴ observed that when students created a lasting personal relationship with one another, they were less inclined to harm each other through gossip or bullying and hence their academic achievement tended to improve. The research findings reviewed so far indicate that good interaction among students is helpful in fostering academic performance. The pedagogical and curricular elements of learning are core reasons why learners are in a school. So it is only reasonable to expect that the class environment must be conducive to learning and self - fulfillment.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

One question that has preoccupied researchers for decades is why some public schools perform well in examinations while others consistently perform poorly. A number of researchers, including³².³⁰.¹⁶ have demonstrated that successful schools have unique characteristics and processes, which help all children to learn at high levels. A lot of research has focused on factors that contribute to high academic attainment such as learning resource material and physical environment. However, there is no evidence of studies that have focused on the critical role played by school social climate in academic attainment of public secondary schools in Kibwezi Sub- County.

With secondary education being a basic requirement for selection into tertiary institutions, poor performance undermines students' chances of job placements and meaningful participation in development of the national economy. Kibwezi Sub-County has not witnessed good performance over the years. Makueni County where Kibwezi Sub-County is part of, has generally witnessed poor performance in the KCSE as shown in the table no 1. School social climate may be one of the possible causes of the poor mean scores for the Sub - County.

Table no 1: County and Sub-County KCSE Performance

Year	Kibwezi Sub- County mean	County mean	Expected total mean score
2014	5.065	5.159	12
2013	4.944	5.036	12
2012	4	5.067	12
2011	4.929	5.145	12
2010	4.527	5.058	12
Overall mean score	4.693	5.093	12

Source: Makueni County Education Office

The table indicates that Kibwezi Sub-County average performance is lower than the County performance despite the fact that the sub-county receives similar subsidies just like the other Sub-Counties in the county. The Sub-County mean is also low compared to the expected total score. The study sought to find out whether there may be an underlying relationship between the schools' social climates and performance in the KCSE.

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the current literature in attempting to understand whether there may be a relationship between quality of the level of relationships within the school and students' KCSE performance in Kibwezi Sub-County. There is lack of research examining the relationship between school social climate and academic achievement in the area.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to assess the relationship between quality of the level of relationships within the school and students' KCSE performance in public secondary schools of Kibwezi Sub- County, Makueni County.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used a descriptive survey design. This design was appropriate for this study because it will enhance the amount of quality information yielded. Descriptive designs focus on the phenomenon of interest, which according to this study, was to find out whether there might have been a relationship between quality of the level of relationships within the school and students' KCSE performance in public secondary schools of Kibwezi Sub- County, Makueni County.

Target Population

The study population from which the sample was drawn for the study consisted of 61 public secondary schools of Kibwezi Sub - County, Makueni County.

Sampling and Sample Size

This study used stratified random sampling because of the nature of the population of study and the behavioural pattern of the target population. Practically, to select schools from the county, average mean scores in the KCSE for 2010-2014 was used to identify good and poor performing schools. Schools with an average mean of 5.0 and above were classified as good while those with a mean of below 5.0 were classified as poor. Purposive sampling was used to choose the informants. The principals, heads of curriculum department and the KCSE graduate students were chosen based on this criterion. The principals are the supervisors in the schools; heads of curriculum departments monitor the academic progress and draw programmes on academics in the schools while the KCSE graduate students have gone through the school social climate in the school and have done their KCSE in it. These formed the basis for their selection.

Data Collection

Performance and school social climate data were collected from the informants and also from documents. Informants' data were collected using questionnaires and interview guides while data from documents was collected using document analysis.

Research Instruments

a) The Questionnaire.

This study used questionnaire as the main guiding instrument to collect data from informants. Likert scale was used in this study for it is simple to construct, it is likely to produce a highly reliable scale and is easy to read and complete for participants³³. Respondents were requested to complete the questionnaires which were collected personally by the researcher from individual respondents. To avoid confusion in analyzing the

collected data from the questionnaires, the questionnaires were marked as high or low to distinguish whether it is from a high or low performing category immediately they were returned by the respondents.

b) Interview Guide

Interview guide was used to clarify areas where the researcher would feel there was a deficiency of information. Structured interview questions were used to collect data from the school principals and heads of curriculum departments. This research instrument was suitable for this study because of its being economical, providing a safe basis for generalization and requiring relatively lesser skill on the part of the interviewer. Unstructured interview was also used.

c) Document Analysis

The researcher also used document analysis in the current study to derive data on issues in the school and how they were resolved and how people in the school related. Document analysis was also used to obtain data on the performance of the schools in the sub county. The benefit of using this method is that it is objective in nature.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRATATION AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The study has used descriptive statistics and statistical tests of significance to analyse and compare data from different schools. Descriptive statistics has been used to summarise, present, compare and explain results of the treatment groups in terms of mean score and standard deviation values. The mean score and standard deviation values were obtained by computing the values assigned to the responses (Agree=1, Undecided=2 and Disagree=3). The tests of significance used in the study are the independent sample t-test.

Mean KCSE Performance of Sampled Schools

In order to ascertain the mean score for the schools sampled the study abstracted and analysed data from the school records and obtained results as shown in table no 2. From the school records, all schools categorized by the researcher as low performing schools had average mean scores of less than 5.0 while those categorised as high performing schools had mean scores of above 5.0.

Table no 2: Mean KCSE performance for the sampled schools

Sampled schools	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Average Mean
L1	3.34	3.36	4.33	4.28	4.29	3.92
L2	4.54	4.62	4.94	5.21	4.53	4.768
L3	3.7	3.72	4.06	4.64	4.84	4.192
L4	4.21	4.27	4.45	4.6	5.07	4.52
L5	4.74	4.61	4.81	5.31	4.95	4.884
L6	4.34	4.79	4.53	2.88	4.73	4.254
H1	6.37	6.47	6.86	7.41	7.38	6.898
H2	7.45	7.83	7.64	7.06	7.48	7.492
H3	7.58	7.49	7.92	8.6	8.58	8.034
H4	5.45	5.47	5.39	5.89	6.04	5.648
H5	5.57	5.46	6.78	6.52	5.27	5.92
H6	5.12	5.21	5.13	5.38	5.27	5.222

The Relationship between Quality of Relations and KCSE Performance

The study sought from the principals and HODs whether they perceived Student's KCSE performance to be related to the level of relationships within the school. Of the principals and the HODs sampled, about 90.9% of the principals and 84.6% of the HODs indicated that the quality of the level of relationships within the school was related to students' KCSE performance. The results were as shown in figure no 1

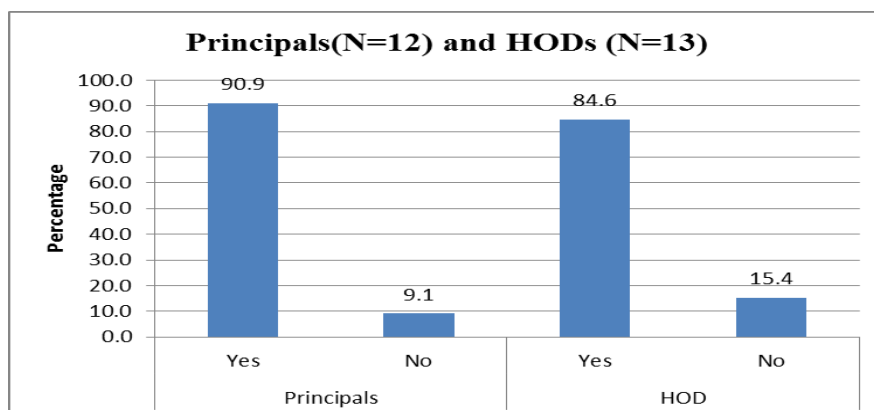


Figure no 1: The Relationship between Quality of Relations and KCSE Performance

The study also investigated the quality of the levels of relationship in both low and high performing schools. Students from the high performing schools registered highest level of agreement with the statements. On average, those who indicated that they agreed with the statements were 40.8%, those who were undecided were 7.5% while those who disagreed were 1.7%. the results were as indicated in Table no 3.

Table no 3: High performing schools students' responses on levels of relationship

	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
feel loved by teachers	6	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Teachers care for me	5	41.7	1	8.3	0	0.0
I am motivated to work hard	6	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
I am supported to learn	5	41.7	1	8.3	0	0.0
I relate positively with other students	6	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
I feel secure and protected	4	33.3	2	16.7	0	0.0
I trust my teachers	4	33.3	2	16.7	0	0.0
I relate well with teachers and the principal	6	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
I am praised and recognized when I work hard	4	33.3	1	8.3	1	8.3
I am free to express my problems to my teachers	3	25.0	2	16.7	1	8.3
Average		40.8		7.5		1.7

Responses from students from low performing schools however revealed different results. About an average of 13.3% indicated that they agreed with the statements against 18.32% who disagreed with the statements. The results indicate that there is low levels of relationships in the low performing schools. The results were as presented in table no 4.

Table no 4: Low performing schools students' responses on levels of relationship

	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
feel loved by teachers	3	25.0	2	16.7	1	8.3
Teachers care for me	0	0.0	5	41.7	1	8.3
I am motivated to work hard	1	8.3	1	8.3	4	33.3
I am supported to learn	2	16.7	2	16.7	2	16.7
I relate positively with other students	1	8.3	1	8.3	4	33.3
I feel secure and protected	3	25.0	2	16.7	1	8.3
I trust my teachers	1	8.3	4	33.3	1	8.3
I relate well with teachers and the principal	2	16.7	2	16.7	2	16.7
I am praised and recognized when I work hard	1	8.3	1	8.3	4	33.3
I am free to express my problems to my teachers	2	16.7	2	16.7	2	16.7
Average		13.3		18.34		18.32

The study also investigated the levels of relationship in schools among the HODs. The average percentage of the HODs who agreed with the statements was 39.97% while only an average of 0.5% disagreed. The results indicated that HODs from high performing schools perceive better levels of relationships within their schools. The results were as presented in Table no 5.

Table no 5: HODs from high performing schools on levels of relationships

	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
Teachers love their students	5	38.5	1	7.7	0	0.0
There is a caring environment between teachers and students	6	46.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
Students feel secure and protected by teachers	6	46.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
Teachers feel secure and protected	4	30.8	2	15.4	0	0.0
There is sense of trust and commitment in both teachers and students	6	46.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
Teachers feel motivated to work in the school	5	38.5	1	7.7	0	0.0
Students feel motivated to working hard	4	30.8	1	7.7	1	7.7
Teachers relate positively with the principal	4	30.8	2	15.4	0	0.0
Students have lasting personal relationship with one another and are positive to each other	4	30.8	2	15.4	0	0.0
Teachers support one another to perform their best	6	46.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
The principal feels supported in running the school	5	38.5	1	7.7	0	0.0
Students are free to express their problems to teachers	4	30.8	2	15.4	0	0.0
Teachers feel free to express their problems to the principal and fellow teachers	6	46.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
The principal and teachers discuss about individual progress on the part of teachers	6	46.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
There is praise and recognition for good work	3	23.1	3	23.1	0	0.0
	37.97		7.7		0.5	

Responses from the HODs from low performing schools indicated a significant average 21.6% undecided responses while those who agreed with the statements were only an average of 18%. This finding indicates that the HODs sampled from the low performing schools perceive a negative level of relationship in their schools. The results were as shown in Table no 6.

Table no 6: HODs from low performing schools on levels of relationship

	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
Teachers love their students	4	30.8	1	7.7	2	15.4
There is a caring environment between teachers and students	4	30.8	2	15.4	1	7.7
Students feel secure and protected by teachers	3	23.1	4	30.8	0	0.0
Teachers feel secure and protected	3	23.1	1	7.7	3	23.1
There is sense of trust and commitment in both teachers and students	3	23.1	4	30.8	0	0.0
Teachers feel motivated to work in the school	0	0.0	5	38.5	2	15.4
Students feel motivated to working hard	1	7.7	4	30.8	2	15.4
Teachers relate positively with the principal	4	30.8	2	15.4	1	7.7
Students have lasting personal relationship with one another and are positive to each other	1	7.7	5	38.5	1	7.7
Teachers support one another to perform their best	2	15.4	1	7.7	4	30.8
The principal feels supported in running the school	2	15.4	3	23.1	2	15.4
Students are free to express their problems to teachers	2	15.4	1	7.7	4	30.8
Teachers feel free to express their problems to the principal and fellow teachers	3	23.1	2	15.4	2	15.4
The principal and teachers discuss about individual progress on the part of teachers	1	7.7	4	30.8	2	15.4
There is praise and recognition for good work	2	15.4	3	23.1	2	15.4
Average	18.0		21.6		14.4	

From the school principals sampled, it was established that a majority from the high performing schools expressed positive perceptions of their schools' levels of relationship (average= 40.6%, 7.8% and 5.0% for Agree, Undecided and Disagree respectively. The results were as shown in table no 7.

Table no 7: High performing schools' principals on the levels of relationship

	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
Teachers love their students	5	41.7	1	8.3	0	0.0
There is a caring environment between teachers and students	6	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Students feel secure and protected by teachers	5	41.7	1	8.3	0	0.0
Teachers feel secure and protected	3	25.0	3	25.0	0	0.0
There is sense of trust and commitment in both teachers and students	4	33.3	2	16.7	0	0.0
Teachers feel motivated to work in the school	4	33.3	2	16.7	0	0.0
Students feel motivated to working hard	4	33.3	0	0.0	2	16.7
Teachers relate positively with the principal	6	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Students have lasting personal relationship with one another and are positive to each other	6	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Teachers support one another to perform their best	3	25.0	3	25.0	0	0.0
The principal feels supported in running the school	6	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Students are free to express their problems to teachers	5	41.7	1	8.3	6	50.0
Teachers feel free to express their problems to the principal and fellow teachers	6	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
The principal and teachers discuss about individual progress on the part of teachers	4	33.3	1	8.3	1	8.3
There is praise and recognition for good work	6	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Average		40.6		7.8		5.0

On the other hand, results from the school principals sampled from low performing schools revealed average responses of 17.2%, 25.0% and 11.1% for Agree, Undecided and Disagree respectively. Most of the school principals from the sampled schools therefore indicated less positive relationships in their schools. The results were as shown in Table no 8.

Table no 8: Low performing schools' principals on the levels of relationship

	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
Teachers love their students	2	16.7	3	25.0	1	8.3
There is a caring environment between teachers and students	1	8.3	5	41.7	0	0.0
Students feel secure and protected by teachers	1	8.3	3	25.0	2	16.7
Teachers feel secure and protected	4	33.3	2	16.7	0	0.0
There is sense of trust and commitment in both teachers and students	2	16.7	4	33.3	0	0.0
Teachers feel motivated to work in the school	2	16.7	4	33.3	0	0.0
Students feel motivated to working hard	2	16.7	4	33.3	0	0.0
Teachers relate positively with the principal	0	0.0	5	41.7	1	8.3
Students have lasting personal relationship with one another and are positive to each other	2	16.7	2	16.7	2	16.7
Teachers support one another to perform their best	3	25.0	2	16.7	1	8.3
The principal feels supported in running the school	2	16.7	1	8.3	3	25.0
Students are free to express their problems to teachers	2	16.7	4	33.3	6	50.0
Teachers feel free to express their problems to the principal and fellow teachers	3	25.0	2	16.7	1	8.3
The principal and teachers discuss about individual progress on the part of teachers	2	16.7	3	25.0	1	8.3

There is praise and recognition for good work	3	25.0	1	8.3	2	16.7
Average		17.2		25.0		11.1

In order to ascertain the relationship between quality of relations and student's KCSE performance, independent sample t- test was conducted. The t- test run indicated positive relationships between the levels of relationships in schools and student's performance in KCSE for responses obtained from students and HODs, ($p=0.05$) for both, $t=6.923522$ (Students), 4.818876 (HODs). Similarly, the responses from the principals also indicated positive relationship between the levels of relationships in schools and student's KCSE performance ($p=0.0433$, $t=2.530652$). The results were as shown in table no 9.

Table no 9: Relationship between the levels of relationships and KCSE performance

	School	N	Mean	Std. Dev	T	p
Students	Low	6	21	2.19089	6.9235	0.001
	High	6	12.17	2.228602		
HODs	Low	7	29	5.291503	4.8189	0.001
	High	6	17.83	2.136976		
Principals	Low	6	27.17	1.722401	2.5307	0.0433
	High	6	18.33	1.861899		

From the interviews with the principals and the heads of curricula development departments, it emerged that both the low and high performing schools desired a positive social environment which they attributed to high performance in KCSE exams. One of the Heads of curriculum Department indicated that;

Schools should strive to provide good social climate for the students and the teachers...also the community members should help enhance student discipline for without all these, the students will not perform well in their KCSE exams (H3)

From the study therefore, better social environments have been shown to have a relationship with student's KCSE performance. The findings of this study are not in isolation since they affirm the findings of a study conducted by ¹⁸. In their study, they found out that good student- teacher relationships in schools were associated with both a degree of informality and good behaviour. Similarly, ⁵, found out that a safe, caring, participatory and responsive school climate tends to foster great attachment to school as well as providing the optional foundation for social, emotional and academic learning ⁵. It could therefore be concluded, based on the study that the high performing school cultivated good social environment and thus the good performance.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Results from both the low and high performing schools were compared at the three categories of respondents. The results revealed that Students, HODs and Principals from high performing schools perceived their social environment to be more positive as compared to the low performing schools. When t – statistics was conducted, it revealed a positive relationship for social environment and academic performance with a statistical significant relationship. From the findings of the study, positive social environment is related to students' performance in KCSE performance in public secondary schools of Kibwezi Sub- County, Makueni County.

Recommendations for policy

1. From the results of the study, the following recommendations were suggested for policy makers in the field of education to consider. Education stakeholders should be encouraged to promote positive social environments in schools, since this can improve the performance of the students in KCSE exams.
2. The findings of the study therefore imply that in order to attain better in National exams, schools should ensure that positive social environment, appropriate teaching interactions that motivate students, positive communication strategies as well as inclusive decision making approaches are put into place. The schools should also aim at developing feedback mechanisms to inform appropriate adjustments in the way the schools are run.

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