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Correlation Between Psychosocial Support and Chemistry Academic Achievement among Form Three Students in Narok North Sub-County in Narok County, Kenya

Anna Moraa Orwari [1], Oluoch James Ndege[2]

[1]Masters student, Department of Educational psychology, Kenyatta University,

[2]Lecurer, Department of Educational psychology, Kenyatta University, Kenya

ABSTRACT: The purpose of the study was establishing the correlation between psychosocial support and Chemistry academic achievement. The study was anchored on Ecological Systems Theory of Human Development and Aspiration Theory and employed correlational research design to obtain quantitative data and targeting a population of all the 294 Form 3 students from 24 public schools in the Sub-County. Purposive sampling was used to select Narok North Sub-county and the Form Three class. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were employed to sample 7 schools from 3 categories; boys boarding, girls boarding and co-educational schools. A sample size of 294 respondents comprising 147 boys and 147 girls were picked using Yamane Formula to participate in the study. Data was collected using Psychosocial Support and Educational Aspirations structured scales. Chemistry end of term one 2024 examination results accompanied the questionnaires filled by the participants. Findings from the study indicates a negative and significant relationship between psychosocial support and Chemistry achievement $r\ (294) = -.125,\ p < .05$. Further, in predicting the correlation between psychosocial support and educational aspirations on chemistry achievement, regression equation revealed that academic achievement was greatly predicted by communication dimension of psychosocial support. From the findings of the research, it was highly suggested that parents and teachers get involved in activities that can reinforce high psychosocial support and sustain high motivation among students. Further research was recommended in exploring ways to maintain high psychosocial support and sustained students' motivation to ensure higher achievement among students.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

According to Kinsey et al. (2019) Chemistry is a discipline of science that is concerned with the characteristics of matter, form and the interaction between substances. Chemistry is one of the oldest science disciplines and manifests itself everywhere in the world around us; in the food we eat, clothing worn, drinking water, drugs, air and cleaning detergents (Helmenstine, 2020). In addition, Chemistry as a science crucially inculcates reasoning skills and problem solving techniques (Marie, 2019). Thus, real and meaningful scientific and technological advancement of any country requires human resource that is well equipped with relevant skills and knowledge in the field of science.

However, in the recent past, studies across the globe indicate that Chemistry academic achievement trends at various levels of learning have been below expectations and that has been a cause of worry among many educational stakeholders. In USA, Harris et al. (2020) indicate that students belonging to underrepresented groups begin college with an equal level of enthusiasm for STEM majors compared to their counterparts but withdraw from STEM fields due to challenges such as low academic attainment in general Chemistry, ultimately leading to attrition or dropout. Stacey (2017) further notes that Chemistry academic achievement has constantly remained poor and is of concern to the educational stakeholders. She recommends that instruction designs based on the outcomes of students can tremendously improve chemistry academic achievement among middle and senior school students. The constant low Chemistry academic achievement has heightened the desire, with a highly dynamic environment in the various education systems across the globe, to study challenges ranging from psychosocial support, student preparedness, lack of school fees, cultural differences, and aspirations among others, that are perceived to be contributors to poor Chemistry achievement (Bellon et al., 2017; Paolo, 2020) It is by so doing that tangible solutions to Chemistry underachievement across nations can be realized. Even though a number of factors have been cited to be behind the scenario, psychosocial support was hypothesized to immensely contribute towards Chemistry academic achievement yet it has not been sufficiently addressed directly.

Psychosocial support involves fostering resilience in individual students by honoring their autonomy, dignity and coping mechanisms within themselves or their communities. Psychosocial support encourages the reconstitution of social unity and

infrastructure, building a relationship of trust and dependence (Rachel et al., 2023). It is perceived that the more psychosocial support students have, the more involved or committed and satisfied they are in not only achieving their educational goals but also their personal goals (Kisić et al., 2012).

In USA, Swanson et al. (2021) in calculating the connection between psychosocial support, aspirations, and academic accomplishment of students throughout their initial three years in public educational institution, observed that the results of psychosocial support were reasonably indicative of academic success. Sense of belonging, academic self-efficacy, and aspirations were identified as the most influential factors in predicting both persistence and cumulative grade point scores.

Purpose of the study

Based on the stated problem, the purpose of the study was endeavoring to establish aspects of psychosocial support and its correlation with Chemistry academic achievement among Form Three students in Narok North Sub-county.

Objective of the study

The study sought to establish the correlation between psychosocial support and Chemistry academic achievement among Form Three students in Narok North Sub-County in Narok County.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study in China by Liu et al. (2022) explored the impact of psychosocial factors on the academic performance of Chinese students engaged in outbound exchange and mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research utilized a correlational research design in gathering statistical data from a sample of 186 Chinese students involved in outbound exchange and mobility. Results indicated that psychosocial factors such as personality, the presence of social support, and language fluency positively influenced the academic achievement of the students' of exchange and mobility programmes. However, the research reviewed was based on general academic performance while this study focused on Chemistry academic achievement.

In Nigeria, Eya et al. (2020) also conducted a research on socio-psychological factors as aspects associated with students' performance in Chemistry, with implications for science and engineering education. The study adopted a correlational research design whereby statistical data were acquired from a group of 100 participants of Senior Secondary 2 Chemistry students from 5 secondary schools. Results demonstrated a noteworthy correlation between socio-psychological factors such as motivation and Chemistry academic achievement of students. However, the study focused on a small sample size of 100 students that does not guarantee generalization. This study, therefore, was based on a larger sample size that guaranteed generalisation to a large population while specifically focusing on psychosocial support as one of the predictors of Chemistry academic achievement.

In Kenya, Ngina and Cecilia (2023) explored the connection between perceived psychosocial support and school adjustment. Correlational research design was utilised in the research and statistical data obtained from 362 learners who were selected randomly from a pool of 12 schools. From the outcomes of the study, the researchers established a positive and meaningful association between students' perceived psychosocial support and school adjustment ($r(347) = .32$, $p \leq .05$). The study reviewed focused on school adjustment of form one students and recommended creation of positive relationships and conducive school environment for proper adjustment. This study was based on the impact of psychosocial support on Chemistry academic achievement of Form Three students.

METHODOLOGY

Target population, sample size and sampling technique

This study targeted a population comprising all the 2929 Form three students attending the 24 public secondary schools in Narok North Sub-County. The Form Three students were sampled because at this level, unlike their counterparts in the lower classes, they were expected to have been exposed to the Chemistry syllabus more adequately hence had a deeper perspective of the subject. This study employed purposive, stratified and simple random sampling techniques in selecting the schools and the students that were involved in the study.

A simplified formula developed by Yamane (1967) was used to come up with a truly representative sample size of 294 students.

Research Instruments

Psychosocial Support Scale (PSS)

A Psycho-social support scale developed by Padhy et al. (2022) was adopted. The scale was measured at a five point Likert scale and entailed 22 items with answer options of; 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. These items were modified to suit Form 3 students in Narok North Sub-county (see appendix A). Reverse scoring was as follows 1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, 5=1. Items 1, 2 and 4 were on Social support network, items 5, 6, 7 and 9 were on Family based psychosocial support, items 13, 15 and 17 were on Communication support, items 3, 18, 19, 20 and 22 were on Supportful disposition, items 8,

11, 16 and 21 were on Psychological support deprivation while items 10, 12and 14 were on Psychosocial support availability. However, all the 22 items were on Psycho-social support.

Document Analysis

Chemistry academic achievement analysis was based on Chemistry academic achievement scores obtained from academic departments and 2024 Chemistry end of term I exam results were presented in pro forma summary.

FINDINGS

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Psychosocial Support Scores

	N	Min	Max	Range	Mean	*SD*	*Sk*	*Kur*
Psychosocial Support	294	58	110	52	87.48	9.407	-.252	.026

In Table 1, it was revealed that the highest psychosocial support score and the lowest psychosocial support score are 110 and 58 respectively implying that the range between the values was 52. Psychosocial support mean score and standard deviation were M = 87.48, *SD* = 9.407). The skewness and kurtosis coefficients were -.252 and .026 respectively indicating a near normal distribution of the scores.

Further, psychosocial support scores were examined as per the various genders of the participants as indicated in Table 2

Table 2. Psychosocial Support Descriptive Statistics by Gender

Gender of Students	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
Male	147	89.10	9.479	63	110	47	-.359	.173
Female	147	85.85	9.078	58	108	50	-.207	.039
Total	294	87.48	9.407	58	110	52	-.252	.026

Findings in table 2 indicate that the lowest score for the male participants was 63 while the highest score was 110. The average score and standard deviation were (M = 89.10, *SD* = 9.479). Pertaining the female students, the lowest score for psychosocial support was 58 while the highest score was 108. The psychosocial support mean score and standard deviation for the female students were (M = 85.85, *SD* = 9.078). Implying that male students recorded the highest maximum and greatest minimum psychosocial support scores and therefore they had a better psychosocial support than their female counterparts.

The descriptive statistics of psychosocial support scores by the school category are indicated in Table 3

Table 3. Psychosocial Support Descriptive Statistics by School Category

Type of school	Mean	N	Std. Dev.	Kurtosis	Skewness	Min.	Max.	Range
Boys Boarding Schools	92.95	42	7.929	-.241	-.326	74	108	34
Girls Boarding Schools	84.57	42	7.184	-.231	.165	72	101	29
Co-Educational Institutions	86.96	210	9.675	.091	-.302	58	110	52
Total	63.99	294	5.928	.803	.129	58	110	52

The results in Table 3 indicate that boys boarding institutions had an average score and standard deviation of (M = 92.95, *SD* = 7.929) while that of girls boarding schools was (M = 84.57, *SD* = 7.184) whereas that of co-educational institutions was (M = 86.96, *SD* = 9.675). Maximum psychosocial support score for male boarding schools and female boarding schools was 108 and 101 respectively and that of co-educational institutions was 110. Minimum psychosocial support score was 74 for male boarding, 72 female boarding schools and 58 for co-educational institutions. These statistics show that psychosocial support was relatable to the school types, with boys' boarding schools having the highest average psychosocial support score, further co-educational institutions having a higher average psychosocial support score than girls' boarding schools. However, generally co-educational institutions seemed to have a higher overall psychosocial support score than boys and girls boarding schools.

The researcher further categorized psychosocial support according to levels presented in Table 4

Table 4. Psychosocial Support Levels

Level	Mean	N
Family based	82.10	198
Social support network	78.10	42
Communication	79.71	54
Total	79.97	294

From the Table 4, it is revealed that family based social support is the most prevalent with the highest mean score of 82.10, whereas communication and social network psychosocial supports had average means of 79.71 and 78.10 respectively. Further the outcomes indicated that majority of the respondents experienced family based social support as opposed to communication and social network psychosocial support.

4.4.2 Chemistry Achievement Descriptive Statistics

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics of Chemistry achievement raw scores.

Table 5. Chemistry Achievement Raw Scores

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Raw scores of Chemistry Achievement	294	34	28	62	50.92	12.434	-1.069	-.553

Table 5 indicates the Chemistry achievement raw scores. The mean scores and standard deviation were (M = 50.92, *SD* = 12.434). However, the minimum raw score was 28 and the maximum raw score was 62 giving a range of 34. The skewness and kurtosis coefficients were -1.069 and -.553 meaning that the distribution was nearly normal.
Standardized Chemistry scores descriptive statistics are as presented in Table 6

Table 6. Chemistry Achievement Standardized Scores

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	*SD*	Sk	Kur
Standardized scores of Chemistry academic achievements	294	27.34	31.57	58.91	50	10	-1.069	-.553

Outcomes from Table 6 indicate that the mean score and standard deviation were (M = 50, *SD* = 10). In addition, the greatest score was 58.91 while the least score was 31.57 giving a range of 27.34. Further the skewness coefficient was -1.069 while the kurtosis was -.553. This meant that the distribution was also nearly normal.
Chemistry achievement scores were further categorized based on gender in Table 7

Table 7. Chemistry Achievement Descriptive Statistics Based on Gender

Gender of students	Mean	N	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	Range	Kur.	Sk.
Male	49.7155	147	9.71631	31.57	58.91	27.34	-.449	-1.123
Female	50.2845	147	10.30123	31.57	58.91	27.34	-.621	-1.043
Total	50.0000	294	10.00000	31.57	58.91	27.34	-.553	-1.069

From Table 7 it can be indicated that female participants and male participants were 147. However, the mean score and standard deviation for the male respondents was (M = 49.7155, *SD* = 9.71631) while that of female participants was (M = 50.2845, *SD* = 10.30123). The least score was 31.57 for both the male and female respondents whereas the maximum score was 58.91 for both male and female students. Based on the average score per gender, results indicated that female students performed better their male counterparts in Chemistry, this is despite the fact that the minimum and maximum scores were consistent across the genders.

The researcher further analyzed the Chemistry achievement by school category, the outcomes are indicated in Table 8

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics of Chemistry Achievement by School Category

School Type	Mean	N	Std. Devi.	Min.	Max.	Sk.	Kur.	Range
Boys Boarding Schools	55.6953	42	.00000	55.70	55.70	-	-	.00
Girls Boarding Schools	58.1080	42	.00000	58.11	58.11	-	-	.00
Co-Educational Institutions	47.2393	210	10.62094	31.57	58.91	-.571	-1.406	27.34
Total	50.0000	294	10.00000	31.57	58.91	-.553	-1.069	27.34

Results in Table 8 point that boy boarding schools had a mean score and standard deviation of (M = 55.6953, *SD* = 0.00000). Furthermore, the mean score for girls boarding and co-educational institutions was 58.1080 and 47.2393 respectively. The outcomes indicated that girls' boarding schools performed better in Chemistry than both the boys' boarding schools and co-educational institutions.

The results in Chemistry achievement are further categorized into levels presented in the Table 9

Table 9. Chemistry Achievement Levels

Levels	Frequency	Percent
Low	67	22.8
Moderate	187	63.6
High	40	13.6
Total	294	100.00

From the statistics in Table 9, a greater percentage of the respondents in the study, about 86.4%, cumulatively had moderate to low scores in Chemistry academic achievement, only 40 respondents representing 13.6% of the participants had a higher score in Chemistry academic achievement. Implying that a larger number of the respondents are average students in Chemistry achievement and a significant number performs poorly in the subject.

4.4.3 Hypothesis Testing

In finding if the relationship between psychosocial support and Chemistry academic achievement was significant, the hypothesis that follows was evaluated.

H_{01} There is no significant correlation between psychosocial support and Chemistry achievement.

Pearson correlation coefficient was employed in examining the hypothesis and outcomes are indicated in Table 9.

Table 9. Correlation between Psychosocial Support and Chemistry Academic Achievement

		Chemistry Achievement
Psychosocial Support	Pearson Correlation	-.125*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032
	N	294

*This Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The researcher hypothesized that there was no significant correlation between psychosocial support and Chemistry academic achievement. However, the analysis of study outcomes through determining the Pearson correlation indicated a negative and significant correlation between the variables of psychosocial support and Chemistry academic achievement r (294) =-.125, p <.032. This culminated in the rejection of the null hypothesis. Implying that psychosocial support and Chemistry academic achievement had some sort of an inverse relationship. This meant that those students achieving highly in Chemistry may mighty not be experiencing higher psychosocial support than those who were performing poorly in Chemistry learning area.

Table 10. Levels of Psychosocial Support and Chemistry Mean Scores

Level of Psychosocial Support	N	Chemistry Mean	*SD*
Family Based	198	28.73	3.788
Social Support Network	42	51.94	6.469
Communication	54	54.67	2.698

From the findings given in Table 10, students that experienced family based psychosocial support had a Chemistry mean score and standard deviation of (M = 28.73, *SD* = 3.788) while those that had vibrant social support networks had the mean score and standard deviation of (M = 51.94, *SD* = 6.469). Further, communication dimension of psychosocial support attracted an average score and standard deviation of (M = 54.67, *SD* = 2.698) among students. This implied that the communication support resulted to higher achievement in Chemistry among students and family based psychosocial support had a smallest effect on Chemistry academic achievement among students.

4.4.4 Discussion of the Results

This study found out a significant negative correlation between psychosocial support and Chemistry academic achievement. This suggests that those students that achieve highly in Chemistry may not necessarily have a higher psychosocial support and further those students that perform poorly may not necessarily have lower psychosocial support as well. The findings support what other researchers established in past studies carried in this area. Liu et al. (2022) found similar results with the current study findings. The study investigated the correlation between psychosocial factors and academic performance of Chinese students. The study performed quantitative data analysis through partial least square structural equation modeling using the smart software version 3. It examined the psychosocial factors affecting the academic performance of Chinese outbound exchange and mobility students during the COVID-19. Results indicated that psychosocial factors such as personality, the presence of social support, and language fluency positively influenced the academic achievement of the students' of exchange and mobility programs implying that psychosocial support is a significant predictor of academic achievement.

Contrary findings to this study were arrived by Dixson et al. (2020). In examining the correlation of the contribution of psychosocial factors to academic performance. Grit, hope, and academic self-efficacy were found not to be linked to psychosocial support and academic achievement of 609 academically talented students ranging in ages from 10 to 18 years. A hypothesis was set that these variables would predict academic achievement above and beyond the contributions of demographic variables and perceived ability. After establishing the reliability and structural validity of scores for the three constructs in this sample, regression analyses indicated that psychosocial support didn't predict the perceived ability and that academic self-efficacy was the most robust predictor of academic achievement. However, further research was recommended to establish which psychosocial variables are significant to academic achievement.

Richard et al. (2022) found out that psychosocial support had a significant impact on Chemistry academic achievement. The study involved high school students in public secondary schools taking Chemistry subject. Data from the students were then collected inform of questionnaires and then analyzed. The outcomes from the research indicated that psychosocial support was correlated positively with Chemistry academic achievement of high school students, implying the higher the perceived psychosocial support the higher the Chemistry academic achievement. The study further identifies psychosocial support as a stronger predictor of student's achievements in Chemistry.

Consistent findings have also been reported in the Africa. Eya et al. (2020) investigated the correlation between socio-psychological factors and students' academic performance in Chemistry in Nigeria. This study was guided by three research questions and three hypotheses. Further a questionnaire was developed by the researchers and utilized in collecting data. The face validity and internal consistency reliability index of 0.75 was obtained through the use of Cronbach alpha technique. Data obtained were analyzed using simple linear regression analysis. The study found there is a significant relationship between psychosocial support and students' academic performance in chemistry. The study also found that self-regulation, attitude and motivation affected psychosocial support.

A survey in Kenya by Mwandike & Kaluyu (2018) reported similar findings on the correlation between psychosocial factors on learners' performance in science subjects. Findings provided sufficient evidence to conclude that very high science anxiety, very

high parental involvement and very high teacher preparedness were associated with psychosocial support and consequently lead to increased learners' performance in science subjects. Moreover, the study established a significant correlation between psychosocial factors on learners' performance in science subjects. The study recommended that schools should strive to develop adequate learning environment and promote higher psychosocial support to learners.

CONCLUSION AND RRECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study, it can be indicated that psychosocial support and educational aspirations predicted Chemistry academic achievement. Notably, psychosocial support had the strongest predictive index while educational aspirations had the weakest predictive value. It was concluded that proper psychosocial support and educational aspirations may result to improved Chemistry academic achievement. The other conclusion is that communication support dimension of psychosocial support had the highest predictive index on Chemistry academic achievement while family based dimension of psychosocial support had the lowest predictive index on Chemistry achievement.

The study recommended that teachers should encourage students to form communicative networks during learning of Chemistry subject to attain higher achievement in the subject. Further an interactive classroom and group discussions that reinforce communication are recommended. The study also recommended that further research may be carried out by use of different research designs such as mixed method approaches to enrich the outcomes of this study.

DECLARATIONS

Author contribution statement

Anna Moraa Orwari: This research project is my original work and has not been presented in any university or institution for any certification.

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This project was not funded by any financial institution or agency and is not meant for any commercial endeavours.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data will be accessed on request.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares no conflicts of interest in relation to this work.

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