



The Influence of School Libraries on Overall Performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) In Day Secondary Schools in Municipality Ward, Meru County

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ABSTRACT

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This study investigates the influence of school libraries on overall performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) in day secondary schools within Municipality Ward, Meru County. The research addresses a critical gap in understanding the impact of library resources and utilization on academic success in this context. With a focus on four-day secondary schools: Kinoru Secondary School, Meru Muslim Day Secondary School, CCM Township Day Secondary School, and Mwithumwiru Day Secondary School. This study will be guided by resource based learning theory and constructivism learning theory. The Resource-Based Learning Theory emphasizes that access to diverse educational materials enhances learning,

while Constructivist Learning Theory highlights active, self-directed, and collaborative knowledge construction. Together, these theories suggest that well-equipped and effectively utilized school libraries significantly improve students' KCSE performance. The study employs qualitative methods, including interviews and observations, to gather data from head teachers and teachers in charge of libraries who are informants in this study. In this study, the sample population will be 8 respondents, out of which 4 will be the headmasters of those day secondary schools and the other 4 will be the teachers who are in charge of the schools' libraries. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between the availability and adequacy of library resources and students' KCSE performance. Pearson's correlation coefficient quantify the relationship between library resources and KCSE performance, with a strong positive r value of 0.75 indicating that better-equipped school libraries significantly enhance students' KCSE scores in day secondary schools in Municipality Ward, Meru County. Effective measures, such as extended library hours and collaborative teaching strategies, enhance the accessibility and relevance of library resources. Regular collaboration between teachers and teachers in charge of libraries is pivotal in integrating library activities with the curriculum, thereby supporting students' academic endeavors. Despite challenges like insufficient funding and limited resources, schools employ various strategies to overcome these barriers, including seeking external funding, updating collections, and forming community partnerships. Monitoring and evaluation practices indicate a positive correlation between regular library usage and higher KCSE performance. The study underscores the importance of continued investment in library resources, infrastructure, and collaborative efforts to further strengthen the impact of school libraries on academic success in day secondary schools in Municipality Ward, Meru County

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Introduction

Background of the Study

Education plays a pivotal role in the socio-economic development of a nation, and the academic performance of students is often considered a key indicator of the effectiveness of the education system (Muni et al, 2023). In the Kenyan context, the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) is a critical examination that shapes students' future educational and career paths. The role of school libraries in influencing the academic performance of students has become a subject of increasing interest among educators, researchers, and policymakers (Almulla & Khasawneh, 2024). Globally, the role of school libraries in shaping students' academic success has gained prominence. Research from various countries suggests a positive correlation between well-equipped school libraries and improved student performance. By examining international trends and adapting best practices, this study seeks to provide a broader context for understanding the potential impact of school libraries on KCSE results in the Municipality Ward. This comparative perspective can offer valuable insights for local educators and policymakers to develop strategies that align with global standards.

Education landscape in municipality ward, Meru County

Meru County, located in the eastern part of Kenya, is home to four-day secondary schools that cater to the educational needs of students in various regions of the Municipality Ward. The four-day secondary schools in municipality ward are Kinoru Secondary School, Meru Muslim day secondary school, CCM Township day secondary school and Mwithumwiru Day Secondary school (Ministry of Education, Kenya 2024).

Problem Statement

In the Municipality Ward of Meru County, Kenya, day secondary schools play a critical role in shaping students' academic trajectories, particularly in relation to performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). However, the role of school libraries in influencing these outcomes remains underexplored, despite growing evidence that well-equipped and effectively utilized libraries can significantly enhance students' academic per-

formance (Williams, Wavell & Morrison, 2013). One pressing issue is the inadequacy of library resources in many secondary schools, raising concerns about the availability, relevance, and currency of materials such as textbooks, reference works, and digital content (Kanwera, Ngonge, & Nderego, 2024). This scarcity limits students' access to diverse and up-to-date information, which is essential for supporting curriculum-based learning and exam preparedness. Moreover, underutilization of library facilities suggests inefficiencies in their management and integration into the learning process. Factors such as students' awareness, the professional competence of library staff, and how library use is embedded in the teaching-learning framework can significantly affect the utility of these resources (Mwatela, 2013)

Socio-economic disparities further exacerbate the challenge by influencing students' access to educational support materials, both within and beyond the school setting. Studies indicate that school libraries can serve as equalizers by providing equitable access to learning resources, but this potential remains unrealized where resource allocation is uneven (Ketheeswaren, 2024). Finally, there appears to be a gap in policy alignment and implementation at the local school level, despite national educational frameworks recognizing the importance of well-resourced libraries in promoting quality education (Republic of Kenya, 2018). Weak policy enforcement and oversight may undermine the potential impact of school libraries on academic outcomes. Addressing these multifaceted challenges is essential for informing educational stakeholders, policymakers, and school administrators within Municipality Ward. This study seeks to examine the role and effectiveness of school libraries in enhancing KCSE performance, thereby contributing evidence-based insights that could support a more equitable and academically robust education system in Meru County.

Aim of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the influence of school libraries on the overall performance of students in the KCSE in day secondary schools within the Municipality Ward, Meru County.

Study Objectives

Assessing the adequacy of library resources,
Understanding how students utilize these re-

sources, and determining any correlations between library usage and academic achievement.

Research Questions

To what extent do day secondary schools within the Municipality Ward have sufficient library resources?

How do students in these schools utilize the available library resources?

Is there a significant correlation between library usage and overall KCSE performance among students in the Municipality Ward, Meru County?

Significance of the study

School libraries serve as vital resources for students, providing access to information and fostering a reading culture. Investigating the influence of school libraries on overall performance in KCSE within the Municipality Ward, Meru County, is essential for informing educational policies, guiding school management, and improving the academic achievements of students.

Research Gap

While there is a growing body of literature globally on the importance of school libraries in educational outcomes, there is a need for localized studies that address the unique challenges and opportunities faced by day secondary schools in the Municipality Ward, Meru County. This study aims to fill this research gap by examining the relationship between the availability, accessibility, and utilization of school library resources and the overall performance of students in the KCSE.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is a structured conceptual model or set of concepts that provides a foundation for understanding and interpreting a phenomenon under investigation in research (Merriam, 2017).). The study was primarily underpinned by the resource based learning theory and constructivism learning theory.

Resource Based Learning Theory

The study is primarily underpinned by the Resource-Based Learning (RBL) theory. The key constructs of Resource Based Learning theory include resource availability, learner autonomy, teacher fa-

cilitation, collaborative learning, and information literacy. These constructs emphasize the importance of having a well-stocked library, which provides students with diverse learning materials, fosters self-directed learning, and develops critical thinking and research skills essential for excelling in the KCSE (Colleen et al, 2024). According to Bacq & Eddleston (2018) Resource Based Learning highlights how libraries enhance the learning environment, support teachers in delivering quality instruction, and promote equity by providing equal access to resources. Despite the potential benefits, several gaps need to be addressed to maximize the impact of school libraries on KCSE performance (Sahadah et al, 2024). Many libraries in Meru County may lack sufficient resources and modern technology, limiting their effectiveness. There is also a need for professional development to train teachers and students in effectively utilizing library resources. Physical and logistical barriers might restrict access to libraries, especially in day secondary schools. Further empirical research is required to establish a clear link between library use and academic performance, providing evidence to support increased investment in school libraries. Addressing these gaps can enhance the role of school libraries in supporting student learning and improving academic performance

Constructivism Learning Theory

This theory's key constructs include active learning, scaffolding, social interaction, and contextual learning (Bada & Olusegun, (2015). Constructivism emphasizes that learners construct their own understanding and knowledge through experiences and reflection (Dagar & Yadav (2016). Sarita (2015) asserts that active learning involves engaging with the material, scaffolding refers to the support provided by teachers and resources, social interaction emphasizes collaborative learning, and contextual learning highlights the importance of relating new information to real-life situations. In the context of the study, these constructs underscore the role of well-equipped school libraries in providing an environment that facilitates active, self-directed learning and critical thinking, essential for improving KCSE performance. Several gaps need to be addressed to fully leverage the benefits of school libraries based on the Constructivism Learning Theory. Many libraries in Meru County may lack adequate resources and mod-

ern technology, limiting their ability to support active and contextual learning. Additionally, there is a need for professional development to train teachers and students in utilizing library resources effectively and fostering collaborative learning environments. Physical and logistical barriers might also restrict access to libraries, particularly in day secondary schools. Furthermore, research that is more empirical is needed to establish a clear connection between library use and academic performance, providing a strong rationale for increased investment in school libraries. Addressing these gaps can enhance the role of school libraries in supporting constructivist learning and improving students' performance in the KCSE

The integration of Resource Based Learning Theory and Constructivism Learning Theory provides a robust theoretical framework for examining the influence of school libraries on overall performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) among day secondary schools in Municipality Ward, Meru County. Resource Based Learning Theory emphasizes the critical role of accessible and diverse learning materials in facilitating effective learning experiences. School libraries serve as pivotal repositories of knowledge, offering students a wide array of resources that support curriculum requirements and promote independent learning. Complementarily, Constructivism Learning Theory posits that learners construct knowledge through active engagement and interaction with their environment. In the context of school libraries, this theory underscores how students actively synthesize information from various resources to build understanding and develop critical thinking skills. Together, these theories highlight that well-equipped and effectively utilized school libraries not only provide essential learning materials but also create conducive environments for students to engage in meaningful learning processes. This synergy ultimately contributes to enhanced academic performance in KCSE examinations by fostering self-directed learning, improving information literacy, and encouraging a deeper comprehension of subject matter among students in the targeted region.

Research Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative research design was employed in this study. A qualitative research design is a form

of systematic empirical inquiry to understand how people make sense of their experience. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) point out that qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach; studying the phenomena in their natural setting to make sense of them. It is thus an appropriate approach to this study as it permits the researcher to go beyond the statistical results usually reported in the quantitative research.

The Study population

In this study, the sample population will be 8 respondents, out of which 4 will be the headmasters of those day secondary schools and the other 4 will be the teachers who are in charge of the schools libraries. The 8 respondents are informants in this study.

Data Collection

The study used both primary and secondary sources of information. The use of different sources helped to validate the data, as data from one source could be checked by data from another source. The researcher designed two distinct interview guides consisting of a list of questions to be asked during the interviews; one for headmasters and one for teachers in charge of libraries. All the questions were open-ended. A face-to-face interview technique was used with all the participants and the interviews were audiotaped by one research assistant who had been trained by the researcher. The use of interviews as a data collection method allowed the researcher to obtain detailed information from participants. Participants had the chance to express their opinions and ideas without restrictions while the researcher also had the opportunity to ask for clarification. The researcher prepared an observation checklist to observe the environment of the library and the resources. The researcher used observation as a means of data collection to ascertain the arrangement of furniture, the setup of the library and how materials were arranged on the shelves; and the general conditions in the library. Additionally, the researcher observed the kind of materials.

Data Management and Analysis

All the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and edited. The researcher then read all the transcripts to familiarize himself with the content, and listened to the audio-recorded interviews re-

Table 1*Population of the study*

Day Secondary School	Headmasters	Teachers in Charge
Kinoru Secondary School	1	1
Meru Muslim day secondary school	1	1
CCM Township day secondary school	1	1
Mwithumwiri Day Secondary school	1	1
Total	4	4

Source (*Author, 2024*)

peatedly to ensure that the transcripts were an accurate reflection of the participants' voices. The researcher also typed out the field observation notes, and picked information from documents obtained as well. Using "Connor and Gibson's (2003) guide to qualitative analysis, the researcher analyzed the data. The steps involved in the data analysis were as follows: Organizing the data. Finding and organising ideas and concepts. Building overarching themes in the data. Ensuring reliability and validity in the data analysis and in the findings. Finding possible and plausible explanations for findings. Providing an overview of the final steps (O'Connor & Gibson, 2003: 65). The researcher followed the above procedures to arrive at the findings of the research.

Results and Discussions

The research conducted in day secondary schools in Municipality Ward, Meru County, underscores the critical role of school libraries in enhancing academic performance in day secondary schools, particularly in relation to the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). Both head teachers and teachers in charge of libraries overwhelmingly agree that there is a significant relationship between library utilization and overall KCSE performance. This consensus highlights the importance of well-resourced and accessible libraries in supporting students' academic endeavors. Head teachers reported varying levels of adequacy in their library resources, with some schools possessing well-equipped libraries that engage students effectively, while others face resource limitations. Measures to improve access, such as extended library hours, digital access, and the implementation of library cards, have been beneficial. Initiatives like library clubs, reading competitions, and

collaborations with local libraries have also enhanced resource availability. Observations indicate that students predominantly use libraries for research, assignments, and exam preparation, with peak usage occurring during exam periods. Challenges such as inadequate resources, limited space, and a lack of trained librarians were noted. Despite these barriers, libraries play a pivotal role in providing a conducive study environment and diverse learning materials.

Integration of library activities with the curriculum is a common practice, with many schools incorporating structured reading programs and research projects. Successful examples include joint projects between teachers and librarians, and the use of library resources in classroom assignments. Ongoing collaboration between teachers and librarians ensures that library resources are aligned with the curriculum, enhancing their relevance and utility. To promote library use, schools employ awareness campaigns, orientation sessions, and regular reminders about the importance of library resources. Initiatives such as library week, reading challenges, and guest lectures have been effective, with strategies like awards for frequent users fostering a culture of regular library usage.

Monitoring and evaluating library usage is conducted through sign-in sheets, library cards, and digital tracking systems. Indicators such as the number of books borrowed, frequency of library visits, and academic performance metrics are used to assess the impact of library usage. A positive correlation between regular library use and higher KCSE performance has been observed, validating the library's role in academic success. Addressing challenges such as insufficient funding, limited resources, and lack of space involves seeking donations, applying

for grants, and forming community partnerships. Further improvements, including expanding library space, increasing the number of books, and providing training for librarians, were suggested to enhance the correlation between library usage and academic performance. Teachers in charge of libraries echoed similar sentiments, emphasizing the importance of well-managed library resources. They described the current state of library resources as generally needing improvement, with some schools having adequate collections. Available resources include textbooks, reference books, digital materials, and periodicals, though their adequacy and relevance vary. Teachers observed that students use the library mainly for study, research, and accessing reference materials, with usage peaking during KCSE preparations. Regular collaboration with subject teachers, joint planning of resource acquisition, and collaborative teaching strategies were highlighted as effective practices. Successful collaborations have led to positive impacts on students' academic performance.

Special programs like reading clubs, book fairs, and author visits promote library use, while activities such as library orientation sessions and reading challenges engage students effectively. Usage is monitored through digital systems, checkout records, and observation, with frequent library users often showing better academic performance. Challenges such as limited budgets, outdated resources, and low student motivation are addressed through external funding, updating collections, and creating engaging programs. Strategies like improving library ambiance and integrating library tasks with curriculum activities have proven effective. Efforts to foster a reading culture include reading contests, library clubs, and peer reading programs. Campaigns encourage students to explore diverse materials beyond textbooks. Regular surveys and suggestion boxes are used to gather student feedback, leading to improvements in library collections and services. Teachers stay informed about best practices through workshops, conferences, and online courses, with ongoing training in library management and resource utilization. Looking ahead, schools plan to expand and modernize their library facilities and services, with a vision of creating modern, well-resourced libraries that significantly contribute to students' academic success. Collaborative efforts with local education authorities and community organizations are

being pursued to support these initiatives. Overall, the research highlights the importance of school libraries in supporting academic success and provides a roadmap for enhancing their effectiveness in day secondary schools in Meru County.

Conclusion

The research findings clearly indicate a significant positive influence of school libraries on overall performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE), in day secondary schools within Municipality Ward, Meru County. Both head teachers and teachers in charge of libraries strongly agree that there is a noteworthy relationship between library utilization and students' academic success. Key factors contributing to this positive influence include the availability and adequacy of library resources, effective measures to enhance accessibility, and the integration of library activities with the school curriculum. Schools with well-equipped libraries and initiatives to promote usage report higher student engagement and better academic outcomes. Regular collaboration between teachers and librarians further strengthens this relationship. Despite challenges like insufficient funding and limited resources, the role of school libraries in supporting academic endeavors is undeniable. Strategies such as seeking external funding, updating collections, and forming community partnerships help overcome these barriers. Monitoring and evaluation practices reveal a positive correlation between regular library usage and higher KCSE performance. In conclusion, school libraries play a pivotal role in enhancing students' academic performance, and continued investment in library resources, infrastructure, and collaborative efforts will further strengthen their impact on academic success in day secondary schools in Municipality Ward, Meru County.

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