

Emotional Support Strategy And Pupils' Academic Self-Efficacy Among Pupils In Public Primary Schools In Endau Zone Kitui County, Kenya

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Abstract

The study was guided by Social Cognitive Theory by Bandura (1986). The study was based on a mixed methods research design. The target population of the study was 12 public primary schools, 360 grade 6 pupils and 12 grade six pupils' class teachers. Near-Census sampling technique was used to select 10 public primary schools while 10 grade six class teachers were selected from the sampled public primary schools. The sample size for grade 6 pupils was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's table to sample 186 pupils. Stratified random sampling technique was used to group the sampled grade six pupils into two groups, that is, boys and girls in each of the 10 sampled public primary schools to make a total of 186 participants. Proportionate sampling was used to select the number of the participants from each sampled school. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from grade six pupils while an interview schedule was used to collect qualitative data from grade six pupils' class teachers. The researcher coded the data and keyed it into the statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 30 for windows 11. To analyse quantitative data, the researcher employed inferential statistics and regression analysis with Pearson correlation coefficient (r) used to examine relationships between variables. Bivariate correlation analysis was done using Pearson moment correlation coefficient to test the study hypotheses. Quantitative data was presented in form of tables and pie charts showing frequencies and percentages. Data from interview schedule for the grade six pupils' class teachers was first transcribed and then thematically analysed. The findings of the study established that majority of the pupils 93.5% reported a moderate level of emotional support, while a small proportion reported high 4.3% and low 2.2 levels of emotional support. The study concluded that the participants did not get sufficient emotional and parental support.

Keywords: Emotional support, academic self- efficacy, pupils, public primary schools, competency-based education

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I. Introduction

Emotional support within primary school environment enhances academic self-efficacy. This suggests that pupils facing emotional challenges require effective strategies to provide the necessary support. Past research established that each pupil has unique emotional support needs (Olatunbosun et al. 2024). According to Chafouleas (2020) schools should give emphasis to three inter-related components of mental health which include social, emotional and behavioral support to promote overall well-being of pupils. This means that when primary school pupils experience emotional support from teachers are likely to develop academic self-efficacy and complete primary school education without disruptions. Soncini et al (2021) study in Italy established that pupils' academic self-efficacy is positively associated with emotional support. Correspondingly, results from a research conducted by Wettstein et al. (2021) in Germany revealed that the pupils' emotional support was positively related with their academic self-efficacy. According to Jin and Zhang (2019) study findings in China, emotional support has a direct correlation and significant relationship with pupils' academic self-efficacy. Kruty et al., (2024) study examined the effect of psychological and pedagogical support on social and emotional skills in preschool and primary school children in Ukraine. The findings established that emotional well-being of school children has a notable influence on their psychological health and academic self-efficacy as well.

Studies on emotional support and academic self-efficacy among pupils in African context reveal a positive correlation between the two variables. Stols et al. (2024) study demonstrated a positive association between emotional support and academic achievement in South African pupils, reinforcing the idea that emotional support is connected to academic self-efficacy. This implies that reduction in anxiety enables pupils to engage confidently in their studies which promotes academic self-efficacy. Bada et al., (2020) study in Nigeria sought to examine the influence of emotional support on academic self-efficacy of learners during the Covid-19 period. The participants were children in primary schools aged 12 years. The results were that emotional support and

academic self-efficacy had a positive correlation and that learners who had less emotional support had low academic self-efficacy.

In Kenyan context, self-efficacy is among the key competencies of Competency-Based Education (CBE) (Akala, 2021). Kenya has prioritized the realization of Sustainable Development Goal number 4 which aims to ensure inclusivity, quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2021). However, challenges remain in terms of public primary school pupils' academic self-efficacy in Kenya. A study by Muiga et al., (2020) in Kiambu County revealed that emotional support provided to pupils in the school enhanced their academic self-efficacy which led to better academic achievement compared to pupils who lacked sufficient emotional support. Tare (2020) on the other hand conducted a research on psychological determinants of teacher- pupil relationship and academic achievement among public primary schools in Kesses sub-County, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The findings established that sufficient emotional support from teachers enhanced pupils' academic self-efficacy which in turn improved academic outcomes among pupils in upper primary school.

Research Objective

To establish the relationship between emotional support and academic self-efficacy among pupils in public primary schools in Endau Zone Kitui County, Kenya.

Research Hypothesis

There is no statistically significant relationship between emotional support and academic self-efficacy among pupils in public primary schools in Endau zone Kitui County, Kenya

II. Materials And Methods

The target population of the study was 12 public primary schools, 360 grade 6 pupils and 12 grade six pupils' class teachers. Near-Census sampling technique was used to select 10 public primary schools while 10 grade six class teachers were selected from the sampled public primary schools. The sample size for grade 6 pupils was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's table to sample 186 pupils. Stratified random sampling technique was used to group the sampled grade six pupils into two groups, that is, boys and girls in each of the 10 sampled public primary schools to make a total of 186 participants. Proportionate sampling was used to select the number of the participants from each sampled school. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from grade six pupils. The researcher coded the data and keyed it into the statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 30 for windows 11. To analyse quantitative data, the researcher employed inferential statistics and regression analysis with Pearson correlation coefficient (r) used to examine relationships between variables. Bivariate correlation analysis was done using Pearson moment correlation coefficient to test the study hypotheses. Quantitative data was presented in form of tables and pie charts showing frequencies and percentages.

III. Results And Discussion

Results

Questionnaire return rate

The questionnaires' return rate in this study was presented below in table 1.

Table 1: Questionnaire return rate

Participants	Sample size		Return rate			
			Participants		Participants	
			Male	female	Male	Female
Total	186(100)		109(58.6)	77(41.4)	109(58.6)	77(41.4)
			186(100)		186(100)	

Note: () percentage

As shown from table 1 above, the participants were 186 pupils (109 males and 77 females) while the return rate for the questionnaires was 186 pupils (100%) (109 boys and 77 girls).

General demographic information of pupils

This section presents the participants' demographic information.

Description of pupils by gender

The pupils' distribution based on their gender was summarized and presented in table 2 below.

Table 2: Description of the pupils by gender

Pupils'	frequency	Percentage
Male	109	58.6
Female	77	41.4
Total	186	100

Note. N=186

Table 2 above shows that the male pupils were the majority representing 58.6 percent of the total participants while the female pupils were the least representing 41.3% of the total participants. The findings indicated a significant gender disparity which implies significant gender difference in self-efficacy.

Distribution of pupils by age

Data were analyzed and the findings presented in table 4.3 indicated below.

Table 3: Description of pupils by age

		Mean	Std dev.	Min	Max	Sk.	Kurt.
Gender	Male	11.78	1.24	10.00	14.00	0.74	.29
	Female	11.08	0.67	12.00	12.00	1.78	.88
Total		11.45	1.02	10.00	14.00	.49	1.25

Note; N=186, Std dev.- Standard deviation; Min= Minimum; Max= Maximum; SK=Skewness; Kurt=Kurtosis.

Table 3 above indicates that the minimum and the maximum age of the pupils were 10 and 14 respectively with a range of 4. Further, the table shows that males had higher mean of 11.78 (SD=1.24) while females had a mean of 11.08(SD=0.67). It was also observed from the same table 4.3, that the combined mean age was 11.45(SD=1.02). According to Hair et al. (2022), a skewness near zero and kurtosis near zero signal a normal distribution. This implies that results in table 4.3 were normal.

Relationship between Emotional Support and Academic self-Efficacy

This was the first objective of the study which sought to establish the relationship between emotional support and the academic self-efficacy of the grade six pupils. The scores of the participants were analyzed on the emotional support questionnaire for the purpose of achieving the objective. Further, the descriptive statistics were done and presented in the section below.

Descriptive statistics of emotional support

The total scores for the participants' emotional support were operationalized so as to provide the mean, range, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis. The results of the analysis were presented in table 4 below.

Table 4 Description of emotional support scores

N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Sk	Kur
186	1.00	3.00	4.00	2.56	1.21	-.422	-.324

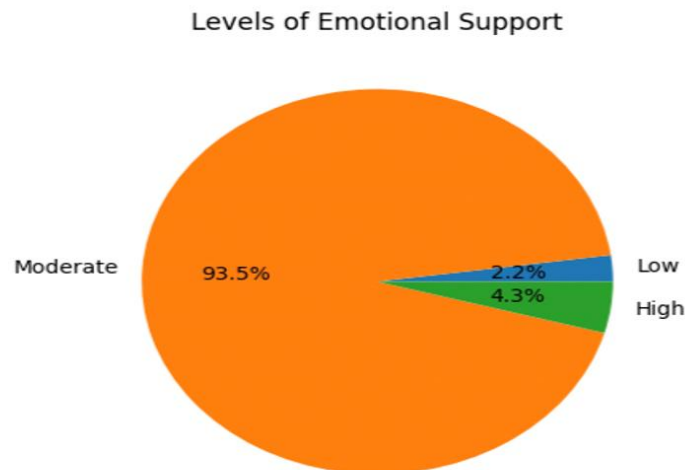
Note. N=186, MIN=Minimum, MAX=Maximum, SD=Standard deviation, SK=Skewness, Kur=Kurtosis

The minimum and the maximum scores were 4 and 1 giving a range of 3 according to table 4 above. It was observed that, the mean score was 2.46(SD=1.12) indicating that most of the pupils had low emotional support. The skewness coefficient was -.0421, implying that most of the participants rated themselves high on the emotional support scale. Kurtosis of this distribution was -.324 indicating that the distribution was platykurtic, meaning that the many scores were at the extremes and very few scores concentrated around the mean.

Participants levels of emotional support

The researcher classified the participant emotional support scores into three levels. The classification involved categorization of the participants' scores into low, moderate and high emotional support. The frequency and categorization of every group were presented in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Pie chart on levels of emotional support



N=186

The scores threshold for low, moderate, and high were 1.00 to 2.49, 2.50 to 3.49 and 3.50 to 5.00 respectively. As shown from the pie chart, majority of the participants were found to have moderately levels of emotional support (93.5%), followed by high levels of emotional support (4.3%) while low emotional support (2.2%) had the least number of participants.

Descriptive statistics for academic self-efficacy

The descriptive analysis was done and the results were presented in table 5 below.

Table 5 Description of academic self-efficacy scores

N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
186	104.00	84	190	132.18	12.60	0.34	-0.29

N=186

As shown from the above table 5, the minimum and the maximum scores were found to be 84 and 190 respectively giving a range of 104. The mean score of the distribution was found to be 132.18(SD=12.60), which implied that most of the majority of the participants were found to have moderate levels of academic self-efficacy. The coefficient of the skewness was 0.34 implying that most of the participants rated themselves low in this scale. The Kurtosis was -0.29 which indicated that the distribution had many values concentrated around the mean.

Levels of academic self-efficacy

The levels of academic self-efficacy were established and the results presented in table 4.6 below.

Table 6 Levels of academic self-efficacy

Level	Frequency	Percent
Low	5	2.7
Moderate	175	94.1
High	6	3.2
Total	186	100

Note: N=186

According to Gafoor & Ashraf (2006) the scores threshold for academic self- efficacy for low, moderate and high are stated as 40-80, 81 to 159 and 160-200 respectively. It was observed from table 6 that majority of the participants were found to have moderate levels of academic self-efficacy (94.1%) followed by those who had high academic self-efficacy (3.2%) while the least participants had low academic self-efficacy (2.7). Further analysis was done to establish the levels of academic self- efficacy against the levels of emotional support. This was done to find out if emotional support could be a predictor of academic self-efficacy which at the end influenced the pupils' academic achievement. The results were presented in table 7 below.

Table 7 Levels of emotional support across levels of academic self –efficacy

Levels of academic self-efficacy

Low	Moderate	High	Total
Leves of emotional	low	4(2.1)	30(16.1)
Emotional support	moderate	0	120(64.5)
high	3(1.6)	18 (9.6)	5 (2.6)
total	7(3.7)	168(90.2)	11(5.9)

N=186, ()=percentage

As shown in table 7, (2.1) of the total population had low level of both academic self-efficacy and emotional support. It was also observed that (16.1) of the total participants had moderate levels of academic self efficacy and low levels of emtional support. The table further indicated that (64.5) of the total participants had both moderate levels of academic self-efficacy and emotional support while (1.6) of the total participants had low level of academic self-efficacy and high level of emotional support. Moreover, (9.6) of the total participants had moderate levels of academic self-efficacy and high levels of emotional support while (2.6) of the total participants were found to have high levels of academic self-efficacy and high levels of emotional support.

Hypothesis testing

To establish how emotional support is associated to academic self-efficacy, the first null

Hypothesis was outlined as follows:

There is no statistically significant relationship between emotional support and academic self-efficacy.

Using the Pearson's Product moment correlation, the data was subjected to a bivariate correlation analysis and the results were presented in table 8 below.

Table 8 Correlation between emotional support and academic self-efficacy

Correlations		Academic Self- efficacy
	Pearson Correlation	1
	N	186
Emotional support	Pearson Correlation	.68**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.00
	N	186

Note: N=186

** stands for significance

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

It was established from table 8 that there was a significant and positive relationship between the participant's academic self-efficacy scores and their emotional support scores. The attained Pearson's (r) value was $r(186) = .68, p < .05$, showing that the two variables have a strong significant and positive correlation. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. As a result, the researcher was prompted to examine the coefficient of determination of emotional support that explained the total variance in the participants' academic self-efficacy. Therefore, the data was subjected to a multiple regression and the results were given in table 9 below.

Table 9: Adjusted R² of emotional support on academic self-efficacy

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1		.62	.49	.46

Note: N=186

a Predictor: (constant), Emotional Support.

Data presented in table 4.9 indicates that the R square value ($R^2 = 0.49$) implied that 49% of the variation which occurred on the participants academic self-efficacy was caused by the emotional support. Therefore, this meant that 49% of the total variations on the pupils' academic self-efficacy was due to their emotional support.

Discussion

The emotional support scores spanned from 1 to 4 as indicated in table 4, meaning there was a moderate variability among the participants. The mean score was 2.56 which suggested that on average participants experienced moderate level of emotional support. The distribution was slightly negatively skewed, indicating that large proportion of participants reported relatively lower levels of emotional support. The analysis in figure 1

showed that the majority of the pupils 93.5% reported a moderate level of emotional support, while a small proportion reported high 4.3% and low 2.2 levels. This suggests that most of the pupils experienced an average level of emotional support with very few experiencing either extreme. The distribution implies relative consistency in emotional support among the participants, although the low proportion of pupils reporting high emotional support indicates a need for interventions to enhance emotional support levels. The academic self-efficacy scores ranged from 84 to 190, revealing a wide variation among the participants. The mean score of 132.18 suggests that on average, pupils reported moderate to high level of academic self-efficacy. This distribution was slightly positively skewed (0.34), indicating that a few pupils had lower self-efficacy scores while the majority tended towards the higher scores. The kurtosis value of -0.29 indicated a slightly platykurtic distribution which meant that the scores were relatively spread out.

Further table 6 gives the distribution of academic self-efficacy levels showing that most pupils 94.1% reported moderate self-efficacy while only a small proportion scored low 2.7% or high 3.2%. This finding suggests that the majority of the pupils have a moderate sense of self-efficacy in their ability to perform academic tasks, with few pupils at the extremes. The limited number of pupils reporting high self-efficacy revealed the necessity of interventions that would further enhance the pupils' self-efficacy in learning. In addition, table 7 explains that emotional support is positively associated with academic self-efficacy. This consistent with the results of the study by Bada et al. (2020) which established that emotional support and academic self-efficacy had a positive relationship and that learners who had less emotional support had low academic self-efficacy. Participants with higher emotional support also reported moderate or high level of academic self-efficacy whereas low and moderate levels of emotional support were associated with low level of academic self-efficacy. However, a significant number of pupils with moderate emotional support still exhibited low academic self-efficacy which may explain that moderate emotional support on its own may be insufficient to significantly enhance academic self-efficacy levels.

Table 8 on the Pearson's correlation analysis demonstrated a strong positive relationship between emotional support and academic self-efficacy ($r=0.68$). This finding indicates that as the pupils receive higher emotional support, their academic self-efficacy tends to increase. The findings from the regression model on table 4.9, show that emotional support is a significant predictor of academic self-efficacy with $R=62$ and $R^2=0.49$. It also meant that nearly half of the variance in the participants academic self-efficacy could be explained by the amount of emotional support they received. The finding was in consistent with Bandura's Social Cognitive theory (1986) which emphasizes the role of supportive environments on individual's self-believe and motivation. The findings are in agreement with the past research indicating that emotional support is a key factor in fostering the participants' self-efficacy and performance in academic tasks. For example, the findings corresponds with the results of a study by Pablo & Vicenta (2024) which examined how emotional support relates to the self-efficacy among learners in Spain. In addition, the study's findings also agreed with the study findings by Li et al. (2024) which showed that the teachers' emotional support to pupils had a direct positive effect on the learners' academic self-efficacy. Lastly, qualitative data from the teacher participants established that emotional support from teachers, parents and peers was found to enhance the pupils' sense of belonging and motivation to learn. Pupils who felt appreciated, encouraged and understood were more likely to believe in their capability to perform academic tasks successfully.

IV. Conclusion And Recommendations

Conclusion

This section presents conclusions in relation to study the objective:

The summary of the findings indicated that the participants did not receive sufficient emotional support. It was established that the participants were supposed to be provided with the sufficient emotional support so as to improve on their academic self-efficacy. The study concluded that enhancing academic self-efficacy requires a holistic and collaborative approach involving the teachers, parents and institutional support systems. Effective integration of these elements would create an enabling environment where the pupils can develop strong beliefs and confidence in their academic capabilities.

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