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The Influence of Principals' Mentorship Practices on Students' Retention in Public-Day Secondary Schools in Nakuru County-Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to look into potential relationships or associations between various Principal mentoring practices in the mentorship scheme and student retention at a day secondary school in Nakuru County, Kenya. Low secondary school retention has long been an issue in much of the existing literature, and therefore complex, multifaceted, and poorly understood. The purpose of this research was to find out how principals' student mentorship practices affected student retention in Nakuru County public-day secondary schools. The study found a positive but insignificant relationship between principal mentoring practices and student retention rates in day public secondary schools (p > 05). Based on this finding, principals should strengthen mentorship practices in order to increase student retention and foster a positive learning environment for academic performance.

Keywords: Mentoring, Principal Mentorship Practices, Day-Secondary Schools, Integration, Student Retention.

1. Introduction

Mentors have more experience than mentees and provide tailored help based on the mentee's learning needs. Mentoring necessitates interpersonal interaction, engagement, and commitment (Cornelius et al., 2016). Despite the lack of agreement on the definition and conceptualization of mentoring (Law et al., 2020),

mentorship is defined as a mutually beneficial relationship in which two people share their knowledge, skills, and experience; in this case, a mentee or protégé requires assistance in developing specific competencies, self-awareness, and early intervention skills.

The mentor applies his expertise in areas of need identified by the mentee and shares wisdom in a nurturing manner (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Mentorship thus provides models of performance by wise individuals from whom advice and guidance can be sought (European Region of the World Conference on Physical Therapy, 2003). Students are essentially paired with adult volunteers or older students to provide friendship, guidance, and support as they navigate new and increasingly difficult circumstances (Val, 1994). Strong relationships with non-parental adults are critical for developing adolescent brilliance, resiliency, and long-term well-being (Jones & Neblett, 2017).
Black middle and high school scholars in the United States of America with strong, long-term mentoring relationships have been found to be more academically engaged, to have greater psychological well-being and autonomy, to have stronger racial identities, and to have greater self-efficacy than their Black peers without such mentor relationships or without mentors at all (Tolan et al., 2020). However, several mentorship success factors, such as mentee age, mentor experience in youth development, clear expectations of the length of the mentoring relationship, and program structure (e.g., embedded mentor training, professional development), have been identified as important to consider for all youth participating in mentoring programs (Raposa et al., 2019).

Mentoring is a flexible approach to youth development in which youth who have been identified as being "at-risk" for poor outcomes (e.g., low-income, living in single-parent homes) are paired with unrelated adult volunteers in the hope of developing a nurturing and encouraging relationship that will serve to alleviate these risk conditions (Liang, Spencer, West, & Rappaport, 2013). Mentoring is being delivered effectively to youth in a variety of settings (e.g., communities and schools) and has been shown to promote gains in emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes, including among at-risk youth (Bouffard & Bergseth, 2008). The extent of the benefits of mentoring, on the other hand, is moderate and has remained virtually unchanged over the last decade, despite significant advances in understanding the determinants of higher-quality mentoring relationships (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; DuBois et al., 2011; Rhodes & DuBois, 2006).

Students at Nakuru County Day School come from diverse backgrounds marked by social, economic, cultural, and political differences; whether they have been asked to do so or not, someone will try to orient them when they join from another school or through a transfer from another secondary school. Students entering Form One are typically in their early adolescence, and if not properly guided, the new environment may lead to them engaging in antisocial behaviors such as drug use and abuse, as well as failing to attend classes. One challenge is ensuring that those students meet the right people who can guide them in the right direction. Increasing evidence suggests that students at all stages of learning can benefit from a mentoring system in which a seasoned mentor or protégé places theory and practice in the context of experience (Maloner, 2011). The most difficult challenge here is determining whether mentorship programs exist, formally or informally, and, if so, who mentors the student. Are the outcomes desirable if the mentorship programs are formalized structures? The primary concern addressed by the study was the impact of mentorship programs on student retention in secondary schools in Nakuru County.

2. Statement of the Problem

Over the last 15 years, there has been a greater emphasis on improving and refining educational standards and practices. The Kenyan government policy emphasizes a 100% transition rate, which necessitates that schools operate the school curriculum with the understanding that student retention is critical. Despite the government's free education program, which aims to ensure equitable participation and completion of basic education for all (MoEST, 2019), this is a problem in many Kenyan educational institutions.

According to the study, many students who start Form 1 each year do not finish Form 4 for a variety of reasons. The national secondary school student retention rate in Kenya in 2019 was 82%, according to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. According to data from the Nakuru County Education Office, student retention rates in secondary schools between 2016 and 2020 were 87%, 89%, 89%, 88%, and 87%, for an average retention rate of 88%. As a result, 18% of Kenyan students and 12% of Nakuru County students did not finish secondary school as planned. Is it possible for traditional mentorship methods to reverse this trend and increase retention? Furthermore, there has been little clear research on the impact.

3. Purpose of the Study

The goal of this study was to determine the influence of principal mentorship practices on student retention in Nakuru County's public-day secondary schools. The study aimed to add to the body of research on secondary school principal mentoring programs and to expand research on interventions in secondary school settings.

4. The objectives of this study

The primary goal was to determine the influence of principal mentorship practices on student retention in Nakuru County public-day secondary schools.

5. Theoretical Literature and Framework

This study was motivated by Tinto's (1975, 1993) student integration theory, which states that academic and social integration are important aspects of student retention and that student integration is influenced by a variety of risk factors. According to the theory, mentoring programs can increase a student's sense of integration in their educational institution, increasing the likelihood of completion. Tinto (1975) defines student integration as occurring on two levels: intellectual and social. Academic integration happens when students participate in the intellectual life of the learning institution, whereas social integration happens when students interact and connect outside of the classroom. Academic integration is defined as the extent to which students are satisfied with their educational experiences and perceived intellectual development since enrolling in college, and it can be measured through contact with academic staff (Noyens et al., 2019). Tinto observes that within institutions, there are both formal and informal systems that can promote integration and persistence. The principal, according to the theory, can use these student integration dimensions to improve retention.

6. Empirical Literature Review

Grande et al. (2018) investigated how students and professionals in computer education can have role models who represent a variety of approaches to the field and/or career. Their findings challenged traditional notions of role models as individuals who set the standards, instead portraying them as capable of changing on a variety of scales (including none) depending on their level of authority. Role models include students,

professors, and other professionals. According to the researchers, the potential of role models is only limited in terms of how computer engagement is formed in social interaction. If principals are to improve student retention in a school setting while using mentorship practices, they must be able to develop team culture and vision among teachers and students that are consistent with direct factors relating to school climate, safety, turnout, and school accomplishment (Schargel et al., 2007). Principals' mentorship practices, according to Thoonen et al. (2012), can influence students' decisions to stay or drop out of school. Hallinger and Heck (2010) also observed that principals' influence on teachers and learning conditions in schools enables principals to effectively guide students and make them understand a school's setup.

Fulk (2020) studied mentoring as a retention strategy among Caucasian principals. The findings suggested that pre-constructed, theoretical challenges for their mentor to go through with them were of little benefit to the principals. They discovered that, when compared to hypothetical challenges, the day-to-day aspects of the job produced significantly more organic challenges that provided more opportunities to exercise analytical and problem-solving abilities. The principals valued admiration for their mentors' work, faith in their accomplishments, the ability to approach a subject from a different perspective, and systemic understanding. However, the study did not investigate the relationship between mentorship and student retention.

Palmer, Burke, and Aubusson (2017) used a best-worst scaling (BWS) survey to assess the relative importance of elements hypothesized to influence students' subject selection preferences. According to their findings, students ranked enjoyment, curiosity, aptitude, and perceived necessity in their future study or job goals as the most important reasons for both choosing and rejecting subjects under the mentorship process. Anachuna and Obi (2021) conducted a study in Nigeria on principals' mentorship practices for teacher retention. Their research discovered that there were no formal structures in schools to guide principals in providing mentorship services to teachers. Mentorship relationships were encouraged after school hours, and teachers chose their own mentors who had no formal mentorship training. The findings of this study supported claims made by Raschdorf (2015) and Ingersoll & Strong (2011) that mentorship relationships should not be limited to formal visits in order to be more effective.
Ongige et al. (2020) investigated social interaction in schools, with a particular emphasis on principal leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, school environment and culture, and school organization. The lack of evidence in the literature on how principals' mentorship practices influence student retention, particularly in secondary schools, prompted this study. This study concluded that formal and informal mentorship activities could help to retain teachers.

Karanja and Gikungu (2014) studied the impact of mentorship programs on secondary school student performance in Kenya's Mbooni East District, Makueni County. The school administration was involved in mentorship programs in a variety of ways, including raising awareness of mentorship programs in the schools, participating in the initiation of mentorship programs, creating structured mentorship programs in the schools, assisting with issues arising from mentorship programs, providing supervision roles, assisting in determining the criteria used to allocate mentors and mentees, and establishing goals for m This study found that school-based mentorship programs help students develop solutions for themselves. However, this study did not look into the impact of mentorship programs on student retention.

Poolos (2019) defines student retention as efforts and strategies to anticipate and identify student needs prior to high school enrollment. He claimed that principals were traditionally in charge of student personnel management in their schools. As a result, student mentoring was deemed important because principals' management practices had the potential to influence student retention throughout their secondary school education cycle. This assertion agreed with that of Blanson (2005), who stated that principals should be at the top of the ladder when it comes to providing mentorship services in their schools.

He contended that mentoring was typically a multifaceted process that included guiding, teaching, influencing, and supporting. Poolos (2019) and Blanson (2005) proposed a structural set up in a school that can facilitate mentorship. In a school, for example, principals can mentor their deputies, who will then mentor their department heads. Teachers would receive mentoring services from their department heads, and students would be mentored by their teachers. Mentorship, on the other hand, does not always follow such a formal structure, and it is not uncommon to find principals providing mentorship services directly to their students or teachers.

7. Research Methodology

In order to provide a comprehensive picture of the impact of principals' management practices on student retention, the study used a quantitative research design (Creswell and Clark, 2013). As is recommended for survey studies, the study included 90 principals, representing 30% of the principals' population (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2019). The sample population included people from all 11 sub-counties. Using proportionate sampling techniques, the number of schools chosen from each cluster (sub-county) was determined. A total of 11 SCDEs were chosen as key informants for the study, with ten students selected from one school per sub-county specifically for the study, yielding a sample of 110 students from across the county, with one school representing each sub-county.

8. Research Findings

Table 1 summarizes the Pearson correlations between principals' mentoring practices and student retention. The common method for interpreting correlation coefficients served as the foundation for correlation coefficient interpretation (Schober et al., 2018).

Table 1: Correlations Relationships

Correlations

		A.	B	C	D.	E.	F	Student Retention
A.	Pearson Correlation	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)							
B	Pearson Correlation	.527**	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000						
C	Pearson Correlation	.470**	.536**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000					
D.	Pearson Correlation	.268*	.209	.230*	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.052	.032				
E	Pearson Correlation	.210	.344**	.307**	.413**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.050	.001	.004	.000			
F	Pearson Correlation	.226*	.466**	.231*	.349**	.699**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035	.000	.032	.001	.000		
Student Retention	Pearson Correlation	.025	.011	.162	.093	.204	.152	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.817	S.918	.134	.394	.058	.159	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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

KEY

A. The School always conducts orientation for new students to familiarize with the school routine
B. The school always introduces staff from various departments who guide the students on the expectations of the department.
C. The school supports orientation for subject selection to guide students on career choices
D. Professional speakers are always invited during career days to motivate students to pursue their career choices
E. The School always supports life skills training to create an enabling environment for students to stay in school
F. The School ensures that students are equipped with skills to enable them integrate into the society after completing their studies.

As shown in Table 1, the individual Principal mentorship practices results above show The School always conducts orientation for new students to familiarize with the school routine had a positive but insignificant correlation with student retention ($r= 0.025$ and $r = 0.025$, $p > 0.01$). However if the school always introduces

staff from various departments to guide the students on the expectations of the department posted a positive and insignificant correlation with student retention; r =0.011, r = 0.918; Whether, the school supports orientation for subject selection to guide students on career choices relationship with student retention had and r = 0.162 with $p < 0.05$ at 95% level of significance. The invitation of professional speakers during career days to motivate students to pursue their career choices had positive correlation with student retention at r = 0.093 but with an insignificant correlation of 0.384 at 95% level of significance. The correlations indicate a positive relationship between the individual motivations practices, implying that as the effectiveness of mentorship practices improve, so does the student retention rate though insignificantly.

The correlation between the practice of the school supporting life skills training to create an enabling environment for students to stay in school and student retention had a positive but insignificant correlation with student retention (r= 0.204 and P = 0.058, $p > 0.05$). The correlation between the practice of the school ensuring that students are equipped with skills to enable them integrate into the society after completing their studies with student retention had a positive but insignificant correlation with student retention (r= 0.152 and P = 0.159, $p > 0.05$).

This result contradicted the findings of Thoonen et al. (2012), Hallinger and Heck (2010), Palmer, Burke, and Aubusson (2017), and Anachuna and Obi (2021). The findings of this study supported claims made by Raschdorf (2015) and Ingersoll & Strong (2011) that mentorship relationships should not be limited to formal visits in order to be more effective. Other studies that contradicted the current findings included those of Poolos (2019). The findings of this study were consistent with those of Blanson (2005), who stated that principals as school administrators should be at the top of the ladder when it comes to providing mentorship services in their schools, and that mentorship should be a multi-faceted process involving guiding, teaching, influencing, and supporting.

9. Hypothesis Test

The regression analysis was carried out to establish the predictive capacity of mentorship practices on student retention. The predictive capacity of Principal mentorship practices on student retention in public day secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya was given by calculating the coefficient of determination (R^2). The coefficient of determination shows the proportion of variation in the dependent variable as a result of the changes in the independent variables. The summary of the regression model is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: regression Analysis

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.272[a]	.074	.004	.98017	.074	1.063	6	80	.392	.151

a. Predictors: (Constant), The School ensures that students are equipped with skills to enable them integrate into the society after completing their studies., The School always conducts orientation for new students to familiarize with the school routine., Professional speakers are always invited during career days to motivate students to pursue their career choices. , The school supports orientation for subject selection to guide students on career choices , The school always introduces staff from various departments who guide the students on the expectations of the department , The School always supports life skills training to create an enabling environment for students to stay in school.

b. Dependent Variable: Student Retention

The multiple regression model produced adjusted $R^2 = .272$, $p > 0.05$. The results of regression analysis (Table 1) showed that principals mentorship practices explained 27.2% of the variance in retention of students in Public day Secondary Schools in Nakuru County, Kenya (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.074$). The other remaining percentage of 82.6% is explained by other factors. Therefore, the overall model of regression showed a statistically insignificant causal relationship ($p>0.05$) between principals mentorship practices and retention of students in Public Day Secondary Schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. Since the regression model showed a statistically insignificant causal relationship between Principals mentorship practices and retention of students in public day secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya, it was not necessary to establish the predictive capacity of each of the principals' mentorship practices on student retention.

The results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) are presented in Table 3 and demonstrate how well the model fits the data. The F-value of 1.063 and the p-value of 0.392, which is greater than 0.05, demonstrated that the overall model was insignificant in predicting variations in student retention rates in public day secondary schools in Nakuru County.

Table 3 ANOVA Analysis

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.129	6	1.022	1.063	.392[b]
	Residual	76.859	80	.961		
	Total	82.989	86			

a. Dependent Variable: Student Retention

b. Predictors: (Constant),

The School ensures that students are equipped with skills to enable them integrate into the society after completing their studies., The School always conducts orientation for new students to familiarize with the school routine., Professional speakers are always invited during career days to motivate students to pursue their career choices. , The school supports orientation for subject selection to guide students on career choices, The school always introduces staff from various departments who guide the students on the expectations of the department, and The School always supports life skills training to create an enabling environment for students to stay in school.

10.Conclusion

Based on the study's findings, while mentorship activities were vital, they were inconsequential in terms of improving student retention and academic achievement. Schools may create a pleasant learning environment that encourages children to stay in school and thrive academically by enacting fair and consistent policies that promote student assistance and positive reinforcement. Successful mentorship practices should be prioritized by school leaders as a means of boosting student retention and academic performance, and they should collaborate closely with teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to establish successful strategies for dealing with disruptive conduct.

11.Recommendations

While participation in the mentoring program was not always associated with increased student retention, preventing attrition and dropout is a primary goal of most mentor programs. One important aspect of this is for the mentor groups to act as a bridge, fostering social interaction as well as integration in the students' study program through their participation in the mentor groups. According to the findings, mentor groups should be made mandatory in order to increase attendance and, as a result, the likelihood of positive outcomes.

12.Limitations of the Study

The amount of contact time that students have with their mentor will differ between schools. As a result, one limitation of this study is that the results will differ depending on how long students have been engaged in a mentoring relationship with their respective mentees. Although mentors were required to spend at least one contact hour per week with their mentees, contact time varied between mentors.

This limitation may prevent the researcher from drawing additional conclusions based on statistical data from different schools. A second limitation is that each mentor/mentee relationship will differ, which may result in the mentees having extremely diverse experiences in the program, which will naturally be reflected in the

statistical data collected from the participants. It might be beneficial for the mentoring relationship if students were assigned the same mentor for both years for consistency's sake. Furthermore, there is a chance that the mentor-mentee match will be unfavorable to the mentee. This almost ensures that the couple will not have a fruitful relationship from the start.

13.Suggestions for Further Studies

More research is required to investigate the duration of the mentoring relationship, which could yield more significant results. Despite the constraints imposed by the school year calendar, it may be advantageous for the student to continue and maintain the mentoring relationship established the previous year with the same mentor when returning to school the following year.

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