



**SELF-ESTEEM LEVELS AMONG SECONDARY
SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF
SCHOOLS. CASE OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS
IN NYANDARUA WEST SUB-COUNTY, KENYA**

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Abstract:

The major purpose of the study was to investigate whether students' level of self-esteem can be influenced by the category of school a learner attends. To achieve this objective, schools were categorized into three categories which are day schools, day-boarding schools, and boarding schools. Students' self-esteem was measured and the data obtained was analyzed. The aim was to find out whether there was any significant difference in students' level of self-esteem in different school categories. The research was conducted using an *ex post facto* research design. Categories of schools were seen as a naturally occurring independent variable, which could have an effect on students' level of self-esteem. The population of the study comprised students in public secondary schools in Nyandarua West Sub County. The Sub County had 8 public secondary schools when the research was conducted; with a student population of 3067. Data relevant to the study was collected using questionnaires, and a self-esteem test prepared by the researcher. The questionnaires were administered to a sample of 240 students, selected using simple random sampling from the 1320 form two students in the Sub County. Data was analysed using mean calculations, percentages, and a one-way ANOVA test. It was found out that there was a significant difference in students' total-mean self-esteem in different categories of schools. Students in boarding schools had a higher level of self-esteem in general compared to students in day-boarding and day schools; whose self-esteem levels were average. Probably, boarding schools have a more child-friendly environment, hence, more opportunities and different facilities which help learners to achieve more and hence acquire positive growth in self-esteem. However, in day schools where opportunities could have been less adequate students recorded a low level of self-esteem. It is therefore recommended that MOEST should finance seminars to sensitize secondary school administrators on adolescents' needs so that every Principal would endeavor to provide students with age-appropriate resources and activities. To achieve this, the

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government should supply adequate facilities to schools that do not have them. Further studies should be conducted to find out the environments in boarding schools that facilitated self-esteem growth among students, additionally, whether similar results would be obtained in other Sub Counties in Kenya.

Keywords: school category, self-esteem, school environment, public secondary school

1. Introduction

The environment in which a person lives has a great influence on his/her psychological well-being. The school environment plays an important role in the development of positive attitudes. According to Melgosa (2000), conditions in the school environment can either be degrading or upgrading to students and may have a positive or negative impact on their level of self-esteem. Level of self-esteem is constantly known to be positively related to academic achievement and social behaviour. For children to succeed in education they need to develop a positive self-concept. Poor academic performance and indiscipline have mainly been associated with a lack of hard work, the hopelessness of school learners, or poor teaching methods (Onyasmi, 2004). However, Bernstein and Nash (1999) argue that declining grades and indiscipline are especially likely among students who are not comfortable with the conditions at school and who have low underlying self-esteem. Therefore, in order to counsel and guide adolescents through their social and academic life we must know how the school environment affects his/her behavioral patterns such as self-esteem. The school environment includes the management style adopted by the teachers and principals in handling students' affairs and the facilities available in a school, mainly learning, co-curricular, and catering facilities.

Kenyan secondary schools showed a lack of clear established channels of communication and freedom to express opinions by teachers, students, and parents is curtailed (Republic of Kenya, 2001). In such an environment, adolescents tend to feel devalued and lose self-worth.

Sadker and Sadker (2000) indicate that the environment in which a student attends schooling can influence the way pupils feel about themselves and others and play an important role in the shaping of each student's self-concept. Every aspect of the school environment is the school can influence learners' level of self-esteem. According to Holland and Andre (1987), extracurricular activities enhance students' self-esteem and encourage civic participation. They also improve students' relations. Therefore, an environment, that does not provide enough age-appropriate activities or that bars students from extracurricular participation denies them an opportunity for personal development and growth in self-worth. The Kenyan curriculum has been found to be deficient in that it is more examination-oriented (Republic of Kenya, 2001). Such a curriculum cannot cater to the holistic development of the child. Extracurricular activities should therefore be given equal emphasis.

The foregoing discussions seem to suggest that the school environment may lead to student growth in self-esteem or lack of it. The youth therefore need to be provided with an environment conducive to the development of positive self-worth. Melgosa (2000) observes that in high-quality schools, the most acute levels of antisocial behaviour are not experienced and that students in such schools have a positive self-concept. Self-esteem and self-actualization needs therefore can only be unfolded in a benign environment. It is therefore, vital that right from the beginning of the school career and throughout it, as the youth go through successive crises of growth, identity, and adjustment, the school gives children a conducive environment through support, comfort, and security (Mike, 1990). The principal's, teachers', and schools' responsibility of producing a caring supportive environment is part of their moral duty to their charges. The fostering of students' self-esteem is a crucial element in their moral and academic performance. The one basic cause of people's difficulties seems to stem from their lack of self-esteem (Johnson, 1986). It is for this reason that this study sought to investigate how the school environment affects students' self-esteem.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

It has been found out from the background of the study that students' self-esteem can be affected either positively or negatively by the prevailing conditions in the school environment. This study was therefore set to find out whether the school environment has any influence on students' self-esteem.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to find out whether the day, boarding, and day-boarding categories of schools have any influence on students' self-esteem.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study aimed at achieving the following objective:

- To find out whether there was any significant difference in students' self-esteem in different categories of schools.

1.4 Significance of the Study

- 1) The research is of interest since the information generated can help serve the following services.
- 2) Provide information to the government, private investors, and other interested groups on the role played by the school environment in shaping students' self-esteem.

1.5 Assumptions of the Study

- The school environment plays a major role in shaping students' self-esteem compared to hereditary and home environment factors.

2. Literature Review

This is a review of the literature on students' self-esteem in relation to the school environment.

2.1 The Concept of School Environment

In Kenya, a school is taken as an institution where learning and teaching take place. It is therefore common to find school inspectors focusing mainly on teaching-learning documents as they inspect schools. Such is a good example of how people perceive school and schooling. However, school and schooling are more than that. Undoubtedly the role of home cannot be undermined or shifted to any other agency. All psychologists, teachers, and mental health experts agree that primarily family living and experiences play the most crucial role in the development of harmonious personality in children but in recent years due to rapid industrialization, the family is disintegrating and is not in a position to play its role effectively. Moreover, in the present circumstances, in our country, most parents are illiterate and ill-informed about education and therefore cannot be charged with the responsibility of proper guidance for mental health. The other problem is that parents do not have access to scientific knowledge of human behaviour which can be used effectively to prevent maladjustment and cure simple mental disturbances like lack of self-esteem. Parents today look at the school as the second line of fostering child development.

According to Chauhan (2009), the school assumes great responsibility in the process of harmonious development of personality. Learners spend six to eight hours per day in day schools, while in boarding schools the learners spend most of their time in school. Therefore, many schools today take on an increasing number of roles traditionally filled up by parents, from sex education to drug and pregnancy counselling, guidance in peer pressure, family and emotional problems, and self-esteem issues. Reports warn of the fragile conditions of troubled adolescents, exhorting schools to do more to help the nation's youth. Chauhan (2009) further notes that biological heredity alone is not enough to enable the child to develop harmoniously in a social culture. To equip the child with the necessary skills and information, concepts and attitudes, and to enable him/her to adjust properly to his/her environment, society has therefore created a separate agency – the school – where he can develop all qualities and abilities required for successful social adjustment. The school must therefore provide a conducive environment if this goal is to be achieved.

According to BBC World Service Education and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (2000), external influences can have a strong effect on how one feels, and this in turn can affect one's self-esteem. Equally, Muola (2000) seems to agree with this; he states that the school environment and the people in the school (principals, teachers, and peers) affect the child's self-concept. He argues that whether the child develops a positive or negative self-concept depends largely on how he/she is treated and how he/she perceives such treatment. If the reaction of others is positive, the child is likely

to accept himself /herself as a person of worth and develop a positive concept. On the other hand, if the reaction of others is negative, he/she is likely to consider himself/herself as worthless and develop a negative self-concept.

It is important to note that as much as the school environment is important in the development of the child's "self", researchers have different stands on what comprises a school environment. According to Sadker and Sadker (2000), some people have always advocated for the creation of more sensitive and humane school environments. Other studies have offered suggestions for creating a more academically demanding school. Research on school environment and what makes a school effective is of great importance. However, it has limitations. First there is a disagreement over the definition of an effective school. Sadker and Sadker (2000) state that researchers use varying descriptions, ranging from "schools with high academic achievement" to schools that foster "personal growth, creativity, and positive self-concept". However, the question that educators should seek to answer is, how can we improve schools so that they enhance both psychological well-being and academic success? At this point, it is important to focus on different stands of people regarding the school environment. These will also help perceive to some extent what school managers and teachers should emphasize in a school in order to make it conducive, for meeting the child's needs.

According to Mutie and Ndambuki (2003), the key issue to be considered in a school is relevancy. He argues that interesting school programmes and flexible curricula should be developed to cater to varying talents, interests, abilities, and goals in life, that is, the school programmes should help the youth know their rights and responsibilities. He further indicates that, in relevant schools, students who might otherwise become delinquent for want of school relevant to their peculiar interests and needs should find a vent for their special talents. This seems to suggest that when the school environment is relevant, the students' varying needs are met, and this helps them develop a sense of self-worth. Sadker and Sadker (2000) seem to agree with this; they observe that safe schools implement a variety of programs and social services. Though implementation of a safe school climate can be a challenge for educators, it provides a needed refuge for students. This is an indicator that good schools have safe environments. Sadker and Sadker (2000) further observe, that, in safe and orderly schools there is a focus on academic achievement, families and communities are involved in meaningful ways in school activities, students and staff treat each other with respect, and student problems are identified and attended to before they deteriorate into violence.

According to Chauhan (2009, 1992), the school environment plays an important role in the development of positive attitudes. He notes that the school environment should be free from fear, tension, and frustration so as to be a conducive environment for learning, growth, and development. He gives suggestions on what should be happening in schools. First, the school should be a conducive environment for the proper development of the students' abilities. Secondly, adolescents should be provided with a balanced diet for proper physical development since future success in life depends on a sound mind in a sound body. These suggestions would help cater to the many physical

and physiological changes that occur during the adolescence period. Schools should therefore understand the development tasks of Kenyan youth and seek to provide for them.

It is important to note at this point that a lack of self-esteem can lead to misbehaviour. According to Mutie and Ndambuki (2003), youths use drugs due to a lack of self-esteem and emotional problems among others. Were (2003) indicates that the school environment is a major cause of maladjustment and hence misbehaviour. He argues that the way the school is organized, including, its laws and regulations, the routine work, the curriculum, and poor teaching methodologies make many students run from school. They find the environment monotonous and uninteresting and as a result, feel devalued leading to laziness, disobedience, and inattentiveness. They eventually lose value with themselves and engage in anti-social activities. Were (2003) adds that even leadership style in schools more so lacks of democratization in schools, misuse of punishment, and lack of management skills by teachers and school principals, among others, may have an impact on students' esteem and hence behaviour. In view of this, it is important to assess the impact such school factors have on learners' self-esteem. It is important to note that a child who is psychologically abused will disrupt learning activities, use defense mechanisms, such as aggression, destruction on the negative and compensation on the positive, take no heed to punishment, and even suffer from depression and pessimism. Pessimism is a major trait with adolescents who have low self-esteem.

According to Melgosa (2000), in high-quality schools, the most acute levels of antisocial behaviour are usually not observed. She argues that, specifically, good conditions of the installations, cleanliness, tidiness, availability of the principal and teachers, and approval of good behaviour have been identified as a safeguard against criminal behaviour. Equally according to Mussen (1984) a classroom that is very crowded or inadequately equipped may produce increased aggression and other kinds of stress in children. He notes further that, space, equipment, lighting, and decoration in the classroom can make a difference in the feelings children have about themselves and their environment.

2.2 The Concept of Self-esteem

2.2.1 Meaning of Self-esteem

According to Muola (2000), some authors use both the terms self-concept and the term self-esteem to refer to the same entity. This is consistent with the views of Burns (1987) in which he uses the terms self-concept, self-attitude, and self-esteem synonymously. He argues that a positive self-concept can be equated with positive self-evaluation, self-respect, self-esteem, and self-acceptance, and that a negative self-concept becomes synonymous with negative self-evaluation, self-hatred, inferiority, and a lack of feelings of personal worthiness and self-acceptance. Each of these terms carries connotations of the others and has been used interchangeably by various writers. These writers refer to the same thing, and even the measures they use in measuring self-esteem and self-

concept are indistinguishable. This research assumed that self-esteem and self-concept are much related, and have therefore been used synonymously. The study therefore leans much on the definition given by Burns (1987) for the aim is not to find out the real difference between self-concept and self-esteem, but more so to find out whether there is any relationship between the school environment and the way a person values himself or herself.

According to Rosenberg (1965), self-esteem is defined in a similar vein as a positive or negative attitude towards a particular object, namely the self. Self-esteem simply implies that the individual feels he is a person of worth, respecting himself for what he is, not condemning himself for what he is not, and the extent to which he feels positively about himself. Low self-esteem suggests self-rejection, self-derogation, and negative self-evaluation. Self-esteem, according to Brisset (1972), encompasses two basic psychological processes (a) the process of self-evaluation, and (b) the process of self-worth. Each is complementary to the other. He argues that self-worth is more fundamental to the human being than self-evaluation; though both elements of self-esteem necessarily involve putting what one is or what one is doing into context or providing oneself and one's activities with a reference. Self-esteem in terms of self-evaluation seems to refer to the making of a conscious judgment regarding the significance and importance of oneself. Anything related to the person, as has been argued, is liable for such evaluations on the basis of criteria and standards involving any one or combination of consensual goals (e.g., wealth, prestige, excelling in certain life aspects, etc.), levels of achievement, moral precepts and norms of behaviour. According to this definition, those who are fortunate to be able to live up to their standards and realize their aspirations develop on this model a strong sense of self-esteem. Those who find that they do not measure up to their own ideals are likely to possess low self-esteem.

A second reference point involves the internalization of society's judgment. This assumes that self-evaluation is determined by the individuals' beliefs as to how others evaluate him. This conceptualization of self-esteem was promoted by Cooley (1912) initially. Mussen (1984) argues that the school is a social institution that reflects the culture of which it is part, and transmits to the young an ethos and a worldview as well as specific skills and knowledge; therefore, the judgment from its members to an individual has an impact on the individual's self-esteem. This justifies some of the reasons why this study seeks to investigate the impact teachers and other members of the school institution have on students' self-esteem.

A third reference point involves the individual evaluating himself as a relative success or relative failure in doing what his identity entails. It involves not the judgment that what one does is good in itself but that one is good at what one does. Therefore, as stated earlier in this study, social support alone cannot compensate for poor self-evaluation. If a student thinks sports are important but feels he/she is not athletic he/she will lose self-esteem no matter how much praise he/she gets from the family, friends and teachers.

The pattern that emerges is of individuals fitting into an ongoing social structure as best as they can. If roles are played properly then collective purposes are served and individual esteem is satisfied. Society provides opportunities for developing self-esteem but to ensure this at an individual level it can only be achieved by adjustment to what is provided.

According to Bernstein and Nash (1999), self-esteem is the evaluation people make about their worth as human beings. People spend a lot of time thinking about themselves, and trying to evaluate their own perceptions, opinions, values, abilities, and so on. He argues that you can determine your height or weight by measuring it, but for other types of questions – about your creativity or attractiveness, for example – there are no objective criteria. In these cases, according to Festinger's theory of social comparison, people evaluate themselves in relation to others. When you wonder how creative, interesting, or attractive you are, you use social rather than objective criteria.

Burns (1987), borrowing from Carl Roger's phenomenological approach, describes self-esteem as synonymous with positive self-regard. He argues that self-esteem is enhanced through internalization or introjections of experience of positive regard by others. It is from such a definition that this study seeks to investigate to what extent teachers and principals offer unconditional positive regard to students and in this way enhance their self-esteem.

According to Mutie and Ndambuki (2003), adolescence is an important time for the development of self-esteem, a positive self-image, or self-evaluation. The adolescents compare their real and ideal selves and judge themselves by how well they measure up to social standards and expectations and how well they perform. He notes that the standards usually considered are:

- 1) Significance – the extent to which they feel loved by those who are important to them. In a school setup, these would be teachers, principals, and peers.
- 2) Competence – the ability to perform a task they consider important. In a school setup, these would include clubs, music, art, debating, journalism, games academics, etc.
- 3) Virtue – attainment of moral and ethical standards. This study considers the principal as the custodian of ethics and one entrusted with the responsibility of inculcating moral standards in students, through the way he/she exercises power and leadership matters.

Mutie and Ndambuki (2003) seem to suggest that the teacher, principal, and peers are significant in the development of self-esteem. Their comments and non-verbal responses have an impact on student's self. In the area of competence, the student must be provided with age-appropriate opportunities to try out their talents and achieve. The school being a major agent of socialization must provide the student with enough chances of excelling. The institution must therefore provide various resources enough to give learners opportunities to achieve.

According to Stangvik (1979), self-esteem has been associated with analytical thinking which permits the individual to separate a problem into the competent part.

With creative ability, with the ability to participate in the discussion and express a point of view, with persistence in performing tasks, and with the ability to maintain a constant perceptual framework in the face of confounding conditions. Persons with high self-esteem are likely to be leaders in their social groups, more concerned about public affairs than personal problems, and less sensitive and anxious. They are generally more effective and in general, achieve more at a given level of intelligence than do persons who take a more negative view of themselves. In terms of affect, persons with high self-esteem are generally more expressive and are less likely to be rated as unhappy, destructive, shy, embarrassed, or retiring. They are less upset by the criticism of others and more inclined to accept their own views of what is correct and appropriate. Self-expectations and the expectations of others exert a powerful influence on the level of performance achieved. High estimate of our own powers leads to higher expectations of success which appear to evoke greater efforts and focus eventually on higher levels of performance. Relating self-attitudes to academic performance leads to the view that a positive attitude represents a self-fulfilling prophecy of success, negative attitudes eventuation and anticipation of failure, and perceived lack of ability, which eventuate in lower performance.

2.3.2 Importance of Self-esteem

Many people of all ages, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and sexual preferences, seem to have one basic because of their difficulties mainly steaming from a lack of self-esteem (Johnson, 1986). Once the problem of low self-concept was addressed and the skills to achieve a feeling of strength and confidence learned and practiced, their lives quickly began to be more productive and life became easier. Once students acquire the necessary self-esteem, they become outstanding in academics and other life areas.

Most of the time people suffering from stress, self-defeating behaviour, and non-assertiveness, usually have a low self-concept. They don't feel worthy and are always agonizing over their weakness and their supposed inadequacies. They always worry about what others are thinking about them and whether they will gain others' approval. However, when such people are guided through a process of gaining self-esteem their problems wade away.

In order to succeed in anything, a person has to believe that he or she can succeed. If you see yourself as a failure, you will become one (Johnson, 1986), the person who has self-esteem is rich – in the best sense of the word. Self-esteem allows and motivates you to be the best you can be.

According to Johnson (1986), people full of self-esteem choose to act out his or her self-worth. Depending on each unique individual some may choose to be creators, teachers, helpers' listeners, support, builders' planners, etc. The behaviour is as varied and as different as the individuals who possess a positive self-image. Perhaps the best way to explain the importance of self-esteem is from quotes gathered from people who revealed how lack of self-esteem affected their lives. Johnson (1986) gives seven examples of these quotes:

“In school, lack of self-esteem makes me nervous and anxious and causes physical problems, i.e., stomach-aches, headaches, etc. I feel I don’t measure up to the teachers’ expectations. I tend to sit in the back in some classes where I feel inadequate and do not participate. I feel what I have to say is unimportant and everyone will think I’m stupid. Therefore, if I don’t understand the lesson or homework, I’ll let it pass, which causes a problem later.”

“The results of lack of self-esteem leave me with an inferiority complex. I allow others to make my decisions. Fear dominates my living – creating excessive nervousness. I am extremely sensitive, and have difficulty in expressing my feelings. Living with these shortcomings is very stressful and really hard to understand or explain.”

“Having a lack of self-esteem perpetuates the myth that I am no good. It discounts all my goodness and rivets my attention on the mistakes of the past; not seeing them as mistakes, or individual incidents, or as lessons but internalizing them and looking at them as proof of my badness.”

“Having a lack of self-esteem shouts to the world that here’s a person who isn’t worth very much – I don’t think so why should anyone else? In my case, as a parent, it sets a bad example for my children’s behaviour patterns.”

“Lack of self-esteem makes me cry. I seem to lose all emotions and everything falls apart. I feel helpless and useless I feel as if I am a failure to me and also the people around me. I am not accomplishing anything only making things worse. A lack of self-esteem is the worst feeling I can have. It not only affects the inside but the people around who love you and care; and that is sad.”

“A person with a lack of self-esteem usually struggles with a fear of failure. I feel that fear of failure has prevented me from trying things that I would really like to do.”

“Really having a lack of self-esteem is like having a dark cloud hanging over me most of the time and it prevents the sunshine from reaching me.”

Another person who has contributed to highlighting on the sources of self-esteem is Johnson (1986). According to her, self-esteem is a learned feeling that originated from the experiences that you were part of from your first day on earth. She explores different types of environments, which may have an influence on a person’s self-esteem. These environments include:

- 1) Positive environment: In this type of environment the child is fully accepted and respected as a person. His or her needs and wishes are taken into serious consideration. The parents or significant others establish and enforce clearly defined perimeters within which the child performs – definite standards of performance are set up and excellence is rewarded. The parents themselves are

persons with high levels of self-esteem. Chances are that a child rose in such an atmosphere, will have their self-esteem flourishing at an early age.

- 2) Next, is the negative environment. This is an environment in which the child picks data that is primarily negative. This comes from actions, words, and attitudes directed to the child, which indicate that the child is stupid unattractive, hopeless, less-than, unwanted, an encumbrance, and generally a pain. The child receives statements defining inferiority, which make them feel most unworthy and hence lose self-esteem.
- 3) The third environment is the perfect environment in which the child is convinced that everything he/she does is perfect. All significant persons adore the child indicating that he or she is better than anyone else. The child is touted as the priest, brightest, the most courageous, and talented. The child therefore perceives himself or herself as perfect. This leads to an overblown unrealistic feeling of self-esteem, which can lead to trouble later on. It's difficult for the persons who receive this 'perfect' message to enter the real world – outside of this exaggerated environment. Such people soon find, to their bewilderment, that they are truly not perfect. This is deflating to their inflated self-image and leaves them questioning whether they can do anything right. Or, otherwise, they become perfectionists.
- 4) The fourth environment is the contradictory environment. It is an environment in which parents' compliment, overprotect, and smother the child with love and affection every minute. The second parent (perhaps trying to offset the other's overindulgence) is very critical and demanding of the child. Such a parent's attitude makes the child feel he or she never quite succeeds. It is a confusing experience day after day. One time the child is told that he or she is superlative while the next time the child is berated for being stupid. The child is left with fluctuating self-esteem and is never quite sure how he or she feels about himself or herself. This stops the child from being productive or from taking many risks.

2.3 The Teachers Influence on Students' Self-esteem

According to Were (2003), the school factor is important in children's behaviour. Children's behaviour is affected by what they experience in school. These include their academic performance and attainment, their social and emotional experiences, and their competence in other areas of co-curricular activities. However, Were (2003) argues that of great influence are the characteristics of the teachers who interact with them, for example, their teaching style, attitude to teaching and learning, morale, and level of self-esteem. Turtle (1987) states that teachers can influence the way pupils feel about themselves and others and play an important role in the shaping of each student's self-concept. Gordon (1972) conceptualized the development of self-concept as mainly centered on to developmental nature and the significance of the child's experiences. The child enters school at the age of around six when his/her self-concept is still in the formative stage; he observes that the type of school the child joins is likely to affect it in one way or the other. The social setting provided by the school where the significant

others include peers and teachers, will presumably determine to a large extent the way the child perceives herself/himself.

According to Mutie and Ndambuki (2003), teenagers desperately need respect and dignity. He therefore advises that adults should show some understanding of what teenagers are going through. They should cooperate, compromise, love, and reason with them and grant them appropriate independence. From the Republic of Kenya (2001), we learn that some of the qualities of a good teacher would include:

- 1) Ability to show interest in academic progress, moral growth, and the welfare of his/her students.
- 2) Ability to appreciate his/her students' individual differences and at all times listen to them and motivate them to do their best.
- 3) Ability to create a conducive learning environment.

These qualities seem to suggest that much of the teacher-learner relationship should be student-centered. It should be a relationship that translates into better self-worth for the learner. According to Were (2003), treating every child with respect is an important aspect of teaching. He states that students hate teachers who speak to them contemptuously, sarcastically, or unfairly. A teacher therefore should not speak to students in a way that demeans them because this affects their relationship with their peers because they lose face or respect with them.

2.4 The Peers Influence on Students' Self-esteem

According to Melgosa (2000), peer relationships are important for adolescents' self-esteem development. She begins by posing a question to adults, "*do you adults understand the importance of your children's social relationships for the development of their self-esteem?*" Melgosa (2000) seems to suggest that teachers should perceive peer relations positively. Unfortunately, in most Kenyan schools' peer groups are always viewed as negative. The intentions of peer groups are mainly interpreted as negative or evil in a narrow sense. This can be well seen in the names given to peer groups by teachers, for example, some label them as gangs, *Wakora*, etc. Melgosa (2000) argues that young persons tend to choose a negative group when they have a poor self-concept and that subconsciously they think that perhaps they will be important and will stand out in some way. A study could be carried out to establish the better part of peer groups and emphasize the reasons teachers need to focus on the positive qualities of adolescents. According to some researchers, the group is where self-concept is adjusted. Members of a healthy balanced group learn to be satisfied with themselves in the present although they also consider other goals to be achieved in the future. From this discussion we can deduce that teachers should appreciate the advantages of peer groups, and take up the responsibility of guiding them and working with them instead of fruitlessly attempting to break up the groups; Mussen (1984) indicates that peers or age-mates contribute in unique and major ways to shaping a child's personally, social behaviour, values and attitudes. Children influence each other by modeling actions that can be imitated, by reinforcing or punishing certain responses, and by evaluating one another's activities and providing feedback to each other. He adds

that peer relationships have some impact on development. For example, children's status in their peer group and the friendships they establish undoubtedly affect their self-concept. This argument seems to suggest that peer groups should be properly guided and not broken. Teachers should therefore appreciate the positive contributions of peer groups. This study aims to establish the teacher's contributions to maintaining students' peer groups as a way of enhancing their self-esteem.

2.5 School Management Style and Its Influence on Students' Self-esteem

According to Were (2003), there are about five leadership styles in administration; autocratic, democratic, *laissez-faire*, bureaucratic, contingency, and consultative. Melgosa (2000) seems to suggest that leadership styles that are predominantly indifferent or excessively authoritarian tend to produce adolescents with low self-esteem. This study will mainly consider three styles of leadership; these are authoritarian, democratic, and *laissez-faire*. According to Sadker and Sadker (2000), students make significant achievement gains in schools where principals:

- 1) Articulate a clear school mission,
- 2) Are a visible presence in classroom and hallways,
- 3) Hold high expectations for teachers and students,
- 4) Spend a major portion of the day working with teachers and students to improve instruction,
- 5) Are actively involved in diagnosing instructional problems, and
- 6) Create a positive school climate.

They argue that successful principals provide instructional leadership, and they spend more of their time working with students and less time in the office. They hold high expectations for teachers' performance and student achievement and provide necessary resources, including their own skills and knowledge. They are active and involved. Sadker and Sadker (2000) note that such principals create schools that make a positive difference in the lives of students. This is much in line with the recommendations given in the Republic of Kenya (2001). According to the report, among other qualities of a headteacher, he/she should be accessible to the teaching staff, students, non-teaching staff, parents, and members of the community. Equally, he/she should have an interest in knowing his students and teachers by name, background, and by their ability. However, the report observes that the current situation in Kenyan secondary schools is one where students and teachers have no avenue of appraising their head teachers as a way of providing feedback on his/her performance. Principals are reported to be aloof and distanced from the students, they assume the "I'm a senior and you are the junior" attitude. This makes teachers and students feel inferior to themselves, which equally affects their self-image. Such an attitude seems to contradict the better part of the principal as a significant person to both the students and teachers. When the learners suffer inferiority, it shows that they have low esteem for themselves. Sadker and Sadker (2000) argue that less effective principals are vague about their goals and focus on maintaining the status quo. They make such comments as, "We have a good school and I

want to keep it that way". He advises that the principal should share his or her vision so that teachers and students understand the school goal and all work together for achievement. In less effective schools, teachers and students lack a common understanding of the school's mission, and they function as individuals charting their own separate courses.

According to the Republic of Kenya (2001), Kenyan secondary schools showed a lack of clear established channels of communication, and the freedom to express opinions by teachers, students, and parents is curtailed. The report observed that this creates mistrust between students and the administration. Such a situation is not conducive to the student's personal development. In such an environment, according to the report, adolescents have a tendency to feel devalued and lose self-worth. This eventually breeds a situation where students have no way of expressing their grievances leading to frustrations and resulting in disruptive behavior. The report therefore recommends that headteachers should cultivate a democratic and participatory environment in schools and encourage regular "Barazas" where teachers and students are encouraged to express views and grievances and where the school administration can get an opportunity to expound on policies.

From much of the foregoing discussion, it can be deduced that a democratic leadership style if adopted by headteachers would help learners feel much more secure in a given school and this may help in building their self-esteem. However, it is important to point out that democratic leadership may not always lead to better self-esteem.

Kiumi (2004) warns that although democracy may promote discipline and by extension the teaching-learning process, it can undermine efforts to enhance discipline if taken beyond a certain threshold. He indicates that uncontrolled democracy may for example create a situation whereby institutional members demand to be involved in all facets of management policies. Consequently, the headteacher may abdicate his/her cardinal responsibility of providing the general direction of conduct. Students may thus lose sense of direction and consequently become undisciplined. In such a condition this study does not suggest that student self-esteem would still be enhanced, at such extremes of democracy.

2.6 Co-curricular Activities and How They Influence Self-esteem

Extracurricular or co-curricular activities according to this study may include music, drama, academic clubs, all forms of athletic activities, all forms of ball games, all forms of indoor games, etc. According to Sadker and Sadker (2000), extracurricular activities are so important that many advocates refer to them not as extracurricular but as the co-curriculum. They argue that the effects of extracurricular participation on secondary school students' personal development and academic achievement are probably positive, but very modest, and are definitely different among students with different social or intellectual backgrounds. Therefore, high-profile students have a complex network of reasons for participating. Sadker observes that for some, there is genuine interest and enjoyment while others see the extracurricular as a path to social success. In their study,

they found that only 16 percent of students surveyed said getting good grades increases status among peers. However, 56 percent of students said extracurricular can lead to popularity. Other calculating students base their choice of activities not on their interests, but rather, with an eye to the interests of admission to certain colleges and careers that select the chosen few who do well in certain activities. This discussion seems to suggest that extracurricular activities can promote the student's esteem in school and out of school when they join careers of their choice for being competent in certain co-curricular activities. Therefore, this works as both a provision for basic needs and esteem needs. Social success, status among peers, popularity, and even a career in the future all translate to improved self-esteem. Researchers such as Holland and Andre (1987) found that:

- 1) Extracurricular activities enhance students' self-esteem and encourage civic participation,
- 2) Extracurricular activities, especially athletics, improve student's relations, and
- 3) Involvement in the extra curriculum is related to high career aspirations, especially for boys from poor backgrounds.

These findings have a big contribution towards enhancing students; self-concept.

According to Chauhan (2009), there is a close relationship between motor performance and other traits. He argues that popularity in adolescence is more closely related to physical strength and skills in athletic activities than to intelligence and school achievement. These findings emphasize the importance of physical education and recreational activities for adolescents. The needs of adolescents should be given a proper place in the school curriculum and they should be provided with opportunities for the development of their creative abilities through music, dance, arts and crafts, etc. According to Mutie and Ndambuki (2003), achieving success in developing skills and participating in physical activity are excellent means of developing confidence and reaping the satisfaction that comes from successful accomplishment. Sadker and Sadker (2000) underscore the school systems where there is emphasis on a rigorous academic curriculum which has policies that bar students from extracurricular participation. There is a culture in Kenya today that emphasizes mainly on academic performance. According to the Republic of Kenya (1999), the current Kenyan curriculum is deficient; teachers tend to be more examination-oriented. The report observes that such a curriculum cannot cater to the holistic development of the child. The task force therefore recommended that the curriculum should address individual needs, human values, and life skills. This shows that schools do not give extracurricular activities equal emphasis. Many schools are therefore lacking in terms of extracurricular resources and facilities denying students an important opportunity for personal development.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is adopted from client-centered therapy of Carl Rogers' (1969) and Maslow's (1954, 1962, and 1971) hierarchy of needs. The key concept in client-centered therapy is that growth occurs in an acceptant, warm, empathic, non-judgmental environment that allows students the freedom to explore their thoughts and

feelings and solve their own problems. Schools that lack these characteristics foster little or no growth in self-esteem. On the other hand, Abraham Maslow constructed a hierarchy of human needs. This is a developmental model suggesting that growth occurs by having sufficient environmental support. The support gradually shifts in emphasis to an individual’s ability to nourish and support himself or herself within his or her environment. Maslow (1954) constructed a pyramid that illustrates this shift. At the base of the pyramid are the basic human needs for food, clothing, and shelter. Survival comes first. In other words, this hierarchy proposes that some needs must be met before others. Therefore, in a school, the social and physical environment must be conducive to the child’s psychological growth, including the development of self-esteem. This relationship is shown in Figure 1.

An improvement in the school environment is expected to positively influence students’ self-esteem hence raising it. A poor school environment will therefore lead to low students’ self-esteem. Self-esteem is also likely to be influenced by other factors within or outside the school environment including peers, sex/gender, home environment, and age. In view of the fact that these extraneous variables could not fully be included in the study, they remain as limiting factors to this study.

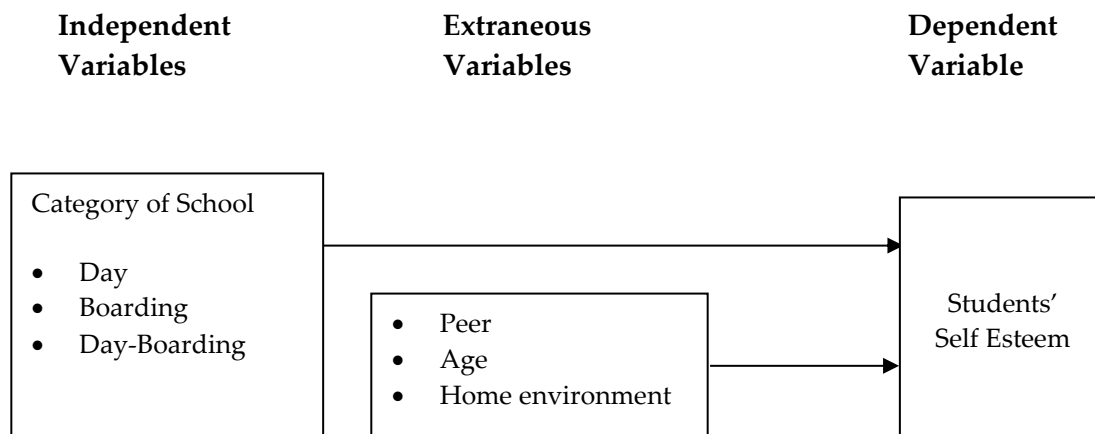


Figure 1: The Relationship between Category of School a Learner Attends and Students’ Self-esteem

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This section discusses the methods, which were applied during data collection and analysis. The chapter is divided into six subsections. These are; research design, population, sample and sampling procedures, instrumentation, and data collection procedures, and data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

This research was a survey using *ex post-facto* design. In this type of design, the researcher establishes any existing relationship between independent and dependent variables retrospectively (Kathuri and Pals, 1993). The school category was seen as a naturally occurring independent variable, which could affect the students' self-esteem. The different school categories therefore were seen as different treatments given to students which would affect their self-esteem.

3.3 Population of Study

The target population in this study was all students in public secondary schools in Nyandarua West Subcounty. According to MOE records, the Subcounty had 10 public schools, of these 2 were County boys boarding schools one was a county mixed day & boarding school, while 7 were Extra County day schools. The student population was 3,067 while the teacher population was 160.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Procedures

Schools were stratified into boarding, day-boarding, and day schools, and a sample of schools was selected. Two probability-sampling techniques were applied in order to come up with an unbiased sample of schools and students. These were stratified random sampling and purposeful sampling. The stratified random sampling method was used for the proportional allocation of each stratum in the population (Kathuri and Pals, 1993). Proportionate allocation was based on 8 schools and 2,267 students in the Sub-county. Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula for estimating the sample size, the number of schools whose subjects participated in the study was 8. Therefore, all schools in the Sub-county were included in the study. In obtaining a sample of students, purposeful sampling was first applied where only students in Forms two (grade two at high school education level) were included in the study. In Nyandarua West Subcounty, form two classes had 1,329 students. Based on Kiejecie and Morgan (1970) formula for estimating sample size, the number of students included in the study was 240. The proportionate number of students selected from each category of school is as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Size of Students Selected from Each Category of School

Category of school	No of the schools selected in each category of school	Sample size
Boarding	1	40
Day & Boarding	1	40
Day	4	160
Total	6	240

The exact number of students from each category of school was obtained from the class registers.

3.5 Instrumentation

The researcher used a questionnaire to collect data for this study. There was one set of questionnaires for the students only. The questionnaire was divided into subsections A and B. Section A of the questionnaire elicited data concerning gender, age, type, and category of school. Section B of the questionnaire was a self-esteem test. The test was developed by the researcher with the help of other standardized self-esteem and self-concept tests, for example, the Piers and Harris (1964) self-concept rating scale for ages 8 – 16 years, and Rosenberg (1965) self-esteem test for adolescents and students. The section had 40 items covering school behaviour, academic status, and personal ability in school-based co-curricular activities. The statements were equally divided between positive and negative forms. The test was on a five-point rating scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A high score (negative statements reversed) indicated a more positive self-esteem.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument

According to Kaplan (1990), validity refers to the agreement between a score or measure and the quality it is believed to measure. In order to test the validity of the research instrument a pilot study was carried out using two randomly selected schools. These schools were excluded during the main study. This was done so as to control extraneous influence on the findings due to the subjects' prior knowledge of the information being targeted by the instrument. Additionally, opinion was sought from three lecturers in the Department of Education Psychology, Counselling, and Educational Foundations. Information obtained from the trial study and comments from the three lecturers assisted in validating the instrument. Items found to be unclear or likely to be misinterpreted were rephrased. To test the reliability of the instruments split half method was used. The items were then arranged according to odd and even numbers. The marks from both odd and even items were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (γ). To obtain the reliability coefficient of the whole instrument, the researcher applied the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula which is denoted by $\gamma_{xx} = 2r_{oe} / 1 + r_{oe}$. Where γ_{xx} is the reliability of the original instrument, while r_{oe} is the reliability coefficient obtained by correlating the scores of the odd-numbered items with the scores of the even-numbered items in the instrument (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1976). The correlation coefficient obtained from these calculations for the self-esteem test was 0.83.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Before conducting the data-collecting exercise, permission was sought from the MOE, which was granted through the Subcounty Director, Nyandarua West Subcounty. The researcher administered the questionnaires to the students in person. Students were given one day to respond to the questionnaire after which the rated questionnaires were collected in readiness for analysis.

3.8 Data Analysis

The researcher went through the questionnaires to ensure that the students had rated them according to the instructions given. This helped eliminate research errors that would emanate from poor or wrong ratings of the questionnaires.

After confirming that all questionnaires returned were rated according to the instruction given, the data was coded, summarized, tabulated, and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Data analysis was accomplished through the use of a computer, which utilized the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) version. The data was mainly analysed using mean calculations and one-way ANOVA tests.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the data analysis and a discussion of the findings.

4.1 Demographic Data and General Information of the Respondents and Schools

Demographic information of the respondents in regard to sex and age is presented in Tables 2 and 3 respectively.

Table 2: Distribution of Sample by Gender

Sex	N	Percentage (%)
Male	110	61.11
Female	70	38.89
Total	180	100.00

Table 2 shows that the majority (61.11 percent) of the student respondents were males. This is consistent with the findings by the Republic of Kenya (2001) in which it was established that the number of secondary school boys outweighed that of secondary school girls.

Table 3: Distribution of Sample by Age

Age (Years)	N	Percentage (%)
Below 16	17	9.44
16	134	74.44
Above 16	29	16.12
Total	180	100.00

Table 3 indicates that approximately 83 percent of the student respondents were of the age 16 and below. This therefore proves the appropriateness of the self-esteem test items used. The test was prepared by the researcher borrowing a number of items from standardized tests, for example, Piers and Harris' (1964) self-concept test, which was meant for ages 8-16 years, and Rosenberg (1965). The table further indicates that most of the respondents were within the adolescent age whose self-esteem is known to be susceptible to modification.

Table 4: Category of School-Based on Either Day, Boarding or Day-Boarding

Category	N	Percentage (%)
Day	5	62.50
Boarding	2	25.00
Day-boarding	1	12.50
Total	8	100.00

The information highlighted in Table 4 indicates clearly that in the Subcounty parents favoured taking their children to day schools than to either day boarding or boarding schools. Sixty-three percent (63%) of the schools in the Sub-county are day schools. There could be several factors which may have contributed to such a preference. These factors may include the low economic status of the population in the area. This may have made most of the parents in the Subcounty unable to meet the fee requirements for a boarding school. Also due to high incidences of riots in boarding schools (Republic of Kenya, 2001), parents could have opted to seek educational services for their children in nearby day schools where they could be able to monitor their academic and social behaviour at a close range.

Table 5: Type of School Based on either Boys or Girls School

School	N	Percentage (%)
Boys	2	25.00
Girls	0	0.00
Mixed	6	75.00
Total	8	100.00

Table 5 indicates clearly that 75 percent of the schools in the Sub-county were mixed schools while 25 percent were boys' schools. Further observation of the data given highlights that the Subcounty did not have any public school for girls only. Such a situation may have denied girls in the Subcounty the positive aspects that go with pure girls' schools.

4.3 Questionnaire Return Rate

The researcher gave out 240 questionnaires to the sampled respondents. The questionnaires were distributed to the subjects through the teacher counsellors in each school. Out of the 240 questionnaires given out, a total of 180 were returned. This represents at least a 75 percent return rate. The recorded return rate was attributed to a situation where some of the principals in the selected schools felt that previous data collection exercises disrupted the school programme and hence similar activities were discouraged by such heads in their respective schools.

4.4 Responses to Research Questions

The researcher formulated one research question for the present study. The research question was on the relationship between school category and students' self-esteem. The data collected was subjected to analysis through mean calculations and one-way ANOVA

tests. ANOVA tests were conducted at a .05, level of significance, to establish whether the mean was significantly different or not.

4.4.5 Research Question

- Is there any significant difference in students' self-esteem in different categories of schools?

The research question suggested that the mean level of total students' self-esteem from different categories of schools would not significantly differ. To answer the above question, data on students' level of self-esteem was analysed using a one-way ANOVA test. Scores from the forty items in the self-esteem test were pooled together and mean calculations were made from each category of school. The three mean values were subjected to a one-way ANOVA test. The results of this statistical test are presented in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6: Mean of the Total Students' Self-esteem in Different Categories of Schools

Category of School	N	Mean	SD
Day	100	121.63	13.0048
Boarding	39	155.3077	11.9520
Day-boarding	41	134.878	8.3402
Total	180	131.9444	17.8813

A look at Table 6 indicates that the means of student self-esteem in different categories of schools were different, with students in boarding schools scoring highly (mean = 155) while students in day-boarding and day school scored a mean of 134 and 122 respectively.

Table 7: Summary of Analysis of Variance Computed from Mean Values of Total Students' Self-esteem in Different Categories of Schools

Source of Variation	DF	Sum Squares	Mean Square	F
Between Groups	2	32279.437	16139.718	114.48
Within Groups	177	24954.008	140.983	
Total	179	57233.444		

Note: F-critical: 3.00, Level of confidence: .05

Table 7 further confirms these differences in students' level of self-esteem. The obtained F-value of 114.48 with 2 and 177 degrees of freedom was much higher than the critical F-value (3.00) at a .05, level of significance. This indicates that there was a significant difference in students' self-esteem in the three categories of schools. It was further observed that students in schools with low ratings in regard to the four selected factors had the lowest level of self-esteem while those in schools rated higher in terms of the selected school factors had the highest self-esteem schools. The position of this research thus, is that there is a positive linkage between the four selected school factors and students' self-esteem.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

In this section a summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study findings are presented. Additionally, some suggestions for further research are made.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The following is a summary of the findings.

- There was a significant difference in students' total-mean self-esteem in different categories of schools. Students in boarding schools had a higher level of self-esteem (mean = 155.3077) in general compared to students in day-boarding (mean = 134.8780) and day (mean = 121.6300) schools; whose self-esteem levels were average.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study the following conclusions were arrived at. To start with, the study revealed that:

- There was a positive relationship between the category of school and students' self-esteem. Where a boarding environment enhanced student self-esteem, while attending day school had less positive impact on students' self-esteem. This is probably because in boarding schools there are more resources, making the environment more accommodating as compared to the other environments. Further, the school Principal and teachers are more likely to be in school to continuously supervise students' activities even at night. However, in day school students do not enjoy 24/7 supervision and guidance. Additionally, in boarding schools, there are more school facilities including learning and co-curricular facilities available for the learners to try out their unique abilities and talents hence developing confidence and consequently their self-esteem.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

- This study found out that the category of school that a student attends, either boarding, day-boarding, or day school influenced students' self-esteem either positively or negatively. The study therefore recommends that educationists should make every effort to understand the environment in boarding schools including management styles of Principals and teachers, teaching methodologies, learning and co-curricular facilities, and the social and spiritual environments that may have contributed to students' growth in self-esteem. This positive environment should be replicated in all secondary schools in Kenya to aid in improving the esteem of learners.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

The study suggests further research in the following areas;

- A similar study could be carried out in different Sub counties in Kenya to establish whether similar results would be arrived at.

Conflict of Interest Statement

I declare that I have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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