



Ranking as a Predictor of Academic Inferiority Feelings Among Form Three Students in Kisii County, Kenya

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Abstract

A lot of research has been done on the relationship between ranking and academic performance among students. However, the literature done is scanty on the relationship between ranking and academic inferiority feelings. The main aim of this study was therefore to investigate relationship between ranking and academic inferiority feelings among students who do not perform well. Alfred Adler's theory of individual psychology forms the theoretical framework of the study. The study adopted a mixed methods sequential explanatory research design. It was carried out in Kisii County, Kenya. The target population was all the Form Three students in public schools in Kenya. Proportionate stratified sampling was used to select the top, average and low-ranking schools in the county. It was further used to stratify schools into boys' boarding, girls' boarding, mixed boarding, mixed day and boarding and mixed day schools. Simple random sampling was used in the selection of the 400 respondents. The sample consisted of 400 students selected from 20 schools. The research instruments were questionnaires and an interview schedule for the students administered by the researcher. Personal and academic self-concept inventory (PASCI) was used to collect data on academic inferiority feelings. A researcher developed questionnaire was used to collect data from students on ranking. A pilot study was used to validate and ensure reliability of the research instruments. Both descriptive and inferential statistical procedures were used to analyze data with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The results were presented using frequency tables. The results showed that there was a relationship between ranking and academic inferiority feelings with most of the respondents having moderate feelings of academic inferiority i.e., 72.9%. Sex differences were evident in the study where boys experienced a higher level of academic inferiority feelings with a mean of 67.11 as compared to girls who had a mean 65.08. A major recommendation of the study was that the ministry of education should try to do away with ranking totally more so within school ranking which could make the students feel academically inferior.

Keywords: *Ranking; Academic Inferiority Feelings; Academic Performance*

Introduction

Education system has become very competitive where every student is struggling to emerge the best. Schools are also struggling to emerge top in examinations therefore creating a lot of pressure among

students whereby some students fail and some pass. Failure among students attracts consequences like judgment, belittling, class retention and even corporal punishment from teachers and some parents. For improvement in academic performance, teachers have resorted to ranking of students and classes resulting to academic inferiority feelings among the students.

Globally, education has been viewed as an important investment. It is seen as a critical path to a good life for an individual and subsequently promising economy for a country. Teachers and parents therefore expect students to excel in academics as a result they put a lot of pressure on them. This is done by putting a lot of emphasis on competition, testing, grading and ranking of students. Generally, academic performance has been given a lot of focus.

After examinations have been done, students are ranked from the first position to the last one. Sometimes their results are displayed on the notice boards for everybody to see or are loudly read out at parade. Subsequently, incentives are given to the best performers while demeaning remarks are given and errors pointed out in a condescending fashion to those who do not measure up to the parents' and teachers' expectations (Boeree, 1998). This may result in academic inferiority feelings among the low performing students. Educational research has been done in this area but much more needs to be done on how ranking predicts academic inferiority feelings among secondary school students.

Comparison among students has become the norm almost in the entire world. Burlison et al., (2005) noted that motivating comparisons among students bring about positive changes in academic confidence unlike demotivating comparisons that are associated with negative changes in academic confidence therefore promoting academic inferiority feelings among students. According to Carson et al., (2013), disadvantages of competition exceed the advantages. The findings from the study on the disadvantages of highly competitive educational settings indicate that constant failure tends to bring about rejection on the side of those who fail.

In academia, inferiority is the relative self-comparison and the perception of one's performance in relation to the performance of other students who are at the same level (Strano & Petrocelli, 2005). Similarly, Adler (1964) defines inferiority feelings in terms of self-comparison resulting to goal striving and subsequently motivating human behavior. He further says that universally, everybody suffers some sense of inferiority of which they try to overcome. It is for this reason that some weak students try to work hard in order to excel. Sometimes their effort is not appreciated by the teachers especially when the teachers' expectations are not met. This often occurs through unfavorable comparisons of students by the teachers. Those in the lower ability stream may eventually suffer from academic inferiority feelings when they eventually discover that they can never make it to the high ability stream.

In America, stakeholders of traditional high schools debated for a long time on whether ranking system based on Grade Point Average (GPA) was of any value (Robinson, 2018). The ranking system only benefited the high achievers who were always celebrated and awarded. They were always viewed as the role models, selected to the top colleges for the best courses and given the best teachers. This has further led to the demeaning of the importance of American College Testing (ACT) and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores. Overall, it motivates students to perform well in school. On the other hand, Robinson (2018) further observed that others worry that learning may lose meaning as test scores become more important. They feel that ranking will divert students' true purpose of learning to competing. At the same time, students are always in fear of affecting their GPAs and they therefore avoid challenging but truly educational classes. Additionally, the excellent scores are so difficult to rank because of the close similarity. This requires parsing the GPAs into small fractions in order to make meaningful distinctions out of the grades. It therefore becomes difficult to get the topmost ranking students in high schools. The schools have therefore resolved to rank students via the broader Latin honors; Magna Cum Laude, Summa Cum Laude and Cum Laude which is a form of ranking still.

In Kenya, for a long-time student have been selected to secondary schools and colleges depending on how they rank nationally. This was done until 2014 when it was abolished by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The ministry cited the demerits and the reasons why it decided to abolish the rankings (Burrows, 2014). These include:

1. Unhealthy competition among schools due to ranking has led to examination irregularities. Most schools and students involve themselves in various exam malpractices so as to rank among the top.
2. Schools' main interest is in the product not the process. The schools' main interest is on the number of A grades they get and the number of students they qualify to the university no matter the process.
3. Subject teachers' main interest is in their subject mean scores and not the resources.
4. Crude and unethical means have been used by principals and teachers to rank schools without considering the silent pain that teachers, parents and students undergo. This includes forceful retention of weak students, extra levies to parents and too much work for the teachers. Comparing schools with different resources and weighing them on the same scale is not fair. Some schools are more equipped with various structures and other resources for example well equipped laboratories, which some schools do not have.
5. Some schools have resorted to registering few students for national examinations so as to get a high mean score. This practice is rampant in private schools and therefore they tend to perform better as compared to public schools which have a high number of students.
6. Some schools have dropped non examination subjects and no longer pay attention in them. These subjects include Physical Education, Life Skills and even Games. These schools do this so that students are able to concentrate more on the examinable subjects.
7. Due to ranking teachers are drilling students into cramming leading to production of poorly educated students whose target is to pass examinations with a particular grade.
8. Ranking has affected teacher and learners negatively. Teachers in poorly performing schools are getting demoralized as promotions are pegged to good performance. Learners get stigmatized leading to some committing suicide because of poor performance and low rankings.
9. Schools engage in remedial teaching whereby learners are forced to stay until late hours in the night and even over the holidays. This denies students time to relax, be with their parents and siblings and enjoy life as children.

Academically, Kisii County has also been ranked low among other counties for many years now. According to the Kisii County Director's office 2018 statistics, the KCSE examination mean in 2017 and 2018 was 3.03 and 3.34 respectively. Ochoro and Monyangi (2014) attributed this to high enrolment rate coupled with lack of enough teachers for effective teaching and learning process. Academic inferiority feelings which could be due to ranking which is highly embraced in schools could be leading to low academic performance in Kisii County.

Closely related to academic inferiority feelings, is ranking. During ranking, students are compared among themselves and against some set standard. This sometimes can be accompanied by rewarding to the ones who measure up to the set standards. Those who do not measure up to the required set standards are harshly judged by teachers and parents; they are belittled and sometimes caned. This is worsened by Parents' high expectations who get happy when their children succeed and get upset when they fail (Odabasi, 2013). When the students persistently do not succeed, they feel very helpless, academically inferior and stop putting in any more effort.

According to Odabasi (2013), success or failure of any individual may affect the way one views himself or herself. He further says that a student who surrenders to failure and feels helpless will neither have a high self-esteem nor face the future with hope. Such a student will admit his or her failure and will

do nothing to avert the situation. Such a student who is encountering an uncontrollable negative situation will have motivational, cognitive and emotional deficiencies such that the student will develop a satisfactory behavior and feelings of inferiority even in cases where positive intervention is possible (Peterson, Maier, & Seligman, 1993).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Joining of competitive courses in the universities has always been pegged on good performance of students. Students who do not perform very well have failed join universities and other colleges. This has resulted to failure of getting prestigious jobs and living up to the individual or societal expectations. Many schools have therefore introduced strategies that they hope would lead to competition among students in order to enhance good academic performance. Ranking of students and schools is one of these strategies. Unfortunately, this is done without looking at the effect it may have on low performers who end up developing academic inferiority feelings. Students with academic inferiority feelings usually display low performance, become academically disengaged and some even drop out of school.

Research done in the United States of America on comparisons between students' performance reported that comparing of students resulted to a sense of inferiority among the low achievers while it brought about a sense of inspiration among the high achievers (Burlesonet al., 2005). In Zimbabwe, studies demonstrate that, self-concept was an important mediating and predictive variable for academic achievement (Dambudzo & Schulze, 2012).

In Kenya, research has been done on self-handicapping, defense pessimism (Wawire, 2010), academic motivation (Mutweleli, 2014), class retention and self-concept (Amadalo et al., 2009) in relation to academic achievement. Very little attention has been given to academic inferiority feelings. In Kisii County, where performance is very dismal, there is paucity of research done to investigate on what predicts academic inferiority feelings among secondary school students. The central problem of this study was therefore to investigate the relationship between ranking and academic inferiority feelings among secondary school students in Kisii County, Kenya.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was:

To determine the relationship between ranking and academic inferiority feelings among secondary school students.

1.4 Research Hypothesis

The study was guided by the following hypothesis:

H_a: There is a relationship between ranking and academic inferiority feelings among secondary school students.

1.5 Assumptions of the Study

The study was based on the assumption that;

- a) Ranking predicts academic inferiority feelings.
- b) The study assumed that the outcome variable under study is related and influenced in the direction required by the theory.

- c) The instrument used will elicit detailed information on academic inferiority feelings.
 - d) Respondents will provide information which is genuine on the items in the questionnaires.
- Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The study was done with a limited sample size within the Kisii County. The results therefore cannot be used to make generalizations to larger populations apart from the population from which the sample was drawn. Self-report items used in the questionnaires could also be subjective.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

The study was delimited to form three students in secondary schools in Kisii County. Form one and two students were left out as they were still settling down and adapting to the secondary school education system. Form four students were also not included as they were having a busy schedule with examinations and other programmes. The study was also delimited to secondary schools only leaving out students from other levels like primary schools, colleges and universities. Secondary school students understand ranking more than primary school students. The study focused on students only without focusing on teachers as they are the ones affected directly by ranking.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Individual Psychology Theory (Adler, 1923)

Alfred Adler developed the first holistic theory of personality, psychopathology and psychotherapy that was intimately connected to a humanistic philosophy of living. From his point of view, when one feels encouraged, he/she feels strengthened with new ability, gets a feeling of belonging and will generally be cooperative and will connect with others. On the other hand, discouragement brings about unhealthy competition, withdrawing and giving up. Alfred Adler viewed inferiority feelings as a condition that can trigger ones creativity. It is a condition normal to everybody which makes one to strive for higher levels of achievement. The desire to overcome inferiority and become successful can motivate human behavior making one to achieve higher levels of development. This is often moderated by social environments. He believed that nobody is born perfect. The physical inadequacies in young children make them feel inferior to those around them. People therefore try to overcome the inferiority feelings early in life (Adler, 1964).

Previous research suggests that feelings of inferiority may serve as a stepping stone to achievement rather than just as an obstacle (Strano & Petrocelli, 2005). Other studies have investigated a one-dimensional self-esteem definition of inferiority (Mehrabian, 2000) or related constructs like motivation (Covington, 1992; Dai, 2000) in connection to achievement or success. The current research adds to the topic by investigating the role of ranking as a predictor of academic inferiority feelings. Students who are ranked low are likely to suffer from academic inferiority. This makes them feel inadequate in their studies.

In schools, students try to overcome their inferiority feelings by trying to work towards excellence and compete with those who do better than them. Unfortunately, this is watered down by teachers and parents who try to make unhealthy comparisons through ranking. This kills the students' motivation and therefore they stop putting any more effort. This study therefore looks at the relationship between ranking and academic inferiority feelings among students in, Kisii County.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

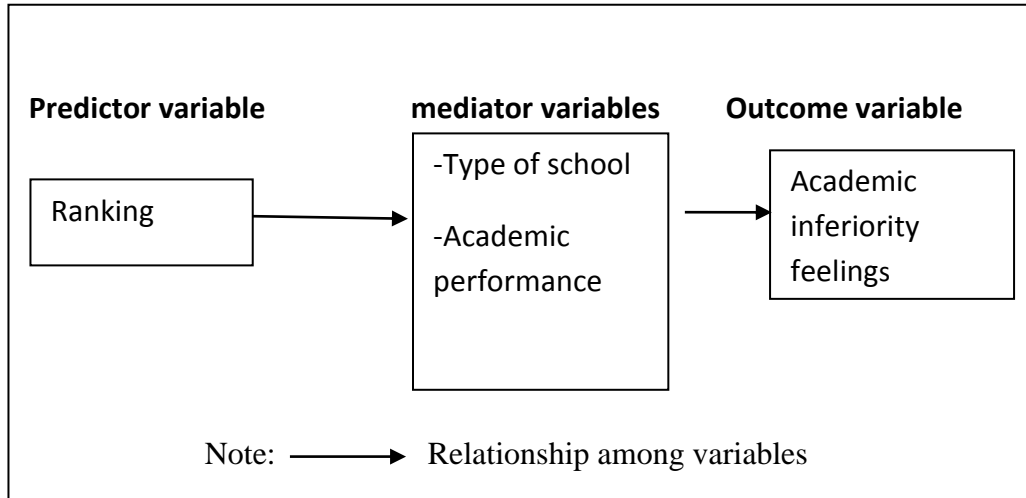


Figure 1.1 shows ranking as a variable that predicts academic inferiority feelings.

A student who ranks low and therefore placed in the low performing stream is likely to feel inferior academically unlike the one who ranks high and placed in the high performing stream. Students who rank low become helpless and gets contented with their usually low rank. They do not struggle to put no more effort any effort since nobody recognizes their efforts. Equally, students who are in the low-ranking schools also tend to feel inferior to those in the top-ranking schools.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Relationship Between Ranking and Academic Inferiority Feelings Among Students

Kalaivani (2017) carried out a study to examine the relationship between inferiority complex and academic achievement of high school students in Vellore district. The study used 200 low ranking high school students who were randomly selected from various schools within the district. Survey method of research was adopted where an Inferiority Complex instrument developed by Sorenson was used. The findings indicated that there was a positive relationship between inferiority complex and academic achievement with 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance. The study further indicated that there was a high level of inferiority complex low ranking among high school students. There also existed significant impact with respect to gender, type of family and medium of instruction. The current study used Personal and Academic Self-concept (PASCI) inventory among secondary school students that looked at inferiority in academia unlike the Inferiority Complex instrument that only focuses on inferiority complex. Furthermore, the study focused on inferiority complex and failed to focus on academic inferiority feelings among high school students.

Burleson et al., (2010) carried out a research on the relationship between social comparison and changes in artistic self-concept among adolescents in an advanced Arts programme. Pre-programmed questionnaires were used in the first two weeks of the study and post-programmed questionnaires in the last two weeks of the study. Results revealed that most adolescents felt inferior academically if the comparisons are intimidating but if the comparisons are favourable, they felt inspired. Intimidating comparisons are associated with negative self-perception among students. The research was done for six

weeks at the Summer School for high school artists in Western US, among the 141 students. This was a longitudinal study conducted during a six-week period whereby participants were sent a pre-programmed questionnaire that invited them to participate in the study. During the first week of classes, they were asked to complete a dairy-type measure assessing their social comparison and a post-programmed questionnaire was given at the end of the six-week programme. This study was based on a sample drawn from a developed country with a different education system. A similar study was done in Kenya specifically Kisii County in order to report on academic inferiority feelings with a sample of 400 participants.

In a related study, Amadalo et al., (2009) found out that ranking does not affect individual schools. It only affects the performance of schools of different categories where the top-ranking schools perform well and the low performing schools perform poorly in national examinations. This has widened the gap between the high-ranking schools and the low-ranking schools. Amadalo et al., (2009) further elucidated that there is a similar concern from the office for Standards of Education which has noted a big gap between the high ranked schools and the low ranked schools. According to the study, in 2006 low ranking schools declined in performance by 0.05 while the high-ranking schools indicated an improvement index of 0.12. The gap between the high-ranking schools and the low-ranking schools continues to widen every year.

School administrators have therefore used various ways of maintaining their schools at the top including the discontinuation of the weak students. Teachers have also been pushed to go an extra mile so as to safeguard their mean scores and rank among the top in the country (Amadalo et al., 2009). It is likely that the students who are discontinued from the top schools end up in the low ranked schools. This therefore means that the students in the low ranked schools will continue to perform poorly and eventually feel more inferior academically. Descriptive survey design was used where the circumstances that already exist and the prevailing practices were investigated. The current study used a correlational research design that helped in discovering the predictive relationships and the degree of association among variables under study.

Lucas and Mbiti (2011) carried out a study to find out if school quality had an effect on student academic performance in secondary school and the grade, they are likely to score in their final examination (Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education). According to the study, students from primary school are admitted to various categories of secondary schools depending on their performance in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE), their preferred stated schools and the district quota system. This assists the Kenya National Examination Council and the Ministry of Education to place the students either in national schools, extra county schools or county schools. Participants were all students whose national primary school exit exam scores and their preferred school placed them near to a national school or extra-county school cut-off between 2004 and 2008. Regression discontinuity design was used in determining how the school quality impacts on students' performance in secondary school and eventually the quality of grade they score in their final examinations. They found out that though national schools (the most elite in Kenya) take the best performers from primary schools, their students are not more likely to graduate with better grades than their peers in other schools. There was no statistically significant difference between student scores on the secondary school exit exam for students in national schools versus other schools. The study did not focus on academic inferiority feelings.

According to Elikai and Schuhmann (2010), students' achievement in higher education institutions is evaluated by giving tests and a marking system is used to get grades. Lettered grades (A, B, C, and D) or percentage correct of a test is used to show how much effort a student put in for the whole course or education system. According to the study, various grading policies are used in regard to the grading. Theoretically, the institutions use grades to motivate students to put more effort and instill the spirit of competition so as to improve their performance. This study also focused on the impact of

leniency or strictness of the grading system on a student's academic achievement. The measure of average mastery of content is grade 'C' which is coincidentally equivalent to the minimum passing requirement of the professional accounting examinations in higher education. According to the results of the study, for accounting students to prepare for the rigorous professional examinations and motivate the students to work, a strict grading policy is required. This can also be a strategy in providing insight to grade scale decisions faced by accounting faculty seeking to prepare students for examinations. This study did not relate grading to ranking of students. Unlike the current study which was done among secondary school students, this study was done among accounting students only in higher institutions of learning.

Limangura (2018) found out that ranking had many disadvantages as compared to advantages to the learners. According to the study, 'stakeholders' perception towards ranking in secondary schools in the West Pokot Sub-County', ranking has led to early coverage of the syllabus as it motivates teachers. Ranking has also led to change of institutional practices and has made all teaching activities to be geared towards passing examinations neglecting all other aspects of education. Ranking has not only brought about unhealthy competition among departments, teachers and learners in schools but also among different categories of schools. Ranking can be inspirational and motivating to performing students but it can also be detrimental to the underperforming students as it kills their morale. However, since ranking was abolished in Kenya students do not care much about how they perform. The study adopted the descriptive survey method research design while cluster and purposive sampling methods were used to get sample participants. A total of 229 students, 34 teachers, 7 principals and 4 Ministry of Education officials were included in the sample. Questionnaires and interviews were used for data collection while descriptive statistics was used in quantitative data analysis. The current study used 400 students as they were the target of academic inferiority feelings without involving other stakeholders. The study did not focus on academic inferiority feelings of which this current study is trying to investigate.

An investigation was done by Klapp et al., (2014) on the effect of using examination scores to grade students in order to determine their achievement. The participants included primary school pupils who were taught for one year and then subjected to a test whereby they were graded. This was used to determine their level of achievement where other variables like cognitive ability, gender and socio-economic status were also considered. After a curriculum change, two groups of students were manipulated whereby one group in 6th grade received grades and was ranked whereas the other did not receive grades and were not ranked. In the grade 7th grade, both groups received grades and were ranked. The two groups consisted of 8,558 students where a quasi-experimental design was employed. Analysis was done through multiple regression models. Results indicated that grading had no effect a student's subsequent achievement. A student's achievement majorly depended on one's cognitive ability rather than grading. Graded students with low cognitive ability received lower subsequent grades and those with higher cognitive ability received higher subsequent grades. The results also indicated that gender had an effect on grading and cognitive ability. This study failed to focus on the contribution of subsequent lower grades on students with lower cognitive ability on academic inferiority which this current study is trying to investigate.

Murphy and Weinhardt (2018) investigated the importance of ordinal rank among primary school students. They found out that, despite a student's underlying ability, ordinal academic ranking significantly affects secondary school academic achievement. The impact has a long-term effect on the student that can last throughout secondary school. Using data from the English school students, results indicated that during ranking a student's ordinal position in a class impacts one's later cardinal achievement. Naturally occurring differences also contribute a lot in impacting class rank whereby the male students' achievement is influenced considerably more than the female students' achievement. Moreover, the high-ranking pupils seem to be linked more in important non-cognitive skills, confidence and self-esteem. It makes some students feel more superior or inferior than others. The study was carried out among 16,122 students using a longitudinal survey method in England. Unlike this study, the current study used a

smaller sample of 400 respondents among secondary school students in Kenya for regional diversification. A correlational study was used in order to establish relationship between ranking and academic inferiority feelings instead of a longitudinal survey.

Njiru et al., (2019) established that student-teacher relationship greatly influences students' academic performance in Mathematics. This was revealed from their study on the effects of performance ranking in Mathematics on students' and teachers' identity development. From the study, there was a clear indication that ranking students according to their performance in Mathematics was beneficial both to the teacher and to the student. It helps the student to measure their ability in relation to the other students in class therefore motivating them to work harder. In addition, a good rank strengthens the relationship between the teacher and the student, therefore students put a lot effort to avoid ranking low as teachers are friendlier to top ranking students than the low-ranking students. Performance ranking in Mathematics also enables students to align themselves to their preferred careers. Similarly, it promotes peer identification where students do ability grouping as far as mathematics is concerned so as to improve on their performance. Ranking motivates teachers of mathematics in furthering their studies in mathematics and other related courses. The study was done among 1989 students and 101 teachers in Embu County, Kenya. Mixed methods research design was used with data being collected using a one-on-one semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. This is unlike the current study that used a smaller sample of 400 students without involving teachers as the researcher was seeking to find out about academic inferiority feelings among students which this study did not highlight on. Additionally, the current study focused on all subjects in general unlike this study that only focused on Mathematics.

Samuels (2014) noted that students are different and they all learn in different ways and have different needs. According to this study, an education system can lead to development of inferiority and superiority complex in students as they all have varying needs. From the existing literature on self-esteem, self-worth and self-perception on students, the study noted that inferiority complex is a creation of the culture of competition and comparison in the classroom leading to anxiety, depression and other behavioural problems. The researcher employed the heuristic methodology in an examination of data from his personal experience to discover the events that caused his inferiority complex to develop. In his study, the researcher was the object of his research. He used his documents like report cards, teachers' reports, psychological assessments and medical records to examine the events that contributed to his feelings of inferiority in school. He found out that if such students do not find enough emotional support from teachers and peers, they could easily quit school due to the feelings of inferiority. Unlike this study that used the researcher as an object of research, the current researcher used 400 respondents to find out the relationship between ranking and academic inferiority feelings.

A study done in the United States of America revealed that people are greatly concerned about their rankings (Tran & Zeckhauser, 2012). According to the study, this is because rank tends to bring tangible benefits and people tend to have preference for high rank. Vietnamese students who were taking an English course participated in a field experiment to find out the effect of ranking on them. Upon being given an official standardized final test and told of their ranking, they performed significantly better than when they were not told of their rankings. The experiment was carried out in 4 classes each with 27-34 students at the same time. Students in each class were randomly divided into 2 experimental groups and one control group. The three groups sat for a test whereby the control group was not to be ranked. One experimental group was ranked but the ranking was privately notified to them on phone and assured that the rankings were not anywhere in writing. The other experimental group was privately notified on phone about their ranking and their rankings were also posted on the notice boards and on the website. Privately and publicly ranked groups indicated a significant improvement in their scores over the control group within four months. The control group scored 49.5%, students receiving private notice scored 59.5% whereas those receiving both private and public notice scored 64.0%. According to the study, participants are more concerned about their rank than their final performance when they are competing. Ranking

determines winners and losers and everyone wants to rank high. High rank is also desired because it brings tangible benefits like awards and it is an incentive in itself. This study did not focus on the effects of low rank and its relationship with academic inferiority feelings which is the focus of the current study.

2.2 Gender Differences in Academic Inferiority Feelings

Czibor et al., (2014) investigated the impact of incentivized ranking on student performance. A field experiment was conducted in a university where absolute (criterion referenced) and relative (norm referenced) grading practices were compared directly as a form of incentivizing students. Rank-order tournaments were created in the classrooms with the hypothesis that relative grading provides stronger incentives for male students than absolute grading. The motivated male students scored significantly higher than the motivated female students when graded on a curve. The results indicated that grading students on a curve narrows the gap on performance between male and female students. Female students did not show any improvement under relative grading whereas in absolute grading women did better than men. This study did not focus on academic feelings of the students.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Mixed methods sequential explanatory research design was used in the collection of data. This research design involves collecting, analyzing and interpreting both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study (Creswell & Plano, 2011). In this design, the researcher began with the collection and analysis of quantitative data and then the qualitative data in two consecutive phases as shown in figure 3.2.

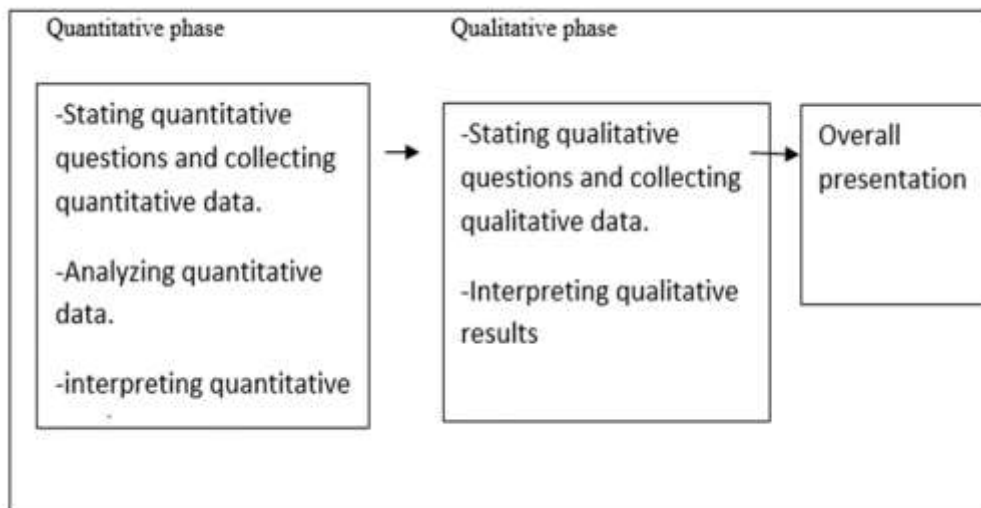


Figure 3.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Phases

In the quantitative phase, descriptive survey method was used whereby the use of questionnaires was employed. In the qualitative phase, an interview was carried out in order to better understand the students' academic feelings. According to Creswell (2013), the mixed methods design yields data that is more comprehensive therefore increasing the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, the method ensures a broader range of research questions as the researcher can use more than one approach. The

results from the methods can also validate each other and provide stronger evidence for a conclusion.

3.2 Research Variables

In this study, the outcome variable was academic inferiority feelings which was measured at the interval scale of measurement. The predictor variable ranking was measured at ordinal scale of measurement.

3.3 Locale

The study was carried out in Kisii County, Kenya. This location was chosen because Kisii County is one of the counties that registers a high number of students in KCSE. Majority of them do not well (Onderi et al., 2015). In 2015, when this study was done, the county registered 21,500 students which was 4.11% of the total number of students in Kenya up from 19,969 students in 2014 which was 4.13% of the total number of students in Kenya (KCSE Essential Statistics, 2015). In 2014, the KCSE statistics from the Kisii County Director's office show that, Kisii County had a mean score of about 5.38 points out of the possible 12 points which is an equivalent of a mean grade of C-. In 2015, the mean score rose to a mean grade 5.67 out of the possible 12 points.

In 2018, 26,997 students sat for KCSE. The statistics from the County Director of Education showed that only 12.34% of the students qualified to join the university, with the minimum entry grade of a C+ (Table 3.2) while 87.86% did not qualify to join the university. The mean for the county was 3.34 in 2018 down from 3.29 in 2017. Ranking of the 11 Sub-Counties was done where the leading Sub-County emerged with a mean of 4.27 and the last one had a mean of 2.58. This was after the Sub-County Directors of Education ranked their schools and submitted the result to the County as shown in table 3.1. Furthermore, a study done by Makworo et al.,(2014) on psychosocial factors affecting academic performance in Kenyan **Sub-County, Kisii County revealed that 51.7% of the girls and 40.5% of the boys have a negative self-concept.** He recommended further research on factors affecting boys' and girls' attitude towards secondary school education in the entire Kisii County as their performance is dismal.

Table 3.1:Kisii County Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination Ranking (2018)

Sub-County	Rank	No. of candidates	Mean	C+ and above
Masaba South	1	3701	4.74	754
Kisii Central	2	3660	4.07	657
Nyamache	3	3882	3.88	376
Kitutu Central	4	2217	3.65	365
Kenyanya	5	3362	3.32	367
Gucha	6	1011	3.45	119
Kisii South	7	2255	3.24	181
Marani	8	2013	3.16	125
Gucha South	9	2034	2.99	178
Etago	10	1685	2.58	37
Sameta	11	1177	2.12	87
Total		26,997	3.34	3246

Further analysis shows that more than 60% of those who qualify to universities are those from the few top-ranking schools while only 40% of the other students are from the low and average ranking schools. In 2011, some schools were elevated to national status by the ministry of education. According to the Kisii Director of Education, the national schools are top ranking and they also get many students who

qualify to the university though there are other small sub-county schools that compete well with them. The researcher's intention therefore is to find out the real causes of academic inferiority feelings.

3.4 Population

The target population composed of all the form three students in public secondary schools in Kenya that have presented candidates for national examinations for at least three years while the accessible population was all the form three students in public secondary schools in the Kisii County that have presented candidates for national examinations for at least three years. The form three students are the ones affected by the KCSE national school ranking as they are the next candidate class. According to the 2018 statistics from the Kisii County Director's Office the total number of form three students is approximately 29,309 students from 370 schools, a population that made it easy for the researcher to draw a required sample from. Form three students are most preferred because they have been in secondary school for three years and have already selected subjects that they will sit for during K.C.S.E examinations and are therefore expected to be working very hard to achieve their expected target. Mutweleli (2014) noted that, these are the students who are more than ever before expected to be getting more serious with their studies.

3.5 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size Determination

3.5.1 Sampling Techniques

Proportionate stratified sampling was used to stratify schools into top ranked schools (National), average ranked schools (Extra County) and low ranked schools (County) and further into boys' boarding schools, girls' boarding schools, mixed boarding, mixed day and boarding and mixed day schools. Simple random sampling was then used to get the required participants from each of the schools that were involved in the study. According to Mugenda (2008) simple random sampling gives each element in the population an equal probability of getting into the sample.

The researcher got the required number of participants by first visiting schools that practice ranking. The lowest ranked stream among the form three classes was the one specifically targeted as it was the one likely to experience academic inferiority feelings.

3.5.2 Sample Size Determination

A total of 20 schools were selected through stratified random sampling. Participants were then randomly sampled from each school using paper folds with 20 of them written 'yes' and the rest written 'no' making a total of 400 students (See table 3.2). This helped in fulfilling the requirements of efficiency, representativeness and reliability (Kothari, 2004).

Table 3.2*Sample size determination*

Population School category	Sample size					
	Students			Students		
	Schools	Girls	Boys	Schools	Girls	Boys
Top ranked schools						
Boys' boarding	10	-	1880	2	0	40
Girls' boarding	8	1040	-	2	40	0
Average ranked schools						
Boys' boarding	32	-	3400	2	-	40
Girls' boarding	27	2760	-	2	40	-
Mixed day	10	560	720	2	20	20
Mixed day & boarding	18	760	906	2	20	20
Low ranked schools						
Boys' boarding	25	-	2720	2	-	40
Girls' boarding	21	2460	-	2	40	-
Mixed day & boarding	12	1040	1220	2	20	20
Mixed day	36	1520	2100	2	20	20
Total	200	10140	12946	20	200	200

3.6 Research Instruments

This section gives a description of the research instruments that were used to collect data on ranking and academic inferiority feelings. The instruments elicited both quantitative and qualitative information on ranking.

3.6.1 Questionnaires

The use of questionnaires was most preferred as it could reach a large audience at the same time and it is also a faster way of collecting data. Questionnaires were used for collecting quantitative data. They were divided into two parts. The first part consisted of the participant's personal information and school characteristics. The second part sought information on the participant's academic feelings using PASCI's student self-concept. The questionnaire was adapted after seeking and getting permission from its developer. Information on ranking was sought using researcher designed questionnaire. The questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes to respond to. The researcher also used an interview schedule to gather qualitative information.

A pilot study was done which helped to reveal whether the anticipated analytical techniques that were used were appropriate. The data of the was subjected to Cronbach's Alpha reliability whose results yielded a reliability index of 0.91. This was very high and therefore the scales were appropriate for use.

3.6.2 ASCI'S Student Self-concept Inventory

Students' academic inferiority feelings was measured using PAsCI (Personal and academic self-concept inventory) which is an extension of the Fleming-Courtney scales (See Appendix C part iv). It is a 20 item questionnaire that seeks to measure students' feelings regarding their academic ability (e.g. "do you ever feel less capable academically than others in your class?") with each item rating on a seven point scale from 1 point - *never* to 5 points -*very often*. The scores on the scale range from 20 indicating high academic inferiority feelings to 100 indicating low academic inferiority feelings. A pilot study was carried out on a sample of 48 form three students from three different schools that were not included in the main study. This was done to pretest the questionnaire for purposes of determining the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. After test-retest was done, Cronbach's Alpha reliability was used to determine the instrument's reliability for the current sample. The reliability for this scale was found to be 0.79. This reliability was considered high enough and therefore, the scale was adapted. This questionnaire took averagely 7 minutes to complete it.

3.6.3 Academic Ranking Scale

A researcher-developed questionnaire was used to collect data on ranking of students. It is a 20-item questionnaire administered to the students requiring responses on how comfortable they are with ranking of students both within and between schools. Piloting of this instrument was done in 3 schools among 48 participants in order to check on its content validity and reliability. 16 participants were taken from each category of the schools, that is, top ranking, average ranking and low-ranking schools. The participants were also selected from three types of schools that is, boarding girls', boarding boys' and mixed day school.

It used a Likert scale of measurement for scoring ranging from 1(*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). A score of 100 shows low academic inferiority feelings while a score of 20 shows high feelings of academic inferiority. After the piloting, Cronbach's Alpha reliability was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire before it was used. The results yielded reliability index of 0.7. This was considered good enough and therefore the scale was used.

3.6.4 Interview Schedule

Students from the low ability streams were interviewed in order to shed light on the findings derived from the quantitative analysis. The qualitative findings were not dependent on quantitative findings neither were they meant to test the quantitative data.

3.7 Validity and Reliability Determination

3.7.1 Validity of Instruments

To ensure content validity and construct validity, a range of items were used for each construct. According to Mugenda (2008), content validity is assured by having enough content and putting the items in a form that can be administered to the relevant population. The instruments were given to peer reviewers and experts from the department of Educational Psychology who judged the validity, relevance and competence of items so as to elicit the anticipated responses. They reviewed the appropriateness of the items selected in order to improve on the content validity. Their recommendations were incorporated in the final scale.

3.7.2 Reliability of Instruments

Reliability of the instruments was done through the test-retest method. This was done during piloting where the respondents responded to the questionnaires for the first time. The same questionnaires were again administered after two weeks to the same respondents. The scores were recorded and correlated to check for their reliability. Piloting was necessary in order to develop and test the adequacy of the instruments. It was also done so as to identify any logistical problems relating to the instruments. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to check the correlation among the variables in order to determine the level of reliability.

3.8 Data Collection

3.8.1 Logistical Considerations

Before starting the research, the researcher first obtained clearance from graduate school Kenyatta University authorizing the researcher to seek clearance from National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) to conduct the study. The researcher then sought a research clearance permit from NACOSTI to carry out the research. Clearance was also sought from the County Director of Education allowing the researcher to carry out research within the schools in the county. Finally, the researcher wrote a letter to the principals in the various selected schools requesting them to allow the researcher to carry out the research in their schools. The researcher then visited the sampled schools and conducted familiarization meeting with each school principal. The purpose of the study and the anticipated benefits of the research to the school were explained to the principals and the appropriate day and time for collecting data was booked.

3.8.2 Ethical Considerations

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured. This was done by reminding the participants not to write their names on the questionnaires. They were also assured that no risks were to be involved. Finally, a letter of consent was given to the participants so that they were able to participate in the study at their own free will.

3.8.3 Actual Data Collection

Data collection was done by the use of questionnaires since they were considered to be cheaper, economical to use and free from interviewer bias (Kothari, 2004). The participants were informed about the aim of the study by the researcher. They were given instructions on the completion of the rating scales. They were then given the questionnaires and allowed to complete them. They were informed that it is not an exam and therefore requested to take about twenty-five minutes however, time for completion was flexible. All the explanations required by the participants were given by the researcher. After filling the questionnaires, they were handed in to the researcher who thanked the participants for participating. An interview schedule was conducted after the administration of the questionnaires. This method was appropriate since it yields more detailed information, though it is time consuming (Kothari, 2004). Six students from each school making a total of 120 students were used. The students were selected using simple random sampling. After the informed consent, the interviews were carried out.

3.8.4 Data Analysis

After data collection, the SPSS programme version 20 was used to analyze quantitative data. The information was then transferred to several tables for tallying. This ensured that the right figures for each objective have been attained. Descriptive statistics was then be used to describe the information gathered

through the questionnaires. After which, inferential statistics was used to test the significance of the results obtained concerning ranking and academic inferiority feelings. The null hypotheses for the study were:

H₀₂. there is no significant relationship between ranking and academic inferiority feelings among secondary school students. This was tested by Pearson product moment correlation coefficient.

Analysis of qualitative data which is non-numerical was also done in order to derive an explanation concerning academic inferiority feelings. The deductive approach whereby the research questions acted as a guide in grouping and analyzing data was used. This was then used to give the summary and conclusion concerning academic inferiority feelings.

4. Findings, Interpretation and Discussion

4.1 General and Demographic Information

This section gives general information on the return rate of the questionnaires and demographic data. It gives information on the type of schools, school ranking and the gender of the respondents.

4.2 Return Rate

The researcher visited all the sampled schools and administered the questionnaires to the respondents and ensured that were properly filled and collected. 99.8 % (399) of the respondents filled the questionnaires properly and handed them over to the researcher. This represents 200 boys and 199 girls.

Table 4.1: Return Rate

School Type	Gender		Expected	Actual	%
	M	F	M and F	M and F	
BB	120	0	120	120	100
GB	0	120	120	119	99.2
MDB	40	40	80	80	100
MD	40	40	80	80	100
Total	200	200	400	399	99.8

Note: BB= Boys Boarding GB= Girls Boarding MDB= Mixed Day and Boarding %= Percentage

As shown in table 4.1, 120 boys were expected to respond from boys' boarding schools, and all of them properly filled in and collected the questionnaire which is 100 % of the total number of respondents from boys' boarding schools. 120 girls from girls' boarding schools were expected respond, but 119 of the girls properly filled in and collected the questionnaire which is 99.2 % of the total number of girls from girls' boarding schools. In the mixed day and boarding schools 80 respondents were expected to respond to the questionnaires, that is, 40 boys and 40 girls. All of them (100%) responded to the questionnaires properly and collected them. In mixed day schools, 80 respondents were expected to respond from each category, that is, 40 boys and 40 girls and all of them responded to the questionnaire properly and collected them. A total of 399 participants were able to fill the questionnaires properly and collect them.

Table 4.2: Type of School and Gender

		Gender				Total
		M	%	F	%	
School type	BB	120	30	0	0	120
	GB	0	0	119	29.8	119
	MD	40	10	40	10	80
	MBD	40	10	40	10	80
Total		200	50.1	199	49.9	399

		M	%	F	%	T	%
School ranking	Top ranking	30	7.5	36	9.0	66	16.5
	Average ranking	107	26.8	88	22.1	195	48.9
	Low ranking	72	18.0	66	16.5	138	34.6
	Total	209	52.4	190	47.6	399	100

4.3 Demographic Data

Note: M= Male, F=Female, T=Total BB= Boys Boarding GB= Girls Boarding MDB= Mixed Day and Boarding %-=Percentage.

The participants' gender was cross tabulated with type of school and school ranking and the results are shown in table 4.2. The table shows that the male participants were slightly more than the female participants (50.1% boys, 49.9% girls). More male participants (30%) were from boarding schools as compared to mixed day or mixed day and boarding schools which were represented by a total of 20%. The same applies to girls where girls from boarding schools were 29.8% as compared to girls from mixed schools where they were 20%, that is, 10% from mixed day schools and another 10% from mixed day and boarding schools. Almost an equal number of boys and girls participated from boys' boarding and girls' boarding schools (30% and 29.8%). On school ranking, 16.5% of the respondents were from the top-ranking schools, 48.9% from average ranking schools and 34.6% from low-ranking schools. There were more boys from average ranking schools (26.8%) as compared to low ranking (18.0%) and top ranking (7.5%). More girls participated from average ranking schools (22.1%) as compared to low-ranking schools (16.5) and top-ranking schools (9.0%).

Table 4.3: Type of school

Type of school	F	%	Cumulative %
Top ranking	66	16.5	16.5
Average ranking	195	48.9	65.4
Low ranking	138	34.6	100.0
Total	399	100.0	

Note: F= Frequency, %= Percent

Table 4.3 shows the number of students from different types of school that participated in the study. A very small percentage (16.5%) were from top ranking schools, 34.6% were from low-ranking schools while almost half of the participants (48.9%) were from average ranking schools. This shows that more students were from average ranking schools as compared to top- and low-ranking schools.

4.4 Results of the Study

4.4.1 Descriptive Analysis on Academic Ranking

The participants' academic ranking was analyzed using the academic ranking scores. The analysis was done in order to get the range, the mean, the standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis of the scores. The results were presented in table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Description Analysis of Academic Ranking

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD	skewness	Kurtosis
ARS	399	63.00	27.00	90.00	60.00	12.40	-.07	-.18

Note: N=399 Min= Minimum Max= Maximum SD=Standard Deviation

The results in table 4.8 show that the minimum score was 27.00 while the maximum score was 90.00. The mean score was 60.00 while the standard deviation was 12.40. The coefficient of skewness was -.07, the kurtosis was -.18 and the range was 63.00. The distribution of academic ranking scores was found to be positively skewed (skewness = -0.07) meaning that the distribution is approximately symmetrical and kurtosis of -0.18 which shows that the distribution of the values was platykurtic.

The participants' academic ranking score was further used to categorize the participants' academic inferiority feelings as being low, average or high. The findings of the levels of academic ranking are presented in table 4.9

Table 4.9: Levels of academic ranking

Levels	F	%
Low	37	9.3
Moderate	291	72.9
High	71	17.8
Total	382	100.0

Key: F- Frequency %- percentage

Results from table 4.9 show that majority of the participants have moderate feelings of inferiority, that is, 72.9%. 17.8% of the participants have high feelings of inferiority while a small percentage of the participants, 9.3% have got low feelings of inferiority.

4.4.2 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was done to find the relationship between ranking and academic inferiority feelings.

This is in line with the second objective of the study. The following null hypothesis was used:

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between ranking and academic inferiority feelings among secondary school students.

Table 4.10: Relationship between Ranking and Academic Inferiority Feelings

		AIF	ARS
AIF	Pearson Correlation	1	.276
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	399	399
ARS	Pearson Correlation	.276	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	399	399

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

The hypothesis was tested by subjecting the data to bivariate correlation analysis using the Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient.

The results in table 4.10 show that, there was a significant and positive relationship between ranking and academic inferiority feelings $r(399) = 0.28$, $p = 0.01$. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

4.4.3 Discussion of Results

The current study supported the findings of Kalaivani (2017). According to the study, ranking has become a norm in most schools. Students who are ranked low usually develop feelings of inferiority. The study discovered a positive relationship between inferiority and academic achievement. On the other hand, the current study did not support the findings of Elikai and Schuhmann (2010) which revealed that grading was used as an important pedagogical technique to motivate students to study and compete well amongst one another. It was also used to serve purposes of motivating students during examinations to work harder and therefore perform better.

The findings of the study supported the findings of Burleson et al. (2010). The study revealed that intimidating comparisons promoted a sense of inferiority because this is associated with negative self-concept while favourable comparisons promoted a sense of inspiration. This means that, for those students who are ranked low are likely to have a negative self-concept but those who are ranked high are likely to be more inspired. However, according to Amadalo et al. (2009) ranking does not affect individual students, it only affects schools of different categories where top performing schools perform highly and the low performing schools perform dismally in the national examinations. In the long run, there is an ever-widening gap in the performance of students in the low-ranking schools and those in the high-ranking schools.

The current study did not support Lucas & Mbiti (2011) which investigated the relationship between student achievement and causal effects of school quality in Kenya. As highlighted in the literature review, national schools that take students who rank top from primary school are likely to perform the same as students in other schools who ranked top in their primary schools. There was no significant difference between student scores on the secondary school exit exam for students in national schools versus the students in other schools. Njiru et al., (2019) indicated that performance ranking assisted teachers and students in getting feedback on their various levels of capability as either mathematics teachers or mathematics students. It was also used to influence teachers to further their studies in mathematics and other areas. It further indicated teachers of mathematics are friendlier to students who are at the top of the rank, and therefore performance ranking served as a motivation for students to work hard so as to have a good relationship with their mathematics teachers.

The current study supports the findings of Limangura (2018) on stakeholders' perception towards ranking in secondary schools' national examinations. 53% of the teacher respondents believed that only students who are ranked high are motivated to work harder and maintain a higher rank while the ones who rank low are never motivated to work harder. Only 29.5% disagreed on the same while 23.5% of the respondents were undecided. 87% of the principals spoke of ranking impacting negatively on performance in schools more especially on the low performers. Among the student respondents, 66.4% argued that since ranking was abolished, they are more comfortable since no one cares about their performance. Only 27.1% are comfortable with ranking while 6.6% were undecided. Similarly, Berry et al., (2017) also revealed that ranking improved test scores for high performers only while it killed the motivation to study for the low performers.

The current findings support the findings by Klapp et al., (2014). The study revealed that grading and ranking disadvantaged students with low cognitive ability while it was advantageous to students with high cognitive ability. After grading, students with low cognitive ability scored lower grades while students with high cognitive ability scored higher grades. Similarly, the current findings support the findings of Murphy and Weinhardt (2018) whereby ordinal rank position influenced non-cognitive skills especially feelings of inferiority and superiority among students. According to the study, a higher rank position meant more confidence and higher feelings of superiority. On the other hand, low rank position meant low confidence and high feelings of academic inferiority.

The current study reports contrary findings to Njiru et al., (2014) who revealed that ranking helps students to rank themselves as they identify themselves with their peers who are of the same ability within their classes. In mathematics, it is a motivation for students to work hard so as to get a closer relationship with their teachers as teachers are friendlier to students who rank top. This was reported after subjecting students and teachers to semi-structured interviews whereby 68% of the teachers and 68% of the students were for performance ranking.

Samuels (2014) reported similar findings to the findings of the current study whereby the education system contributes a lot to the formation of inferiority complexes among students. He found out that comparisons and competition among students often leads to inferiority complex. This revelation was contrary to the study carried out by Tran and Zeckhauser (2012) which found out that private and public ranking had a positive effect on students. According to the study, rank brings tangible benefits and people tend to have preference for high rank. Rank was an incentive in itself to the students and it was valued more than absolute performance. It helped serve as incentive that motivates students to do better. The findings of the current study are not in support of this study.

4.4.4 Gender Differences in Academic Inferiority Feelings

Description of Gender Differences in Academic Inferiority feelings

The participants' academic inferiority feelings were analyzed against gender. As shown in table 4.13, the number of girls who participated was 190(47.7%) while the number of boys was 209(52.4%).

Table 4.16: Description of Gender Differences

Gender	F	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Male	209	52.4	52.4	52.4
Female	190	47.7	47.7	100.0
Total	399	100.0	100.0	

Note F= Frequency % = Percent

The participants' academic inferiority feelings was analyzed also to find the mean and the standard deviation. The results were summarized in table 4.14.

Table 4.17: Gender Differences in Academic Inferiority Feelings

Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	67.11	209	9.57
Female	65.08	190	9.69
Total	66.14	399	9.67

Results in table 4.14 show that the mean in academic inferiority feelings for boys was 67.11 and 65.08 for girls. This clearly shows that boys had a slightly higher mean in academic inferiority feelings as compared to girls. The standard deviation in boys was 9.57 while in girls it was 9.69.

4.4.5 Discussion of Results

However, in almost a similar revelation, Tripathy (2017) found out that the effect of academic achievement on the level of inferiority feelings among high achiever boys and high achiever girls is the same. The effect was also the same when low achiever boys and low achiever girls were compared. In his study on the effect of academic achievement on inferiority, he also revealed that there is no significant difference between low achiever boys and low achiever girls on the level of inferiority feelings. There was also no significant difference that exists among high academic achiever boys and low academic achiever boys in respect to their level of inferiority feelings with t-value of 0.59 and at 0.05 level of confidence. Significant difference only exists among high academic achiever and low academic achiever girls in respect to their level of inferiority feelings with a t-value of 3.63 and significant at 0.01 level of confidence. The current study does not support this revelation where boys have higher level of inferiority than girls.

Czibor et al., (2014) compared the effect of relative grading and absolute grading among boys and girls by creating a rank-order tournament. It was established that relative grading becomes a strong incentive for boys as compared to absolute grading. Further results show that relative grading does not motivate the girls but in absolute grading, they outperform the boys. The current study does not support these findings.

Qualitative Analyses

Qualitative research is important as it gives the interviewee greater freedom of expression and the ability to give authentic answers without any restrictions. Data that is collected in qualitative research is based on people's perception and opinion. The data is therefore dependent on participants' observation and personal experiences.

Qualitative analysis is done in order to get a personal insight perspective of the respondents' views on their academic feelings. It gives the respondent the opportunity to express themselves more on various issues. The qualitative component provided insight on issues that are not provided for or those that are not exhaustively addressed by the quantitative methods. The respondents' broad views and their realistic feelings are explored using qualitative methods. Furthermore, qualitative research allows for detail-oriented data to be collected. Restrictions are minimized and therefore many details are given. It is within the details that genuine insights tend to be found. It enables the researcher to explore the respondents' views of the world

Qualitative Findings

Data was collected though not without some few challenges. Firstly, a lot of clarification had to be done for the respondents to fully understand the questions. Despite the much clarification, some still answered some questions irrelevantly. For this reason, not all the responses were provided for in the findings. Only data from the respondents that was well interpreted and responded to giving correct information was presented. Some respondents were not able to respond well in the English therefore from time-to-time Kiswahili was used in communication. Their responses were then interpreted and recorded in English.

Four respondents from each school were interviewed separately so as to get their views on academic feelings. One of the problems encountered is that some of the respondents especially girls were shy and took time to be free with the interviewer. Therefore, in the first few minutes, they could only give one-word answers and then later once they became freer, they could provide exhaustive answers. In some schools, especially the day schools, it was a challenge for most of the respondents to express themselves in English. The use of Kiswahili was very common even to the extent that some of the questions had to be explained further to them in Kiswahili so that they could have a better understanding of the questions. The respondents seemed to understand some of the issues under focus though some of the issues seemed to confuse them. A lot of explaining and clarification had to be done before they could exactly comprehend some of the aspects under study.

Diverse ways in which academic inferiority feelings occur were illustrated in various ways during the interview in regard to experiences in school. Regarding the treatment of students from different streams by the teachers, Beryl said without fear that she hates some teachers because they also hate them especially the girls from their class. According to her, this is because their class is always attributed to failure. "Our class is form 3 Green which is always ranked last in exams, and every teacher in fact hates us".

Linnet from Beryl's class confessed that she overheard a teacher tell another that our class is so hopeless and there is no need of teaching them. When she was asked how this makes her feel, she said that she does not struggle to get good grades, after all nobody will appreciate her. She openly revealed that she takes the last position in class and this does not affect her at all. Previously she could be punished because of the poor performance, but she prefers to stay outside doing a punishment rather than being taught in class by teachers who hate her. Furthermore, she also does not care about what the other students think of her when she takes the last position in class.

According to Vincent, their school ranks among the last not only in joint exams but also in co-curricular activities. Therefore, anytime they participate in a competition, he is always sure that they will rank among the last schools. Ombati notes that their stream (Form 3D) is always ranked last during exams where either form 3A or form 3B ranks top. "That is why teachers have labeled us as form 3 dander heads)". The whole class has therefore despaired because they feel that nothing good can come out of them. George who could barely express himself simply said that school is just like jail. "I was made to repeat form three and am simply tired of school)". Kaiser who is from the same class as George and Ombati says that he is comfortable in his class. He says that the whole class just needs to work hard and they can make it. He says that he is only uncomfortable when teachers do not appreciate them when they show some improvement.

Some respondents with low academic inferiority feelings reported that they do not have a problem with the ranking that is done within their school. When asked about what he feels when he is ranked among other students who perform better than him, Richard said that it challenges him to work harder so that he can better his performance. "What I don't like is the scolding from the teachers and lack of appreciation when one improves", he says. Just like Richard, Abuga reported that though he does not

perform to the teachers' expectations, he does not mind the ranking that is done at school. What he hates is the way the result is displayed on the notice board so that everyone even from form one gets to know their position in the class. He also hates the labeling that is done by the teachers and the other students. "They call our class form three 'Waste' instead of form three West because they believe that we shall all go to waste"

Joshua, who suffers from very high academic inferiority feelings seems not to be bothered about performance. When asked on how often they do exams, he irrelevantly explains how he hates to be in school especially boarding school, he had rather be in a day school. "I do not like the way we are always doing exams which do not help us. Exams are for those who do well and those who are always rewarded wasting the school resources. I do not feel comfortable in this school," he adds. When asked about the position he takes in his class, he is adamant to talk about it.

Beatrice confesses that most part of the term she is absent from school. She avoids exams as much as possible because after all she knew she will always be promoted to the next class. "Nobody can make me repeat a class, it is against the government policies. The only exam I will be serious about is the KNEC exam. Nobody cares whether I perform well or not, after all, I always take the last position in class". Daisy, who happens to be a friend to Beatrice says she also has no interest in doing exams, in fact she never revises. "Exams are for those who perform well", she says. Though she refused to reveal the position she takes in her class, she said that she would never desire to change her stream, because according to her, they are all at the same level unlike the other classes where they are all hard working.

Verah and Juliet who seem to have low academic inferiority feelings seem very different from their colleagues in the same class. They rank themselves above average and they feel that they are in the wrong class. They said that they could do better if they were in a different stream where there is competition. They enjoy discussion groups especially when they are mixed with students from the better performing streams. "I don't blame our teachers for calling us lazy because most of our classmates are lazy", says Juliet.

Discussion of Findings

The objective here was to dig deeper and find out how much ranking predicts academic inferiority feelings. From the quantitative data analysis, it was evident that majority of the students from low performing classes experience high academic inferiority feelings. From the qualitative data majority of the students who suffer from high academic inferiority feelings do not care a lot about school. They are just in school to complete the system without minding much about their performance.

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

This study was formulated to investigate the predictors of academic inferiority feelings among form three students in Kisii County, Kenya. The study also investigated the gender differences in academic inferiority feelings. From the study, it was found out that there was a significant and positive relationship between academic ranking and academic inferiority feelings. Majority of the students displayed moderate academic inferiority feelings due to ranking as compared to a small percentage of students with very high and very low levels of academic inferiority feelings.

Conclusions

This study has resulted into various conclusions. The results have presented some evidence of existing relationship between ranking and academic inferiority feelings.

The study showed that ranking which is highly embraced within majority of the school systems has positive and significant influence on academic inferiority feelings. It was found that ranking intimidates the low performers and the low performing schools. In the national exams, ranking of schools and students is not done but, in most schools, within-school ranking is usually done. According to the analysis, ranking which is done and then displayed to the other students tends to kill the motivation of low achieving learners and makes them academically inferior to the others. Students in the low performing schools tend to given up and they are almost sure that no matter how much they work, they cannot measure up to the standards of the high performers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations for policy and further research were made:

Policy Recommendations

- i). Since ranking was found to have positive and significant influence on students' academic inferiority feelings, the ministry of education should intervene into the education sector to ensure that teachers stop ranking students especially within school.
- ii). Too much emphasis is laid on exams for one to transit from one level to another. The government through the Ministry of Education should advice the policymakers to come up with strategies that schools can employ to overcome the over-emphasis on exam orientation resulting to low esteem and low achievement orientation which finally results to academic inferiority feelings.
- iii). Parents should also be advised not to put too much pressure on their children but should understand and appreciate their academic potential.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following suggestions were made in consideration for further research:

- i). Findings of this study have shown that ranking has a significant and predictive value on academic inferiority feelings. However, the study was done only among form three students only. There is need for further research among the rest of the classes in secondary school.
- ii). The results of this study carried out in one county will be generalized to the rest of Kenyan secondary school student population. There is need for further research in the rest of the counties in order to control for the effects of cultural, geographical and economical differences.
- iii). The findings of this research have indicated that ranking is a great contributor of academic inferiority feelings. Further research should be done to determine whether there could be other factors apart from these one that could contribute to academic inferiority feelings. Home and other school factors like grading and class retention should be studied if to find out their contribution to academic inferiority feelings.

iv. From the study, it was assumed that ranking only lead to academic inferiority feelings which obviously affects their performance in class. Further studies should consider investigating other possible consequences of ranking in schools apart from academic inferiority feelings.

v). This study was done with students from secondary schools only. A similar study should be replicated to students from different levels of learning to include primary schools, colleges and universities so as to find out the extent to which ranking relates to academic inferiority feelings at these levels of learning. The measurement scales used in the study should be modified and standardized so as to suit the students from the different levels of learning.

vi). The current study targeted the student population only as participants. A similar study should be done to include principals, teachers, parents and other stakeholders who greatly contribute to the education sector.

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