

Relationship Between Teacher's Self Efficacy and English Language Performance Among Form Three Students in Embu County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The English language is a crucial subject in the Kenya school curriculum as it serves as the primary language of instruction for most subjects. This study was prompted by the concern of underwhelming performance among students. Its purpose was to explore the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy in English teaching and English language performance. The research specifically targeted form three students in Embu County, Kenya. The study was guided by the following objectives: to ascertain the link between English teachers' self-efficacy and English performance. This research was built upon Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory and a correlational research design was used. The study focused on form three students who were preparing to take their KCSE examination in 2021, among a total of 50,675 students from 189 public schools in the county. In the initial stage, the researcher utilized simple random and stratified sampling methods to choose 17 schools from the 189 public secondary schools in Embu County. Teacher's Self-efficacy scale created by Ralf Schwarzer (1999), along with oral interviews conducted with school principal were used to collect data. A preliminary pilot study was carried out with 26 students, a group similar to the study's participants, to assess the feasibility and reliability of the research instruments.

Keywords: Teachers, self-efficacy, relationship, English language, performance.

INTRODUCTION

English is a global language that plays a vital role in education, communication, and career development. However, despite its significance, students' performance in English has remained a challenge worldwide. Various studies have documented concerns over English language proficiency, with many learners struggling to attain the required competence levels.

Globally, countries such as South Africa have reported persistent challenges in English language performance. A study by Howie et al. (2017) on literacy levels in South African schools found that a large proportion of students had difficulty comprehending and using English effectively, despite its status as a key language of instruction. Similarly, in the United States, Graham (2007) examined students' performance in standardized English assessments and found that a significant percentage failed to meet proficiency benchmarks, indicating widespread difficulties in mastering the language.

Regionally, in Nigeria, Olofin (2015) conducted a study analyzing English language performance trends and reported that students' results remained below satisfactory levels. The study highlighted concerns from educators and policymakers about the effectiveness of language instruction and its impact on academic performance. Likewise, in Ghana, a study by Ankomah and Brew (2018) revealed that students continued to struggle with English proficiency, leading to poor academic outcomes in secondary schools.

Locally, in Kenya, English is both a core subject and the official language of instruction, making its mastery crucial for students' academic success. However, reports from the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) indicate that students have consistently performed poorly in English in national examinations such as

the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) and the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). Mwangi and Mugambi (2019) analyzed national mean scores over the years and found a worrying trend of declining English performance, with many students failing to achieve the required competence levels. Similarly, Waweru (2020) noted that secondary school students continued to underperform in English, despite various policy interventions aimed at improving language education.

At the county level, Embu County has also experienced a trend of low performance in English. Examination results from the region have shown that a significant number of students fail to meet the required standards in English, affecting their overall academic performance. Ndwiga (2021) conducted a study in Embu County and reported that both primary and secondary school students continued to struggle with English, as reflected in their low performance in national examinations. While previous research in the region has examined general factors affecting English performance, there has been limited focus on the role of teacher self-efficacy in influencing student outcomes.

Given that teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' learning experiences and outcomes, their self-efficacy—their confidence in their ability to teach effectively—may be a significant factor influencing English language performance. Research suggests that teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to implement effective instructional strategies, motivate students, and create positive learning environments. However, limited studies have explored this relationship in Embu County. Understanding how teacher self-efficacy influences English language performance in this region will provide valuable insights that can inform teacher training programs, policy formulation, and educational interventions. This study, therefore, seeks to bridge this gap by investigating the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and students' performance in English in Embu County, ultimately contributing to efforts aimed at improving language education in the region.

Statement of the problem

English language performance among students in Embu County has remained persistently low, as evidenced by national examination results. Despite being a core subject and the primary language of instruction in schools, many students continue to struggle with reading, writing, and comprehension skills. This poor performance not only affects their overall academic achievement but also limits their ability to effectively communicate and engage in higher learning opportunities.

If this issue remains unresolved, it will have far-reaching consequences on students' academic and professional futures. Poor English proficiency hinders understanding across other subjects, leading to an overall decline in performance. Additionally, it reduces students' chances of excelling in national examinations, gaining admission to higher education institutions, and competing effectively in the job market. Beyond academics, weak English skills limit students' ability to engage in global conversations, access valuable information, and participate in professional and economic opportunities.

Given the central role of teachers in shaping students' learning experiences, it is crucial to investigate whether teacher self-efficacy plays a role in influencing students' performance. While various interventions have been introduced to improve English performance, little attention has been given to the impact of teachers' self-efficacy on student outcomes. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by exploring the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and English language performance in Embu County.

METHODS

Research design

The current study employed correlational research design to investigate the relationships between the selected teacher and student variables with English language performance. The researcher found this design justified and relevant to this study as it was a statistical measure of a relationship between two or more variables, and gave an indication of how one variable affected another. According to Boparai et al. (2018), correlational design describes an existing condition and also allows participants to answer questions administered through interviews as well as questionnaires.

Research Setting

The inquiry was undertaken in Embu County. The researcher was prompted to undertake the study in this region due to a record of meagre performance in English language annually. The scrutiny of the National KCSE results analysis indicated that English language scores have been meagre in Embu County for the last four years (2019-2023), with mean scores consistently below the national average. For instance, in the year 2020, the mean score was 4.58, 2021- 4.49, 2022- 4.44, 2023- 4.43 with a negative index of -0.24, compared to the maximum possible 12 points per subject.

In addition, a comparative data compiled from eight counties in the Eastern region, including Machakos, Marsabit, Isiolo, Embu, Makueni, Kitui, Meru, and Tharaka Nithi, illustrated the county's unique challenges in English performance. Embu ranked low in comparison to other counties in the region, with a higher concentration of students in lower grades like C and D. The disparity in performance between Embu and other counties like Machakos further called for need of a localized studies in this region.

Finally, as per the KCSE statistics less than 15 students emerged among top 100 best candidates in English language results nationally in two consecutive years from Embu County (KNEC 2018, 2020). It is therefore evident that the county is placed low in terms of performance in English language, and this has merited the choice of the location.

Research Respondents

The study targeted form three students due to sit for their KCSE in 2024 from a total number of 50675 in 186 public schools within the County (Embu County TSC Director Office, Embu County Quality Assurance and Standard Office 2023). Out of this, 7364 were from girls' boarding schools, 9022 boys boarding, 6254 mixed day & boarding, 27562 mixed day and 473 from mixed boarding. In the county, form three students totaled at 11586 of which 5553 were girls and 6033 were boys.

Research Instruments

The study used the 10 item Teacher Self-Efficacy scale, an open-source instrument developed by (Ralf Schwarzer, et al, 1999). It assessed the variable in four dimensions: that is job accomplishment, skill development on the job, social interaction with students, parents and colleagues and coping with stress. The scale initially consisted of 27 items, which were later reduced to 10. These items were developed based on Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997; Schwarzer, 1992, 1993). They are personalized, employing the pronoun "I" and incorporating expressions such as "can" or "be able to." Furthermore, the author emphasizes difficult activities in an effort to support Bandura's theory, which demonstrates that completing simple tasks would not result in self-efficacy. This enabled the researcher to establish the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy in teaching English language and the students' performance as contemplated in objective two of the study. This scale is an open access one indicating that the researcher did not need to seek for permission in its usage. The questionnaire had two separate divisions: the respondents' personal information and the questions based on the research objectives measured in a 5-point summative scale ranging between strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Data Gathering Procedure

Approval from the graduate school to commence fieldwork were first sought before the data collection exercise commenced. Thereafter, a permit to collect data was then acquired from the National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI), along with further authorization from the Embu County Quality Assurance Office to conduct the study within the specified region. To enhance efficiency, the researcher recruited a research assistant to collaborate throughout the data collection period. This team-based approach ensured proper handling of tasks and timely completion of data collection.

Upon visiting each school for the actual data collection, the researcher did the introduction to the security personnel at the gate explaining the purpose of the visit. Official documentation, including the NACOSTI permit and authorization letters, was presented to validate their search team's credibility.

The researcher also introduced the purpose of the study at the principals' office, presenting authorization documents and explaining the relevance of the research to educational outcomes. The reception from the principals was generally positive, with most expressing interest and offering their support. Some principals assigned school staff or teachers to assist in the process, ensuring smooth steering within the school.

After obtaining approval from the principal, the researcher proceeded to the English department. English subject teachers were instrumental in providing mark sheets, which were vital for analyzing end of the year English language performance data. The teachers organized and explained the mark sheets, clarifying the Mock Exam structure and evaluation criteria used.

In the administration of the Achievement Motivation Questionnaires Phase, the subject teachers also coordinated with the researcher to schedule convenient times to meet students, minimizing disruptions to the school routine. With the help of the research assistant, the researcher gave the students their questionnaires in person. The researcher gave the students an introduction, outlined the goal of the study, and emphasized the significance of their involvement. Clear instructions were provided on how to complete the questionnaire, including an assurance of confidentiality. Students were informed that their participation was not coerced and that they were at liberty to withdraw at any point. Further, they could skip any questions they were uncomfortable with. The researcher and assistant remained present to address any questions or challenges encountered by the students while filling out the questionnaires. Once the questionnaires were fully completed, the research team collected them immediately to ensure all were accounted for. The collection process minimized the risk of loss and enhanced data security.

The support received from principals, English teachers, and students was crucial for the success of the data collection phase. The cooperation, combined with the strategic approach of the research team, ensured a smooth and effective data collection process. This multi-level engagement facilitated the gathering of reliable and comprehensive data for the study.

Ethical Considerations

During the data collection exercise, the respondents were not compelled to provide such personal identities as names, and registration numbers. Respondents received assurance that their responses would be kept entirely confidential. Throughout the research exercise, respondents' identities were not discussed and were only privy to the members of the data collection team. Additionally, they were guaranteed that no personal victimization due to the information provided will arise. They were also granted the liberty to pull out of the interview or discussion sessions in the event they wish to.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was aligned with the study objectives and the measurement levels of the collected data. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were generated to represent various research items. These statistics responded to all items in the questionnaire, which utilized a five-point Likert scale. Qualitative data, collected through interview schedules and document analysis, was summarized and transcribed under common themes. This qualitative data was then triangulated with quantitative data to enhance the validity of the study. Inferential statistics were applied to test the hypothesis as outlined below:

H₀₁: There was no significant relationship between teacher's self-efficacy and English Performance. (Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To establish the relationship between teachers of English self-efficacy in teaching English language and English performance in Embu County

Descriptive Analysis of Teachers self-efficacy Scores

The Table 3.1 presented a descriptive analysis of teachers' self-efficacy scores in English.

Table 3.1 Descriptive Analysis of Teachers self-efficacy Scores

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
TSEE	314	2.65	2.00	4.65	3.36	.81
Valid N (list wise)	314					

Note. SD=Standard Deviation; TSEE=Teachers self-efficacy in English.

The range of self-efficacy scores in English was 2.65, indicating the spread or variation of scores among the respondents. The minimum self-efficacy score was 2.00, while the maximum score is 4.65. This showed the range of scores observed in the dataset, from the lowest to the highest. The mean self-efficacy score was 3.36, representing the average level of self-efficacy among the teachers in English. This provided a measure of central tendency, suggesting the typical score observed in the dataset. Finally, the standard deviation of 0.81 indicated the extent of variability or dispersion in the self-efficacy scores. A higher standard deviation suggested a wider spread of scores around the mean, indicating greater variability in teachers' self-efficacy levels.

From the observations above, the descriptive analysis suggested that teachers, on average, exhibited moderate to high levels of self-efficacy in English, with a mean score of 3.36. However, there is variability in self-efficacy levels among teachers, as indicated by the range of scores and standard deviation. This implies that teachers' self-efficacy in English is crucial for assessing their confidence and competence in teaching the subject. Factors associated with higher self-efficacy scores can inform professional development initiatives aimed at enhancing teachers' confidence and effectiveness in teaching English. Further exploration, such as examining the relationship between self-efficacy and teaching performance or investigating the impact of interventions on self-efficacy, can provide insights into improving teacher quality and educational outcomes in English language instruction.

Teachers Self-efficacy Scores and Sex of Respondents Cross tabulation

The Table 3.2 presents a cross tabulation of teachers of English self-efficacy scores in students' English language performance based on the sex of the students.

Table 3. 2 Teachers' Self-efficacy Scores and Sex of Respondents Cross tabulation

Sex		N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Male	TSSE	151	2.05	2.05	4.10	2.91	.61
Female	TSSE	163	2.65	2.00	4.65	3.77	.75

Note. Min = Minimum; Max =Maximum; SD=Standard deviation; TSEE=Teachers self-efficacy in English.

There was variability in teachers' self-efficacy scores in English between male and female respondents, as indicated by the range of minimum and maximum scores, as well as the standard deviation. Female respondents have a higher self-efficacy score (3.77) compared to male respondents (2.91). This suggested that, on average, female respondents exhibited higher levels of self-efficacy in English compared to male respondents. The standard deviation for both male (0.61) and female (0.75) respondents indicated the extent of

variability or dispersion in self-efficacy scores within each group. A higher standard deviation suggests more variability in scores within the group.

The findings above suggest a potential gender difference in self-efficacy levels, with female respondents demonstrating higher self-efficacy in English compared to male respondents. This difference may have implications for instructional practices, professional development, and support programs designed to address the specific needs of male and female teachers.

Exploration of the factors contributing to the above observed differences in self-efficacy levels between male and female respondents can inform strategies to promote equitable opportunities and support the professional growth of all teachers, regardless of gender.

Teachers Self Efficacy Scores and Age of Respondents Cross tabulation

The Table 3.3 presents a cross tabulation of teachers' self-efficacy scores in English across different age groups of respondents.

Table 3.3 Teachers Self Efficacy Scores and Age of Respondents Cross tabulation

Age		N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD
15	TSSE	34	2.55	2.10	4.65	3.50	.61
16	TSSE	21	2.60	2.05	4.65	2.98	.76
17	TSSE	54	2.60	2.05	4.65	3.42	.90
18	TSSE	160	2.65	2.00	4.65	3.43	.82
19	TSSE	45	2.05	2.05	4.10	3.08	.71

Note. Min = Minimum; Max =Maximum; SD=Standard deviation; TSEE=Teachers self-efficacy in English.

There was variability in teachers' self-efficacy scores across different age groups of respondents, as indicated by the range of minimum and maximum scores, as well as the standard deviation. Mean self-efficacy scores varied slightly across different age groups of respondents, ranging from 2.98 to 3.50. Overall, the mean scores indicated a moderate to high level of self-efficacy among teachers across all age groups. From the observations above, there did not appear to be a clear trend between age of the students and teachers of English language self-efficacy scores.

The findings above suggested that age of students alone may not be a significant predictor of teachers' self-efficacy in English. Other factors such as teaching experience, training, and individual characteristics may also influence self-efficacy levels. Further analysis could explore additional factors that may have contributed to variations in self-efficacy scores among teachers, such as years of teaching experience, professional development opportunities, or teaching contexts. Identifying these factors can help develop targeted interventions to support teachers in enhancing their self-efficacy and effectiveness in English language instruction.

Teachers Self-efficacy Scores and Type of School Cross tabulation

The Table 3.4 presents a cross tabulation of teachers' self-efficacy scores in English across different types of schools.

Table 3. 4 Teachers' Self-efficacy Scores and Type of School Cross tabulation

Type of School		N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Girls Boarding	TSSE	112	2.00	4.65	4.09	.54
Boys Boarding	TSSE	71	2.53	3.51	3.10	.49

MD &Boarding	TSSE	31	2.98	4.10	3.67	.55
Mixed Day	TSSE	86	2.05	3.47	2.70	.47
Mixed Boarding	TSSE	14	2.10	2.10	2.10	.00

Note. Min = Minimum; Max =Maximum; SD=Standard deviation; TSEE=Teachers self-efficacy in English

There was variability in teachers' self-efficacy scores across different types of schools, as indicated by the range of minimum and maximum scores, as well as the standard deviation. Girls boarding schools had the highest mean self-efficacy score (4.09), followed by mixed day and boarding schools (3.67), boys boarding schools (3.10), mixed day schools (2.70), and mixed boarding schools (2.10).

The above findings suggested that teachers in girls' boarding schools tended to have the highest levels of self-efficacy in English, while teachers in mixed boarding schools had the lowest levels. Understanding the differences in self-efficacy levels across school types could inform targeted interventions or support programs aimed at enhancing teachers' confidence and effectiveness in English language instruction. Further analysis could explore the factors contributing to variations in self-efficacy scores among teachers, such as teaching experience, professional development opportunities, or school resources. Identifying these factors can help amend interventions to address specific needs and improve overall teaching quality.

Teachers Self-efficacy Scores across different levels of English Performance

The provided Table 3.5 presents teachers' self-efficacy scores in English across different levels of English performance.

Table 3. 5 Teachers' Self-efficacy Scores across different levels of English Performance

Levels of English Performance		N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Low	TSEE	104	2.00	4.10	2.91	.63
Moderate	TSEE	199	2.05	4.65	3.55	.78
High	TSEE	11	2.58	4.65	4.07	.89

Note. Min = Minimum; Max =Maximum; SD=Standard deviation; TSEE=Teachers self-efficacy in English.

From the results in Table 3.5, there is variability in teachers' self-efficacy scores across different levels of English performance, as indicated by the range of minimum and maximum scores, as well as the standard deviation. Teachers associated with high English performance levels have the highest mean self-efficacy score (4.07), followed by teachers associated with moderate English performance levels (3.55), and then teachers associated with low English performance levels (2.91).

The above findings suggest a positive association between English performance levels and teachers' self-efficacy scores. Teachers associated with higher English performance levels tend to have higher levels of self-efficacy in English, while those associated with lower performance levels have lower self-efficacy scores. Further analysis could explore the factors contributing to differences in self-efficacy scores among teachers across different levels of English performance. Identifying these factors can help develop targeted interventions or support programs to enhance teachers' confidence and effectiveness in teaching English across all performance levels.

Hypothesis testing

H₀₁: There is a significant relationship between teachers of English self-efficacy in teaching English and English performance.

Relationship between Teachers Self Efficacy and English performance

The provided Table 3.6 presents the relationship between the teachers' self-efficacy scores in English across different levels of English performance.

Table 3.6 Relationship between Teachers Self Efficacy and English performance

		EP	TSSE
EP	r	1	.47
	Sig. (2tailed)		.00
	N	314	314
TSSE	r	.47	1
	Sig. (2tailed)	.00	
	N	314	314
. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2tailed). Note. TSEE=Teachers self-efficacy in English; EP=English performance.			

From the results in Table 3.6, there is a significant positive relationship between English performance and teacher’s self-efficacy scores ($r(312) = 0.47, p < .05$). The correlation between teachers' self-efficacy in English and English performance is 0.47. The significance level value is 0.000 for both correlations. This value represents the probability of observing the correlation coefficient if there were no true correlation in the population. A significance level of 0.000 indicates that the correlation is statistically significant.

The findings above show positive correlation coefficient of 0.47 suggesting a moderate positive relationship between teachers' self-efficacy in English and English performance. This means that as teachers' self-efficacy in English increases, English performance increases as well, and vice versa. The significance level of 0.00 indicates that it is unlikely that the correlation not by random chance. Therefore, a there was a significant relationship between teachers' self-efficacy in English and English performance.

The findings above reveal that teachers who have higher levels of self-efficacy in English are more likely to contribute to better English performance among their students, and vice versa. This highlights the significance of teachers' confidence and effectiveness in influencing student outcomes in English language education.

CONCLUSION

The objective of the study focused on the relationship between teachers' self- efficacy in teaching English and students' English performance. It explored into the mindset of educators’ beliefs, assurance, and steadfast dedication to sharing knowledge. Teachers' confidence in their ability to teach English significantly influences student learning. When teachers have faith in their ability to facilitate language learning, their teaching methods become more impactful. This objective aims to understand the complex interplay between teachers' confidence in teaching English and its effect on students' language skills.

The study revealed a positive correlation between teachers' confidence in teaching English and students' performance. When teachers display confidence, their enthusiasm permeates the classroom, fostering an environment conducive to learning. These findings highlight the importance of tailored professional development programs. By enhancing teachers' self - efficacy, emphasizing effective teaching strategies, and offering continuous support, schools can improve both teacher effectiveness and student outcomes in English.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of intervention programs aimed at promoting teachers of English self-efficacy. By implementing and assessing the impact of targeted interventions, researchers can identify effective strategies for enhancing students' motivation and academic performance.

The current study established an implementation of targeted professional development programs specifically designed to enhance the skills and self-efficacy of English language teachers in Kenya. These programs should offer comprehensive training in effective teaching methodologies, language acquisition strategies, and classroom management techniques. By investing in the professional growth of teachers, policymakers can ensure that educators are well-equipped to meet the diverse needs of students and foster a supportive learning environment conducive to English language proficiency. Examples of programs that could be implemented to provide comprehensive training for English language teachers include:

Implementing peer mentoring programs where experienced teachers mentor and support newer or less experienced teachers. This allows for knowledge sharing, skill development, and ongoing professional growth through collaborative learning experiences.

Conducting seminars or workshops on classroom management techniques to help teachers create a positive and conducive learning environment. Topics covered could include behavior management strategies, student engagement techniques, and fostering a supportive classroom culture.

Facilitating collaborative lesson planning sessions where teachers can work together to design and share lesson plans, teaching materials, and resources. This encourages collaboration, creativity, and the sharing of best practices among teachers.

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