



Influence of Personality on Performance of Boy Child in Languages in Day Secondary Schools in Awendo Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract

Several research finding statistics show persistent and consistent poor performance of the boy child in languages. Therefore, there was need to assess how personality influence performance of boy child in languages in Day Secondary Schools in Awendo Sub-County, Kenya. The study was guided by two different theories: Gardner's Theory (Socio-Educational Model) and The Behavioral Theory. The study employed mixed method approach with a cross-sectional survey research design where both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. The target population comprised 1400 form four boys, 78 language teachers and 39 principals in 39 public day secondary schools totaling to a population of 1517. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 12 public Day Secondary Schools. Purposive sampling was used to select 24 language teachers and 12 principals while 420 form four boys were also selected purposively. A total sample size of 456 was incorporated in the study. Data collection tools included interview schedules which were used to collect qualitative data from principals and questionnaires collected data from form four students and language teachers. Pilot study was conducted in order to check the reliability and validity of the instruments. Validity was established through the test-retest method. Data was analyzed descriptively into frequencies, percentages, mean ratings and overall mean ratings and inferentially into Pearson's correlation at 0.05 level of significance and t-test. The findings were that personality positively and strongly influence performance of boy child in languages at $r=.792$, $p=.000<.05$. The findings of this study are expected to help the principals, language teachers and other education stakeholders to find a better way of enhancing boy child personality during language lessons.

Keywords: *Boy-Child, Languages, Performance, Personality*

Introduction

Psychological factors are the elements of personality that limit or enhance the way that an individual thinks. Personality can render something as simple as conversation extremely difficult or very easy. A phobia (illogical and uncontrollable fear) can limit or even control the ways that a person thinks or reacts (Hoque, 2019). A study in USA by Hoque in 2019 on Personality Types and Foreign Language Acquisition proved that individual differences significantly influence the acquisition of foreign language, as well as, thinking and behavior. The results further noted that the mindset of a learner can largely be gauged from the known or personality inclination of the individual. This can be inspired by teachers to enhance language acquisition. Other affective characteristics that influence language learning in students are language learning anxiety, experience with the first language, culture, transfer, attitude, social interaction, and it is however, not yet clear on how the feminine and male personality influence language acquisition, suggesting the need for more research in this area. According to the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) results analysis of the three recent years 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023, boys have been found to perform well in other subjects than in English and Kiswahili. According to the second international conference, children have a lot of anxiety in learning English and Kiswahili languages. Awendo Sub-County, Kenya is rich in different economic activities making boys to take part in income generating activities instead of going to school leading to severe cases of absenteeism from school which also make them to perform poorly in languages as they interact so much in mother tongue when out of school. The reports obtained from the office of the Director of Education Migori County; Kenya (2024) showed that there were continuous trends of poor performance in languages by boys in the KCSE results of the last four years. In these results, a greater percentage of boys failed English thus raising eyebrows.

Methodology

The researcher used a cross-sectional survey research design to collect the quantitative data on knowledge, attitude and respondent opinions. In using a cross-sectional design, multiple variables can be investigated at the same time. Cross-sectional study was efficient and fast study design option because when measuring the attributes of different age groups, a cross-sectional study does not need to wait for the participants to age with time the way a longitudinal study does (Boru, 2018). In this study, cross-sectional survey was conducted around one group specifically form four boys or used to compare several opinions like the opinions of form four boys, language teachers and principals with regard to personality factors influencing boy child performance in languages in day secondary schools.

The target population for this study included; 1400 form four boys, 78 Language teachers and 39 principals in 39 public day secondary schools. The study population was therefore 1517. The study used simple random sampling to select schools for the study. Therefore from 39 schools, 12 schools were picked. For the students, the researcher used a purposive sampling to select only boys of form four for their maturity as the highest class in secondary education and that they are an examination class. Additionally, language teachers were selected because they are the ones who handle the subjects. Therefore 34 Language Teachers were sampled. Principals on the other hand were the custodians of all the activities in the schools and a sample of 12 was included in the study. However, the researcher used thirty percent of the study population (as recommended by Kothari, 2016) to get the sample size for this study as shown in table 1

Table 1: Sample Size

Items	Sample Size
Form Four boys	420
Language teachers	24
Principals	12
Total	456

Table 1 shows the study sample of 456 from which the data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. The study used questionnaires to collect data from form four students and language teachers whereas interview schedules collected qualitative data from principals. Whilst questionnaires ensured collection of large amounts of confidential information from many respondents and cheaply (Denscombe, 2014; (Kombo & Tromp, 2006), interviews permitted free responses by respondents and further probing by the researcher for in-depth understanding of the phenomena (Braune & Clark, 2016; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2019). The quantitative data was analyzed descriptively into frequencies and percentages (Gray, 2014) while qualitative data was transcribed verbatim and subjected to thematic analysis in line with the conceptual framework of the study and research question. A coding scheme was developed for qualitative data from the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2016).

Results and Discussion

The study sought to to assess the influence of personality on performance of boy child in languages in day secondary schools in Awendo Sub-County. To achieve this, the respondents were probed on the influence of their gender personality factors on performance in languages and asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements using the following key: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA). The result is presented in Table 2.

Item Statement on Personality Factors		RATINGS					MR	OMR
		SD	D	N	A	SA		
		1	2	3	4	5		
Boys find it easy to collaborate in language activities	S	180 (50.3%)	150 (41.9%)	7 (2.0%)	6 (1.7%)	15 (4.2%)	1.68	2.08
	LT	8 (38.1%)	4 (19.0%)	3 (14.3%)	3 (14.3%)	3 (14.3%)	2.48	
Boys feel uneasy to cooperate during language lessons	S	4 (1.1%)	40 (11.2%)	30 (8.4%)	142(39.7%)	142 (39.7%)	4.06	3.53
	LT	4 (19.0%)	4 (19.0%)	4 (19.0%)	6 (28.6%)	3 (14.3%)	3.00	



Boys are not flexible in changing their opinion towards language discussions.	S	5(1.4%)	21 (5.9%)	102 (28.5%)	200 (55.9%)	30 (8.4%)	3.64	3.58
	LT	2 (9.5%)	3 (14.3%)	2 (9.5%)	10 (47.6%)	4 (19.0%)	3.52	
Boys tend to be more organized in revisions of science exams than languages.	S	18 (5.0%)	23 (6.4%)	63 (17.6%)	114 (31.8%)	140 (39.1%)	3.94	3.88
	LT	2 (9.5%)	1 (4.8%)	3 (14.3%)	8 (38.1%)	7 (33.3%)	3.81	
Boys feel anxious during language examinations more than mathematics and sciences.	S	8 (2.2%)	231 (64.5%)	4 (1.1%)	9 (2.5%)	106 (29.6%)	2.93	3.42
	LT	1 (4.8%)	2 (9.5%)	1 (4.8%)	11 (52.4%)	6 (28.6%)	3.90	
Boys feel encouraged in activities that allow them to express their creativity than languages.	S	120 (33.5%)	102 (28.5%)	66 (18.4%)	14 (3.9%)	56 (15.6%)	2.40	2.42
	LT	7 (33.3%)	6 (28.6%)	3 (14.3%)	2 (9.5%)	3 (14.3%)	2.43	
Boys tend to make impulsive decisions without much deliberation in language learning	S	25 (7.0%)	30 (8.4%)	50 (14.0%)	124 (34.6%)	129 (36.0%)	3.84	3.59
	LT	2 (9.5%)	4 (19.0%)	3 (14.3%)	9 (42.9%)	3 (14.3%)	3.33	

Table 2: Influence of Personality on Performance of Boy Child in Languages

Key: Interpretation of OMR; 1.00-1.44(VLI), 1.45-2.44(LI), 2.45-3.44(MI), 3.45-4.44(HI), 4.45-5.00(VHI)

In Table 2, the construct, “Boys find it easy to volunteer in language activities,” majority of the students (50.3%) and Language Teachers (38.1%) Strongly Disagreed that boys find it easy to volunteer in language activities. Another 41.9 per cent of the students and 19 per cent language teachers Disagreed that, boys find it easy to volunteer in language activities. Cumulatively, 92.2 per cent of the student respondents and 57.1 per cent of language teachers Disagreed with the statement that boys find it easy to volunteer in language activities. The Overall Mean Rating of the construct is 2.08 (out of a maximum possible of 5) which corresponds to a low influence of the construct on performance of boy child in languages. The quantitative findings are in an agreement with that of Lee (2021) who discovered that boys are more likely to engage with girls in cooperative tasks when they observe their male peers participating positively. Therefore, there is need to continuously encourage boys to volunteer in language activities during the learning process.

From the qualitative data analyzed, a theme of voluntarism and co-operation emerged and the findings confirmed that, boys find it easy to volunteer in language activities. During an interview with the principals, said that:

Nowadays, boys don't have any problems engaging during language activities. However, the few who are still reservists should be talked to so that they can believe that they can associate with their peers during learning process. We can also motivate boys so that they can believe in their ability to perform well in languages despite their belief that sciences are their areas of strength in terms of performance. We should encourage them to improve in languages and motivate them as well. (P7)

The analyzed findings imply that when boys are encouraged to volunteer in language activities, their ability to express themselves in English and Kiswahili improve and this can translate to a better performance in the languages. Therefore, when boys are encouraged to volunteer during language activities, they can compete effectively.

In Table 2, majority of the students (39.7%) and majority of Language Teachers (28.6%) agreed that “boys feel uneasy to cooperate with girls during language lessons.” Another 39.7 per cent of the students and 14.3 per cent language teachers strongly agreed that, boys feel uneasy to cooperate with girls during language lessons. Cumulatively, 79.4 per cent of the student respondents and 42.9 per cent of language teachers agreed that boys

feel uneasy to cooperate during language lessons. The Overall Mean Rating of the construct is 3.53 (out of a maximum possible of 5) which corresponds to a high positive influence of the construct on performance in languages. The findings support the results of Nyaga and Johnson (2020) that, boys frequently feel uncomfortable working alongside their counterparts due to deeply ingrained societal expectations that dictate gender behavior, the dynamics of gender interaction in educational settings were found to be complex, particularly concerning boys' comfort levels in cooperating during language lessons. However, Lee (2021) disagreed with the quantitative findings by deducing that, boys are more likely to engage in cooperative tasks when they observe their male peers participating positively. None the less, this is one critical factor that can mitigate boys' unease in cooperating in the classroom environment established by the teacher during language lessons. Teachers play a vital role in creating a safe and inclusive atmosphere where both genders feel valued and respected. When teachers actively promote mixed-gender collaboration and model respectful interactions, boys may feel more comfortable participating in such lessons.

From the qualitative data analyzed, the findings confirm that, boys feel uneasy to cooperate during language lessons. During an interview with the principals, said that:

“Sometimes, boys may feel uneasy to co-operate with during language lessons. Therefore, they too should be engaged in interactive forums like language symposiums, debates and public speaking with the aim of perfecting their oral skills and written work. Through this, they gain confidence and encouragement to handle languages”. (P3)

The analyzed views imply that with the help of languages forums like debates, boys are able to be competitive in languages. Through interactions, boys can develop language competency in both spoken and written English and Kiswahili.

In Table 2 minority of the students (55.9%) and majority of Language Teachers (47.6%) Agreed that boys; “boys are argumentative and never flexible in changing their attention towards language discussions.” Another 8.4 per cent of the students and 19 per cent language teachers Strongly Agreed with the statement of the construct. Cumulatively, 64.3 per cent of the student respondents and 66.6 per cent of language teachers Agreed with the statement that boys are argumentative and never flexible in changing their attention towards language discussions. The Overall Mean Rating of the construct is 3.58 (out of a maximum possible of 5) which correspond to a high positive influence of the construct on performance of boy child in languages. The quantitative findings are in an agreement with that of Lee and Lee (2020) who discovered that, boys often dominate discussions by expressing their viewpoints strongly. The perception of boys as argumentative and inflexible in language discussions is a topic that merits careful examination. While boys may exhibit strong opinions and assertiveness in discussions, this behavior can sometimes hinder collaborative learning and inhibit the development of critical thinking skills. Boys may struggle to adapt their positions when confronted with differing opinions, which can limit their ability to engage meaningfully during language discussions.

From the qualitative data analyzed, a theme of argumentativeness and inflexibility emerged and the findings confirm that, boys are argumentative and never flexible in changing their attention towards language discussions. During an interview with the principals, said that: “*Well, it is not clear if arguments can translate into good or poor performance in languages! What I know is that, dismal performance in languages by boys is all about perception. Boys should struggle to improve when it comes to performance in languages,*” (P2). The analyzed views imply that arguments during language discussions can lead to poor performance by boys. Boys should perceive languages as subjects for both genders. Though arguments may not translate to performance, boys can still pursue their abilities in languages.

In Table 2 majority of the students (39.1%) and Language Teachers (33.3%) Strongly Agreed that boys tend to be more organized in revisions of science exams than languages. Another 31.8 per cent of the students and 38.1 per cent language teachers Agreed that, boys tend to be more organized in revisions of science exams than languages. Cumulatively, 70.9 per cent of the student respondents and 71.4 per cent of language teachers agreed that boys tend to be more organized in revisions of science exams than languages. The Overall Mean Rating of the construct, is 3.88 (out of a maximum possible of 5) which corresponds to a high positive influence of the construct, “boys tend to be more organized in revisions of science exams than languages” on performance in languages. Quantitative findings contradict with that of King and Gurian (2020) who deduced that, boys often benefit from



explicit instruction in study skills tailored to the unique demands of language learning. Therefore, a strategy on how to make boy child feel competent in the process of learning languages is uttermost important.

From the qualitative data analyzed, a similar theme of anxiety emerged that, boys tend to be more organized in revisions of science exams than languages. During an interview with the principals, said that: *“Boys can be more organised when it comes to science lessons. Boys being comfortable during science examinations may warrant them better performance in science subjects than languages! However, they should be able to perform well in both,”* (P6) The analyzed views imply that organization can encourage performance in sciences none the less; boys should still be encouraged to perform well in languages.

In Table 2 majority of the students (62.5%) and a simple minority of Language Teachers (9.5%) Disagreed that boys feel curious during language examinations more than mathematics and sciences. Another 2.2 per cent of the students and 4.8 per cent language teachers strongly disagreed that, boys feel anxious during language examinations more than mathematics and sciences. Cumulatively, 64.7 per cent of the student respondents and 14.3 per cent of language teachers Disagreed that boys feel anxious during language examinations more than mathematics and sciences. The Overall Mean Rating of the construct is 3.42 (out of a maximum possible of 5) which correspond to a moderate positive influence of the construct, “boys feel anxious during language examinations more than mathematics and sciences” on performance in languages. The quantitative findings support that of Smith, et al. (2020) that anxiety is a fundamental aspect of learning that can significantly influence students' engagement and performance. Therefore, there should be deliberate action in advising boys to deal with their anxiety with regards to language examinations.

From the qualitative data analyzed, a theme of anxiety emerged. During an interview with the principals, said that: *“It is important to find out more about language examinations. However, when boys are too much concerned about performance in languages, they may tense during the examinations and as a result achieve dismal performances as you know curiosity killed the cat!”* (P9). The analyzed views imply that being over curious can affect concentration and hence poor performance in languages.

In Table 2 majority of the students (33.5%) and Language Teachers (33.3%) Strongly Disagreed that boys feel encouraged in activities that allow them to express their creativity in languages. Another 28.5 per cent of the students and 28.6 per cent language teachers Disagreed that, boys feel encouraged in activities that allow them to express their creativity in languages. Cumulatively, 62 per cent of the student respondents and 61.9 per cent of language teachers agreed that boys feel encouraged in activities that allow them to express their creativity in languages. The Overall Mean Rating of the construct, is 2.42 (out of a maximum possible of 5) which corresponds to a low influence of the construct, “boys feel encouraged in activities that allow them to express their creativity in languages” on performance in languages. The quantitative findings support that of King and Gurian (2020) who confirmed that, boys often benefit from explicit instruction in study skills tailored to the unique demands of language learning and creativity. Therefore, teacher's classroom strategies should recognize the use of language differently among boys by encouraging them to be more creative in telling stories as another way to gain their creativity and courage.

From the qualitative data analyzed, a theme of creativity emerged and the findings confirm that, boys feel encouraged in activities that allow them to express their creativity in languages. During an interview with the principals, said that:

“Male child generally does not welcome disappointments with open arms. That is why when boys make mistakes in public when speaking in either English or Kiswahili, they feel awkward and discouraged! However, teachers should encourage them to accept the disappointments positively and use the scenarios creatively to soldier on towards language excellence.” (P5)

The analyzed views imply that boys should be encouraged in activities that allow them to express their creativity in languages. However, the extent to which boys feel discouraged due to improper use of the two languages, they should not concentrate on the negative aspect as compared to their own abilities to excel in the two languages.

In Table 2, majority of the students (36%) and Language Teachers (14.3%) Strongly Agreed that boys tend to make impulsive decisions without much deliberation which affect their language learning. Another 34.6 per cent of the students and 14.3 per cent language teachers Agreed that, boys tend to make impulsive decisions without

much deliberation which affect their language learning. Cumulatively, 70.6 per cent of the student respondents and 52.7 per cent of language teachers agreed that boys tend to make impulsive decisions without much deliberation which affect their language learning. The Overall Mean Rating of the construct is 3.59 (out of a maximum possible of 5) which correspond to a high positive influence of the construct, “boys tend to make impulsive decisions without much deliberation which affect their language learning. The quantitative findings are in an agreement with that of Skipper and Fox (2021) who suggested that boys' impulsivity is often rooted in social and biological factors. From a young age, boys may be socialized to prioritize action and assertiveness, leading them to adopt a more spontaneous approach to decision-making. Therefore, providing structured writing frameworks that guide boys through the drafting and revision processes can help them approach their writing with greater care and attention to detail. Therefore, boys should be encouraged to develop interest in learning of the languages.

From the qualitative data analyzed, a theme of impulsivity emerged that boys tend to make impulsive decisions without much deliberation which affect their language learning. During an interview with the Principals, P6 said that: “Comparatively, boys can be more impulsive in decision making than girls. Boys being more impulsive may not warrant them enough courage to concentrate in language lessons! However, they should be able to perform well in languages when properly guided by the teacher.” (P6). The analysed views imply that impulsivity hinders leaning and hence performance in languages. Boys’ impulsivity should be dealt with through guidance and counselling to enable them catch up with performance in languages.

Table 3: T-test and Correlation of Influence of Personality on Performance of Boy Child

Item Statement on Personality Factors	R	MR	OMR	T-test	Correlations
Boys find it easy to volunteer in language activities	S	1.68	2.08	t(286)=2.371, p=.002	r=.611, p=.003
	LT	2.48			
Boys feel uneasy to cooperate with girls during language lessons	S	4.06	3.53	t(291)=4.954, p=.000	r=.977, p=.000
	LT	3.00			
Boys are argumentative and never flexible in changing their attention towards language discussions	S	3.64	3.58	t(291)=4.489, p=.000	r=.698, p=.000
	LT	3.52			
Boys tend to be more organized in revisions of science exams than languages	S	3.94	3.88	t(290)=5.111, p=.000	r=.890, p=.000
	LT	3.81			
Boys feel curious during language examinations more than mathematics and sciences	S	2.93	3.42	t(289)=4.999, p=.000	r=.904, p=.001
	LT	3.90			
Boys feel encouraged in activities that allow them to express their creativity in languages	S	2.40	2.42	t(287)=3.001, p=.001	r=.671, p=.002
	LT	2.43			
	S	3.84	3.59	t(290)=5.123, p=.000	Used for correlation with



Boys tend to make impulsive decisions without much deliberation which affect their language learning LT 3.33 the excluded sub variables

Overall Correlations **r=.792, p=.000**

In Table 3, the observed p values are all less than the set alpha (.05) for all the sub variable groups. Since this is less than the critical p value (.05), there is statistical evidence to dispute that their views on gender personality factors and performance of boy child in languages were different. The higher the mean rating given by the respondents for each of the aspect of gender personality factors and performance of boy child in languages being investigated, the higher the influence of that aspect in enhancing performance of boy child in languages. The statistics show that; the views of the two categories of the respondents are not statistically different based on the p values of the t-test analysis.

Overall Influence of Personality on Performance of Boy Child in Languages

A two tailed Bivariate Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to establish whether a relationship exists between gender personality and performance of boy child in languages. The results are shown in the Table 4

Table 4: Overall Influence of Personality and Performance of Boy Child in Languages

Independent Variable	Inferential Statistic Test	Correlation with performance of boy child in languages
Personality	Pearson Correlation	.792**
	Set Sig. (2-tailed) (α)	.05
	Observed P value	.000

The results in Table 4 indicate that there is a statistically strong positive influence of personality on the performance of boy child in languages ($r = .792$; $p = .000$). Since P value obtained was 0.0 which was < 0.05 , it was concluded that there was a statistically strong positive influence of personality on performance of boy child in languages.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The performance of boy-child in languages can be enhanced with special emphasis and focus on their unique personalities and this was found to be having statistically strong positive ($r = .792$; $p=.000$) influence on their performance in the languages. The study recommended that language teachers should deliberately inspire the boy-child in class with the aim of improving their performance mean score.

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