

## Influence of Teachers' age, gender, and personality on Students' Academic Achievement in Kiswahili: A case of Public Secondary Schools in Murang'a and Kiambu Counties

Munyaka Lucy Wanjiru<sup>1</sup>, Prof. Grace Bunyi<sup>2</sup> & Dr. Wilfrida Itolondo<sup>3</sup>  
Department of Education Management, Policy and Curriculum Studies, School of  
Education and Lifelong Studies, Kenyatta University  
Corresponding email: luciegichia2007@yahoo.com

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** Teachers have a vital influence on students' academic achievement. The steady decline in academic performance of secondary school students has generated a lot of interest among stakeholders in the education sector in Kenya. Despite efforts by teachers to improve their skills and technical expertise the performance of students in KCSE examinations and Kiswahili in particular has not been encouraging. In the year 2020, Murang'a and Kiambu posted the least mean scores of 4.3 and 4.4 respectively in comparison to neighboring counties Nyeri and Kirinyaga which had mean scores of 4.62 and 4.64 respectively. The purpose of this paper was to establish the nexus between Kiswahili teacher characteristics and students' academic achievement in Kiswahili at the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination (KCSE) results in Kiambu and Murang'a counties. The objective of this paper was to establish the influence of teachers' age, gender, and personality characteristics on students' academic achievement in KCSE examination results.

**Methodology:** A descriptive survey research design was utilised. The target population was 29,134 comprising 512 principals, 1,172 teachers, and 27,450 students across 512 secondary schools in Murang'a and Kiambu counties. A sample size of 103 schools through proportionate and 299 Kiswahili teachers, and 395 students was obtained through Yamane sampling formula. Purposive sampling criteria were used to obtain 103 principals across the 103 sampled schools. Data was collected using a questionnaire for principals, students, and teachers.

**Results:** It was established that teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge, professional skills and academic achievement, and teachers' characteristics positively influenced student academic achievement in Kiswahili at KCSE, ( $M = 4.0$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ), ( $M = 3.9$ ,  $SD = 0.8$ ) and ( $M = 3.8$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ) respectively. ANOVA test showed teachers characteristics in terms of gender was the only aspect which statistically, significantly differed with teachers' response and the response from principals and students,  $p = .000$ . These findings emphasized the complexity of teachers' factors affecting students' academic achievement.

**Conclusion:** There is a nexus between teacher characteristics and students' academic achievements as perceived by principals, teachers, and students. This is related to recommendations that every practicing teacher should enroll in a teacher performance development program initiated by TSC to enhance and update teacher pedagogical content knowledge in teaching for an impressive students' academic achievement.

**Keywords:** Academic Achievement, Teacher Characteristics, Pedagogical Knowledge

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## 1.0 Introduction

Students' academic success as measured by test scores is one of the indicators of quality education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2006). Ahmad and Zeb (2022), posit that test and examination scores or marks assigned by teachers depict students' academic achievement. Students' academic achievement is also indicated as an expression of their academic success. Secondary schools' - students' academic achievement is a major indicator of quality education among the youth and the nation in general (Kaya & Erdem, 2021) This achievement is affirmed by Akour and Alenezi (2022) who noted that the performance of students in any academic task has always been of special interest to education stakeholders.

The teacher is the most important factor influencing student learning. This was noted by Qureshi (2023) in their study that investigated the factors that affect learning in America. Díez, and Iraurgi (2020) affirms this statement by observing that teachers are charged with a responsibility of implementing educational policies that translate into educational attainment of learners. The level of teachers' effectiveness in transmitting skills and knowledge to the learners as measured by students' test scores during teaching-learning processes may lead to high or low students' academic gains. This according to Wright et al is despite the students' differences in terms of academic achievement and ability. The implication then is that when all factors are held constant, teacher effectiveness is the greatest contributor to students' learning compared to other factors such as school environment and family background.

According to Ayeni and Bamire (2022) the importance of teachers' contribution to students' academic achievement, seems to be at the top of instructional debate but when trying to identify what aspect of a teacher matter, it becomes difficult (Ayeni & Bamire, 2022).). According to Rivkin et al, researchers have not reached an agreement on the specific teacher characteristics that affect students' academic achievement. On reviewing research findings about teacher characteristics, Hagenauer and Ivanova (2023) did not find any relationship between teacher personalities described as clarity, variability, enthusiasm, task orientation, and approachability, depth of knowledge, interest, and organization on the one hand and students' academic achievement on the other. These research findings point to inconclusiveness and whether teacher characteristics influence students' academic scores. At the same time, the level to which teacher training addresses personality characteristics is still subject to debate (Sancar & Deryakulu, 2021). This implies that more research on teacher personality is required in an endeavor to improve teacher quality.

Teacher certification is another teacher characteristic used to predict students' academic achievement. The study by Toropova and Myrberg (2021) in their research on how teacher characteristics affect students' performance in science pointed out that the results for students' mathematics results taught by qualified and certified teachers were better than those taught by unqualified and uncertified teachers. Lee and Lee (2020) found similar results with a positive correlation index of between 0.51 and 0.71 when distinguishing students results of teachers with full certification and with a major in their subject area and students' results taught by uncertified teachers. These research findings indicate the importance of teacher qualification and certification and the need for researchers and educators to focus more on these aspects in teacher education.

Pedagogical content knowledge is seen as a new kind of knowledge developed based on subject matter mastery, pedagogical knowledge, and contextual knowledge as it can be interpreted in the transformational state. For the first interpretation, coursework in each of the components

would be the most likely form of training, whereas the second would call for training in *situ*, practice simulations and observations in real-life teaching situations (Gess-Newsome 2019). Jacob and Gwany (2020) further elaborate that pedagogical content knowledge is a form of practical knowledge that is used by teachers to guide their actions in a classroom setting. Jacob et al. (2015), add that this understanding impacts other types of professional knowledge and is therefore vital and perhaps the most important constitutive element in the knowledge base of teaching.

Another factor that has been researched is teachers' gender and academic performance. Lee and Rudolf (2019) examined the influence of teacher gender on student academic achievement. They observed that when students are taught by a teacher of the same gender, the students' scores increase and concluded that the influence of teachers' gender on students' achievement cannot be ignored. Gupta and Shukla (2021) in their study about the relationship between teacher gender with student achievement. Their study revealed differences in teacher gender impact on classroom management practices and beliefs in students' learning ability. In light of this evidence, the current study is also aimed at ascertaining teacher gender influence on students' academic performance.

Studies carried out by Makatiani, (2021) confirmed that teacher characteristics influenced learners' performance in Kiswahili subject. Assertive teachers and those who were able to relate well with their students posted good grades compared to those who did not as found out by (Ouma, 2023). Teacher assertiveness was a factor that affected the outlook of the learners toward the subject. In cases where teachers used group instruction approaches and related activities which ensured mutual interaction by the students and the ability to learn from each other, the students were able to post good grades (Bovill, 2020). The studies illustrated that students' performance as a measure of the individual efforts by the teachers and their ingenuity and creativity had a big bearing on their capacities to excel. The current paper therefore sought to establish the nexus between the characteristics of the Kiswahili teachers and students' academic achievement in KCSE performance of Kiambu and Murang'a Counties.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

The concern on the declining academic performance among secondary school students has created considerable interest among backers in the education sector in Kenya. The quality of education and students' performance depends on teachers as mirrored in their day-to-day activities and duties they discharge. Students' academic achievement has been used to determine the effectiveness of teachers and teaching over time. Considering the huge government investment in public education (473,705 billion on education in general and 55.4 billion on free day secondary education in particular in 2019 Kenya's budget). This budget has been observed as unproportional to education output in terms of the quality of students learning outcomes. Despite the increase in qualification of teachers with regard to educational attainment the performance of students in KCSE examination and Kiswahili has not been encouraging as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Kiswahili KCSE Examination Results in Kiambu and Murang’a Counties from the Year 2017 to 2019**

County	Year		
	2017	2018	2019
Kiambu	3.930	4.107	4.644
Murang’a	3.334	3.567	4.795

Source MoE (2019)

Data from the Ministry of Education showed that in the period covering 2017 to 2019, the national Kiswahili KCSE performance slightly improved by 17% with an average mean score of 4.1 and 45% with an average mean score of 3.9 in Kiambu and Murang’a respectively. These overall mean scores indicate performance of 34% and 33% in Kiambu and Murang’a respectively in national exams. The statistics indicate these two counties have been performing poorly in Kiswahili at KCSE in comparison to the national performance.

According to the data from the Ministry of Education in 2018, Murang’a County posted 13,140 (52%) of her 2018 KCSE examination candidates with the lowest mean grades. In 2019 the county posted close to 4 % (3.894) of 30,840 national candidates who had attained E mean grade of E nationally, MOE (2019). In the year 2020, Murang’a and Kiambu posted the least mean scores of 4.3 and 4.4 respectively in comparison to neighboring counties Nyeri and Kirinyaga with mean scores of 4.62 and 4.64 respectively, MOE (2021). The findings necessitated this paper to establish the influence of gender, age and personality characteristics, professional qualification, and Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) on students’ academic performance in Kiswahili in public schools in these two counties.

## 1.2 Objective

To investigate influence of Teachers’ age, gender, and personality characteristics on students’ academic achievement in Kiswahili at KCSE examinations in Kiambu and Muranga counties.

## 1.3 Research Question

What is the influence of teachers’ age, gender, and personality characteristics on students’ academic achievement in Kiswahili?

## 2.0 Literature Review

Teachers’ personalities have been associated with variations in students’ academic performance (Olowookere, 2020). The sub-sections hereunder discuss the influence of teacher’s age, gender, and personality on students’ academic achievement:

A study by Effion and Okeke (2020) sought to determine the influence of teachers’ demographics on academic achievement of secondary school students in Economics in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State in Nigeria. The study involved a total of 92 Economics teachers and 2,940 Economics students. It adopted the ex-post facto research design. Independent t-test analysis and One-way analysis of variance was carried out on data collected at a .05 significant level. The results from the analysis of the data indicated that age of teachers does not significantly influence students’ academic achievement.

In a study done in India by Shah and Udgaonkar (2018) students gave their views concerning their choice of age of instructors in their classroom and reasons behind their choices. A total of 75 second-year MBBS students were involved. In this study most of the students felt that gender or age was not a barrier to teaching so long as the teacher was active and interested in teaching. They felt that experience had a positive influence on teaching. The study showed that the knowledge of the teacher, clarity of thought or idea, the concept, its explanation, confidence of teacher, the organization of lecture material, expertise over the language and the subject, the classroom control and the use of proper audiovisual aids with recent knowledge were important attributes rather than age of a teacher. Contradictory findings were made by Mazzetti and Evers (2022). Who observed that as age advances there is burnout in teaching which results in a negative influence on teaching and students' academic achievement.

Waseka et al. (2016) however noted the downside of older teachers who may also be conservative and not willing to embrace change. Age would be an advantage only if the older teachers were flexible enough to combine modern, effective, and efficient teaching methods with time-tested techniques, this would guarantee better results for their students.

A review of literature on age showed divergent views on influence of age on students' academic achievement. For instance, Shah and Udgaonkar, (2018) and Zedani (2021) agree that older teachers are better than younger teachers in terms of student handling and mastery of subject matter in teaching while others like Mazzetti and Evers (2022) observe that advanced age of a teacher leads to burnout that may negatively affect students' academic achievement. This study sought to reconcile these conflicting findings by assessing the perception of principals, teachers, and students on influence of age on students' academic achievement.

Conflicting findings on the relationship between teachers' gender and students learning are developing in instruction debate. In a study, Banerjee (2018) investigated the effects of teacher gender on students' gain using National Educational Longitudinal Survey (NELS) data on 8<sup>th</sup> graders from the US. They found out that when taught by teachers of their own gender, students performed better. In history for instance, when taught by female history teachers girls performed better. Lee and Rudolf (2019) in a study on Francophone and SubSaharan Africa support this view.

The relationship between gender and learner attainment research findings continues to be complicated. Research done by Timmermans and Rubie-Davies (2023) revealed that teacher gender did not have any significant effect on learners' academic achievement. This was regardless of the variances in students' social, cultural, or economic backgrounds.

Therefore, the debate that female teachers increase girls' academic attainment as male teachers do for male students becomes limited. UNESCO (2000) reports explain that the effects of female teachers could be because of female teachers' inclination to parental role of caring and therefore parents encourage their children to attend schools dominated by female teachers.

In a study carried out by UNESCO (2000), it was established that in Bangladesh, Nepal, India, and Pakistan female teachers were considered more effective in lower classes by supervisors. Learners regarded them as more open and easier to relate with than male teachers. Discussions, focus groups and interviews with principals, pupils, members of the public, and policy makers were used in the study.

However, Hastedt et al., (2021) noted that the relationship between the gender of the teacher and student achievement in the context of single-sex education warranted further research. As observed by Yekha (2020) teachers in rural set-ups are perceived as authority figures and therefore, their teaching practices in class appear the same regardless of their gender Literature

reviewed on teacher's gender influence on students' academic achievement appears not to converge. While Terrier (2020) and, UNESCO (2000, 2005) establish that students taught by female gender performed better than those taught by male teachers, contradicting findings by Timmermans and Rubie-Davies (2023) reveal that teachers' gender did not have a significant influence on students' academic achievement. This study sought to reconcile these divergent views by assessing the perception of principals, teachers and students on teacher's gender influence on students' academic achievement.

Recent evidence has indicated that there is a concern regarding lack of necessary qualities among many teachers today (Adeyemi et al., 2022). Parents, the government, and teachers themselves are worried about this issue, particularly because poor student achievement is being attributed to the ineffectiveness and inadequate personality qualities of teachers. Concerns arise over the potential consequence if the decline in students' performance in national and international examinations persists.

Personal capabilities and training of the teachers for instance the case of experienced examiners with the national examination councils may positively impact student outcomes (Meadows & Black, 2018). This has a bearing on the capacity to infer individual prowess positively and significantly on the part of the teachers and a factor impacting directly on students' academic outcomes. It is on this stance that teacher personality was studied to establish whether indeed it had a bearing on students' examination scores.

The personality traits studied in the literature reviewed namely: efficacy, teachers' outlook towards teaching, attitude and personal capabilities in teaching all result in a positive influence on students' academic results. However, Levin (2021) noted the scarcity of research that investigates the impact of one person's personality style on the success of another person. This gap in the research work raises questions concerning the possible influence of teachers' personality traits on students' academic achievements. As a result, the current study delved further to assess the influence of other teacher personality traits such as social skills and resilience of the teacher all in an effort to establish teacher factors influencing students' academic achievement.

### **3.0 Methodology**

A descriptive survey research design was used. The design was suitable in this paper since it allowed the researcher to collect all the required information without manipulation of study variables. The study targeted 512 principals, 1,172 Kiswahili teachers and 27,450 Form three students in the 512 public secondary schools in Murang'a and Kiambu counties. The paper considered a sample of 797 respondents. The study used questionnaires to collect data from principals, students, and teachers.

## 4.0 Result and Discussion

### 4.1 Instruments' Return Rate

**Table 2: Response Return Rate**

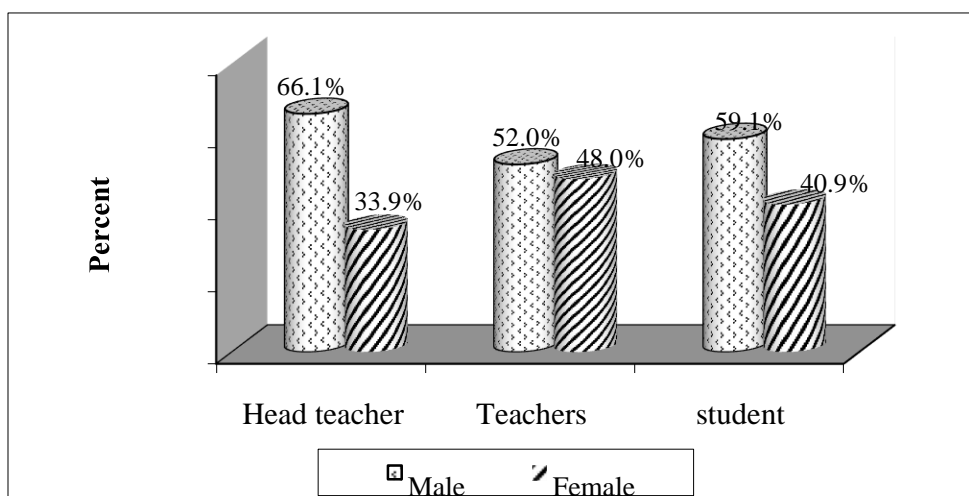
Questionnaire Category	Distributed	Returned	Return Rate (%)
Teachers	299	299	100
Students	395	374	95.0
Principals	103	103	100
Total	797	776	97.3%

Source Author 2020

Table 2 indicates 100% return rate for principals and teachers. However, some of the questionnaires from students were not returned despite the researcher's efforts. The overall return rate-from 797 questionnaires distributed was 97.3%.

### 4.2 Gender of the Respondents

The study comprised principals, teachers, and students. The response per gender is represented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Gender of the respondents**

Majority 68(66.1%) of the principals who were involved in the study were male compared to 35 (33.9%) of their counterparts who were female. Slightly above half 155(52.0%) of teachers were male with 144(48.0%) of them being female. Finally, 221(59.1%) of students were male compared to 153(40.9%) who were female. We can deduce that majority of principals and students were male. Teachers' gender distribution was almost equal. This was a fair representation of gender as it was one of the characteristics of teachers under study.

### 4.3 Principals and Teachers' Length of Service

The study revealed that majority 85(82.5%) of the principals had more than 6 years of experience in service. This was an indication that the principals had engaged in instructional supervisory roles to garner the necessary experience regarding the role played by individual teacher characteristics being a measure of student performance. It can thus be interpreted to

mean that the principals were skilled enough to understand the dynamics around the individual subject performance in their schools and had interacted with the teachers long enough to know how their individual characteristics affected the same.

Further, majority of teachers 177(59.1%) had also more than 6 years in service as Kiswahili teachers. This implies that they had gained enough experience in understanding factors that influences students’ academic performance in Kiswahili at KCSE. The results are tabulated in Table 3.

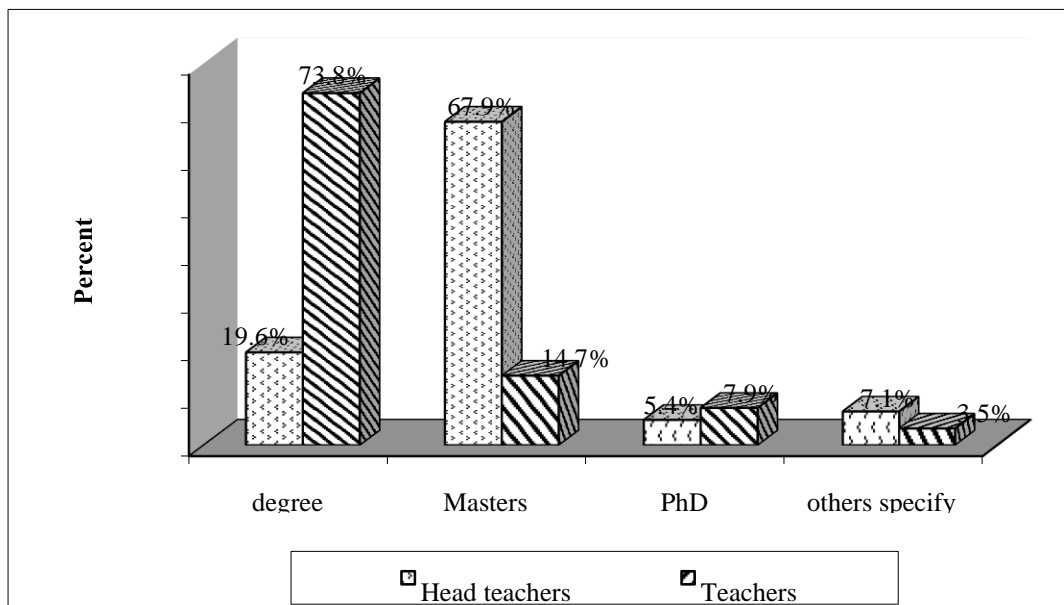
**Table 3: Principals and teacher’s length of service**

Duration	Principals		Teachers	
	N	%	n	%
Less than 1 year	-	-	11	3.7
1-5 years	18	17.5	111	37.1
6-10 years	39	37.9	78	26.1
11-15 years	30	29.1	50	16.7
16+Years	16	15.5	49	16.4
Total	103	100.0	299	100.0

#### 4.4 Principals and Teachers’ Academic Qualification

Majority (73.8%) of teachers were found to have degrees as their highest academic level; similarly, majority a (67.9%) of principals had master’s degrees as their highest level of education. This shows that principals had higher academic qualifications compared to teachers. This was an indication of their efforts towards advancing the academic positions attributed to the fact that the entry point for the teaching profession is the bachelor’s degree. The principals however have strived to acquire higher certification in the quest of achieving the ideals of their administrative offices. This was an indication of enhanced professional improvement as a measure of assuring optimal school administration in the requisite manner. Figure 2 shows principals’ and teachers’ academic qualification.





**Figure 2: Principals and teachers' highest academic qualification**

Presence of PhD holders in the principals' positions further reinforced the basis of advancement of professional qualifications by the individual principals. Others had post graduate diploma qualifications in different areas.

The fact that majority of teachers were degree holders was an indication that most of them had not strived to obtain higher academic qualifications beyond their entry-level in the teaching profession.

**Table 4: Overall, Ratings Teachers Gender on students' academic achievement in Kiswahili at KCSE**

Study Sample	No. of Respondents	Teachers Gender	
		Mean	S. Dev
Principals	103	4.0	1.1
Students	374	3.9	1.2
Teachers	299	3.0	1.4

As shown in Table 4, principals had the highest mean score (M=4.0, SD=1.1), followed by students (M=3.9, SD=1.2) and then finally the teachers (M=3.9, SD=1.2). Table 5 shows the ANOVA test on mean score comparison on the perceived teachers' gender influence among principals, teachers, and students.

**Table 5: ANOVA results for Gender influence on students Achievement in Kiswahili**

Sum of Squares	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between	151.056	2	75.528	46.22	0.000
Within	1263.160	773	1.634		
Total	1414.215	775			

The results of ANOVA test as shown in Table 6 indicates that the perception of teachers' gender influence on student academic achievement in Kiswahili is significant different across principals, students and teachers as indicated by  $F(2, 773) = 46.22, p = .000$ . Additionally, Bonferroni Scheffe post hoc analysis was carried out and established that the perception of teachers-on-teachers gender influence on students' academic differed significantly from that of principals and students with  $p = .000$ . The data shows that both students and principals agreed that teacher's gender is fundamental in supporting interaction in classroom which fosters students' academic in Kiswahili. These findings are supported by Terrier (2020) who revealed that irrespective of the student's gender, students taught by female teachers performed better than those taught by male teachers. Similarly, UNESCO (2000, 2005) reported that female teachers outdo male teachers in impacting students' academic gains.

However, students taught by male teachers attained high in Mathematics. However, findings by Timmermans and Rubie-Davies (2023) revealed that teachers' gender did not have a significant influence on student's academic achievement.

**Table 6: Overall Ratings of Teachers' Age on Students' Academic Achievement in Kiswahili in Kiswahili at KCSE**

Study Sample	No. of Respondents	Teachers Age	
		Mean	S. Dev
Principals	103	4.2	1.1
Students	374	3.6	1.3
Teachers	299	3.4	1.4

As shown in Table 6, principals had the highest mean score ( $M=4.2, SD=1.1$ ), followed by students ( $M=3.6, SD=1.3$ ), and then finally the teachers ( $M=3.4, SD=1.4$ ). Table 6 shows the ANOVA mean comparison of perceived influence of teachers' age on students' achievement.

**Table 7: ANOVA results for teachers Age influence on students Achievement in Kiswahili**

Sum of Squares	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between	44.745	2	22.373	13.20	0.000
Within	1310.589	773	1.695		
Total	1355.335	775			

The results of ANOVA test as shown in Table 7 indicate that perception on influence of teachers age on student achievement in Kiswahili significantly differed across principals, students, and teachers as indicated by  $F(2, 773) = 13.20, p = .000$ . Additionally, Bonferroni Scheffe post hoc analysis was carried out and established that the perception only significantly differed between teachers, students, and the perception of principals and with  $p = .000$ . However, there were no statistically significant difference in perception between teachers and students. Both principals, teachers, and students agreed that teacher's age was key, and it affects how teachers handle a class which fosters student achievement in Kiswahili with the perception being high among principals. These findings concur with those of Hervie and Winful (2018) who established that experienced teachers, who are often the older teachers, have mastery of subject areas and its scope, are well versed in examination techniques, and take keen interest in revision and examination techniques.

**Table 8: Overall Ratings of Teachers' Personality on Students' Academic Achievement in Kiswahili at KCSE**

Study Group	No. of Respondents	Teachers Personality	
		Mean	S. Dev
Principals	103	4.7	0.4
Students	374	4.0	1.2
Teachers	299	4.3	0.6

As shown in Table 8, principals had the highest mean score ( $M = 4.7, SD = 0.4$ ), followed by teachers ( $M = 4.3, SD = 0.6$ ) and then finally the students ( $M = 4.0, SD = 1.2$ ). Table 8 shows the ANOVA mean comparison test on perceived teachers personality influence on students' academic achievement.

**Table 9: ANOVA Results for Teachers’ Personality Influence on Students Achievement in Kiswahili**

Sum of Squares	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between	40.600	2	20.300	23.29	0.000
Within	673.763	773	.872		
Total	714.363	775			

The results of ANOVA test as shown in Table 9 indicate that respondents’ perception of teachers’ personality influence on student achievement in Kiswahili differed significantly across principals, students, and teachers as indicated by  $F(2, 773) = 23.20, p = .000$ . Table 8 shows that principals, teachers and students agreed that teacher’s personality was key, and it affects how teachers handle a class which fosters student achievement in Kiswahili at KCSE. These findings concur with those of done Bashir (2024) who established a strong and statistically significant Pearson correlation ( $r$ ) of 0.477 between teacher attitude towards the curriculum and student average scores and those of Yasin (2021) whose study unveiled that teacher attitude had a substantial effect on the academic performance of pupils of primary schools in Hargeisa districts in Somaliland.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The findings confirmed that teachers’ gender and personality -in particular teachers’ social skills, attitude and resilience are key characteristics that influence students Kiswahili performance at KCSE examination. Teachers’ age had an insignificant influence on students’ academic achievement in Kiswahili at KCSE.

## 6.0 Recommendations

Ministry of Education through the teacher training colleges, may place more emphasis on teachers’ characteristics in terms of, gender and personality as aspects which influence students’ outcomes at KCSE.

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