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Original Article

Relationship Between Students' Attitudes, Towards Kiswahili and Kiswahili Performance in secondary schools in Vihiga County

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Date Published: ABSTRACT

24 May 2022 Attitude has been considered to play a major role in second language learning. Learners' tendencies to like or dislike a subject affected their overall performance.

Keywords: The study examined the relationship that existed between students' attitudes and Kiswahili language performance as well as the relationship between gender and attitude towards Kiswahili. The study employed a cross-sectional survey design. *Attitude, Gender, Performance, Second Language.* A simple random sampling procedure was used to select 45 schools, 343 students and 121 teachers of Kiswahili. The research instruments included questionnaires for teachers, an attitude scale for students, and document analysis guide and the Kiswahili achievement test. The test re-test method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument's results. Descriptive data were analysed by use of means, standard deviations, and percentages, while inferential data were analysed by use of t-test for significance of r and Independent Sample T-tests. The study findings established that there was a significant relationship between student attitude and Kiswahili subject performance. Students with positive attitudes performed better than those who held negative attitudes towards the subject. Regarding gender and attitude, it was evident that the Female students exhibited a positive attitude towards Kiswahili as compared to their male counterparts. Additionally, female students performed better in the Kiswahili subject, but the difference was non-significant. The study recommended that teachers needed to come up with teaching methods that would foster positive attitudes among students, like engaging students in co-curricular activities, symposiums, debates, and dramatising set-books, among others.

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching Kiswahili in Secondary Schools in Kenya

Language is part and parcel of human life as it is the most effective means of human communication. Language also necessitated national and international interaction between people. It was common for people to identify with those who speak the same language as themselves (Simiyu, 2017). Kiswahili is a national language as well as an official language in Kenya. According to Ridwan (2018), a national language is the language of a political, cultural, and social unit. It was usually developed and used as a symbol of national unity, whereas an official language was a language which may be used for government business such as nation's courts, parliament, and administration.

According to the 8-4-4 curriculum, the Kiswahili language is compulsory and examinable in the Primary school level and secondary school. As a result, this subject has been allocated lessons and a number of hours for its teaching and learning. According to the Kenya Institute of Education, Kiswahili has been allocated 5 lessons in Forms 1 and 2 and six lessons in Forms 3 and 4. Being a multilingual country, it is important to note that in most parts of the country, apart from the coastal region, Kiswahili is learnt in schools as a second language after the mother tongue. Any other language learned or acquired after the mother tongue is known as the second language (Hoque, 2019). A second language could be acquired in one's environment or learnt in school. Being a

national language, Kiswahili was used mostly in media, local programmes, and day to day activities in the markets, public transport, outdoor games, and so forth. Generally, the language used in these contexts was not standard; it did not adhere to the grammatical rules of the given language. Being a compulsory and examinable subject, Kiswahili is first taught in nursery schools up to secondary school. It is in school that learners are taught standard Kiswahili as a second language.

According to Djigunovic (2012), second language acquisition tends to be referred to as language learning that is done in a controlled context in a classroom. The second language learning environment encompassed everything the language learner hears and sees in the new language. It may include a wide variety of situations such as exchanges in restaurants and stores, conversations with friends, reading street signs and newspapers, as well as classroom activities, or it may be very sparse, including only language classroom activities and a few books. Regardless of the learning environment, the learner's goal was mastery of the target language (Simiyu, 2017). Most learners have been faced with diverse challenges in the course of learning Kiswahili as a second subject. These ranged from negative attitudes, the influence of mother-tongue, sheng, inadequate time to cover wide content, and biased language policies in schools that favoured English subjects, among others. The study, however focused on the contribution of students' attitudes to their performance.

Students' Attitudes and Kiswahili Language Learning

Kiswahili teaching and learning has been faced with numerous challenges that have immensely affected its performance in secondary schools in Kenya. Apart from teacher factors, teaching and learning resources and environment, students' attitudes have been cited as having a great impact on students' performance in the subject. Ibemenji *et al.* (2021) defined attitude as a person's tendency to think or feelings/ preferences about an object based on their beliefs about the object. It could be regarded as positive or negative and was related to likes and dislikes. An individual's attitude towards any object determines it as good or bad, harmful or beneficial, pleasant or unpleasant, important or unimportant. According to Appiah-Kutbi (2019), in order to learn or acquire a second language, attitude could possibly support or demotivate the learning process as attitude affects learners' motivation for learning. Meaning that students' performance was pegged on whether they liked or disliked the particular subject.

Gettie (2020) observed that students' attitudes were an integral part of learning and should become an essential component of second language learning pedagogy. This was because attitudes influenced one's behaviour, inner mood and therefore learning. Both negative and positive attitudes had a strong impact on the success of language learning. Learning occurs easily when the learner has a positive attitude towards the language and learning. Many scholars have identified learners' attitudes as one of the major factors that influence performance. Attitudes ranged from views that learners held of a particular subject, liking or perception of the learners towards the teacher and teaching methods and rating of the importance of the subject to the learner.

Examining studies conducted on students' attitudes towards Kiswahili, Moraa (2020) established that most students had a negative attitude towards Kiswahili subjects. Learners' attitude was considered to be very important in language teaching because they determined if the learners comprehended what was taught (Mutheu *et al.*, 2019). Wamalwa *et al.* (2020) posited that the importance of attitudes in second language learning hinged on the argument that if people had positive

attitudes toward the language they wanted to learn, they would have a higher motivation to learn the language, and if one had a negative attitude, language learning was considered negative. Reviewing some of the factors that influenced students' attitudes towards the Kiswahili subject, Wamalwa *et al.* (2020) established that Kiswahili was not accorded the same weight as English which in turn influenced Kiswahili language learning negatively.

Gitau (2013) posited that the language policy of a given school affected the attitude of the learners; some schools gave prominence to English at the expense of Kiswahili. The learners therefore, tended to give more attention to English than Kiswahili hence contributing to challenges of Kiswahili curriculum implementation. This called for language departments and schools to enact policies that were unbiased. Consequently, a learner could develop a negative attitude towards teaching methods employed by their subject teacher, possibly due to a lack of proper guidance from teachers on how to go about these activities, lack of exposure to such activities, inadequate resources, and inadequate time (Mutheu *et al.* 2019).

A research study done by Loan (2017) investigated attitude in English for Specific Purpose (ESP) studies and English performance by medical students at Thaibinh University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Vietnam. The respondents involved 82 second-year undergraduate students in seven classes. Results indicated that the English performance of the students for both listening and speaking was poor, meaning they had not met the minimum competency required for English for General Purpose (EGP) and English for Specific Purpose (ESP). The results also indicated that there was a significant relationship between the students' attitudes towards ESP and their English performance.

In Iran, Daviran (2014) Investigated the impact of educational attitudes of students and teachers on the academic achievement of Third Grade Middle school students in Zanjan. The study aimed to investigate the impact of educational attitudes of students and teachers on the academic progress of third-grade middle school students in Zanjan, Iran. The target population of teachers was 766, and that

of students was 7314 (Male= 3776, Female =3538) in third-grade middle schools. The study findings indicated that positive academic attitudes of male students impacted their academic success. Similarly, the academic attitudes of female students impacted their academic success. Finally, the positive academic attitudes of teachers impacted students' success. Therefore, in general, the results indicated that the academic attitudes of male and female students and teachers impacted students' academic achievement.

In Nigeria, Attah *et al.* (2018) investigated whether students' attitudes toward the English language had a significant influence on their academic achievement in the English language. The study took place in Calabar metropolis, Cross River state, and made use of a sample size of 660 senior secondary school two students (SSII) drawn from 22 public secondary schools in Calabar metropolis. The results of the analysis showed that students' attitudes had a significant influence on their academic achievement in the English language in Calabar Metropolis. Finally, in Kenya, Oguta (2014) investigated learners' attitudes towards Kiswahili subjects. A sample of 12 schools, 12 head teachers, 45 teachers of Kiswahili, and 260 pupils was obtained for the study. The study findings indicated that the implementation of the Kiswahili curriculum was influenced by the attitude of the teachers and learners. From the study findings, it was evident that attitudes played a major role in students' performance.

Gender and Attitude in Language Learning

Sabiq *et al.* (2021) used the word gender to refer to males and females' cultural characteristics. Gender was a basic categorisation that was recognised and followed in all human cultures as a source of defining a person and social identity; gender gaps were thought to affect mood and motivation as well as the learning process. Research studies have indicated that gender played a crucial role in language learning as it influenced learning strategies adopted by either gender. Females seemed to outperform males on the listening comprehension test. In essence, girls began to speak earlier than boys, used longer sentences, had more positive attitudes toward reading and had higher

reading achievement than the boys (Akeem *et al.*, 2021).

A study conducted by Muhammad (2020) investigated the gender differences with respect to their attitude and motivation toward English language learning and achievement in English tests on twelfth-grade Pakistani students. The results indicated that there were no significant differences between gender and achievement in language proficiency. Gender did not affect the achievement of students in learning English. Similarly, regarding the gender differences in their motivation to learn English, the study showed that there was no statistically significant difference between males and females in their attitudes and motivation to learn the English language.

Additionally, Wayar (2017) investigating gender-based attitudes of students towards the English language in Nigeria, established that gender played a significant role in second language learning as female learners developed a more positive attitude towards English than their male counterparts. Appiah-Kutbi (2019) conducted a study on the influence of gender on attitudes and motivation towards learning English as a second language in secondary school students in Ghana. The researcher sampled 33 female and 29 male participants, with a total of 62 students participating in the study. The results showed that there were no statistically significant differences between both males and females in their attitudes and motivations to learn the English language. Students' attitudes and motivations were gender-neutral. On the other hand, Wamalwa *et al.* (2020), studying language attitudes and Kiswahili language learning in Primary schools in Kenya also established that gender had an insignificant influence on the attitude towards Kiswahili in Siaya with $p=0.517$ $t=1.439$. $p\text{-value}=0.160$ indicated that the attitude of the male pupils towards the teaching of Kiswahili in Siaya County was not significantly different from the female pupils.

In conclusion, it was evident that results from the various research studies showed conflicting evidence and inconsistencies in learning a second language based on gender differences. Study findings varied depending on the contexts and participants of the study.

Statement of the Problem

The status of Kiswahili has been improving globally over the years. In Africa, it is the second most spoken language after Arabic (Oguta, 2014). This language has been adopted by the East African region and the African Union as a medium of communication alongside English, French, and German, among others. For its growth and development, teachers and students need to embrace its use both in school and outside school. In Kenyan secondary schools, Kiswahili subject is a core compulsory and examinable subject for all candidates at the KCSE level (Mukanzi et al., 2019). Poor performance of this subject experienced in secondary schools in Vihiga county has been partly attributed to negative attitude held by students towards the subject. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between students' attitudes towards Kiswahili and Kiswahili subject performance of secondary schools in Vihiga county.

Research questions

- Is there a relationship between students' attitudes towards Kiswahili and student Kiswahili achievement?
- Does gender influence secondary school students' attitudes toward learning Kiswahili?
- Is there a relationship between gender and Kiswahili subject performance in secondary schools in Vihiga County?

Research Hypotheses

H₁: There is a relationship between students' attitudes and students' performance in Kiswahili subject

H₂: There is a relationship between student gender and attitude towards Kiswahili subject.

H₃: There is a relationship between gender and Kiswahili subject performance in secondary schools in Vihiga county.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research study used a cross-sectional survey design. The target population of the study included: 159 schools and all the 34,188 forms four students drawn from the public secondary school in Vihiga County. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select the participants. A total of 45 schools were selected. Simple random sampling was used to select 343 students.

Data collection instruments used in the study included questionnaires, attitude scales, observation schedule and document analysis guide and Kiswahili achievement test. Content validity of the instrument's results was determined by a panel of experts comprising teachers of Kiswahili and specialists in research. The instruments were then trial tested in two schools in Vihiga county that were not part of the study. The reliability of the instrument's results was estimated using the test-retest technique. A reliability coefficient of 0.8 was obtained.

Data were collected by the researcher. Selected schools were visited and administered the questionnaires, attitude scales, and Kiswahili achievement test to the sampled participants. Descriptive data were analysed using frequencies and percentages. Inferential statistics were analysed by use of a t-test for significance of r and an independent sample t-test.

All the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their consent to participate was sought. Participants' confidentiality was adhered to. No one was coerced to give information

RESULTS

Demographic Data of Respondents

Table 1 shows the number of male and female students who participated in the study.

Table 1: Student Demographics characteristics

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	151	44
	Female	192	56
	Total	343	100

The survey results in *Table 1* showed that there was a slightly higher number of female student respondents (192 (56%)) as compared to male student respondents 151(44%), indicating high female enrolment within public secondary schools in Vihiga county.

Students' Attitudes Towards Kiswahili.

The study also sought to establish the attitudes of secondary school students towards Kiswahili in Vihiga County. This was computed on a Likert scale where students were scored on the basis of whether they strongly agreed, agreed, undecided, disagreed or strongly disagreed. The scale was constructed as follows (SA = 5, A = 4, U = 3, D = 2, SD = 1). The findings are indicated in *Table 2*.

Table 2: Students' Attitude Towards Kiswahili subject Learning

		SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
I like Kiswahili more than other subjects.	f	152	103	50	24	14	1.965	1.1129
	%	44.3	30	14.6	7	4.1		
Kiswahili is a difficult subject.	f	37	57	82	90	77	3.329	1.2862
	%	10.8	16.6	23.9	26.2	22.4		
I study Kiswahili because I have no choice.	f	47	64	120	16	96	3.145	1.373
	%	13.7	18.7	35	4.7	28		
I like speaking correct Kiswahili always.	f	159	95	47	39	3	1.927	1.064
	%	46.4	27.7	13.7	11.4	0.9		
What I learn in Kiswahili is relevant in my life.	f	139	112	59	21	12	1.994	1.0678
	%	40.4	32.7	17.2	6.1	3.5		
Kiswahili will be useful to me in future.	f	139	112	59	20	13	1.997	1.0746
	%	40.4	32.7	17.2	5.8	3.8		
I study Kiswahili in my free time	f	165	92	61	13	12	1.877	1.0552
	%	48.1	26.8	17.8	3.8	3.5		

Source: Field data 2021

The overall mean for students in the Kiswahili subject was 2.3195, as shown in *Table 2* above. This meant that students in Vihiga county had a negative attitude towards the Kiswahili subject. Study findings in *Table 2* showed that 152 students representing 44.3% of the respondents, strongly disagreed that they liked the Kiswahili subject more than any other subjects, 103 representing 30%, disagreed while 50, representing 14.6%, were undecided. Twenty-four students representing 7% of the respondents, agreed to like Kiswahili, while 14 (4.1%) strongly agreed, translating to a mean of

1.9650 (SD = 1.11290). This implied that most students hardly liked Kiswahili more than other subjects.

Further, 37 students (10.8%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that Kiswahili was a difficult subject, 57 (16.6%) disagreed, while 82 (23.9%) were undecided. Ninety students representing 26.2% and 22.2% agreed and strongly agreed, translating to a mean of 3.3294 (SD = 1.28620). The findings implied that most students found Kiswahili to be a difficult subject. As to whether the students

studied Kiswahili because they had no choice, 47 (13.7%) students strongly disagreed, 64 (18.7%) disagreed, and 120 (35%) were undecided. Sixteen (4.7%) students agreed, whereas 96(28%) strongly agreed with the statement giving a mean of 3.1458 (SD = 1.37300), implying that students rarely studied Kiswahili because they had no choice. Kobia (2013) further established that students' negative attitudes towards Kiswahili were partly due to the fact that the subject was a compulsory one and examinable at the secondary level

The findings further portrayed that 159(46.4%), 95(27.7%), and 47(13.7%) of the respondents were strongly disagreed, disagreed and were undecided, respectively, that they always liked speaking correct Kiswahili, whereas 39(11.4%) and 3(0.9%) agreed and strongly agreed respectively, giving a mean response of 1.9271, (SD = 1.06400) implying that there was a gap in the attitude of students towards Kiswahili as a subject. The importance of attitudes in second language learning hinged on the argument that if people had positive attitudes towards the language they wanted to learn, they would have a higher motivation to learn the language. According to Kobia (2013), positive attitudes enhance the learning and acquisition of relevant language skills. Negative attitudes toward a second language hindered its learning and academic achievement in the language. Likewise, if one had a negative attitude, language learning was considered negative. Wamalwa et al. (2020) indicated that a huge number of the students moderately loved speaking Kiswahili correctly; this could be an indication of a dearth of school policies that fostered Kiswahili usage outside classrooms as well as co-curricular activities that encourage the use of Kiswahili for instance debates within public secondary schools

Further, 139(40.5%), 112(32.5%) and 59(17.2%) of students Strongly disagreed, disagreed and undecided, respectively, that what they learned in Kiswahili was relevant in their lives, whereas

21(6.1%) and 13(3.8%) agreed and strongly agreed respectively, giving a mean response of 1.9942 (SD = 1.06786) implying that students did not view Kiswahili to be relevant in their lives. As to whether Kiswahili would be useful in the future, 139(40.5%), 112(32.5%) and 59(17.2%) of the students strongly disagreed, disagreed and were undecided, respectively. Whereas 20(5.8%) and 13(3.8%) agreed and strongly agreed, giving a mean response of 1.9971 (SD = 1.07469), indicating that most students in public secondary schools deem Kiswahili to be moderately useful to them in the future. The review concurred with the findings obtained by Wamalwa *et al.* (2020) that established that most teachers insisted that Kiswahili being an African language, was not as important as English. This assertion influenced learners' decisions in terms of the language they put more effort into during their personal study times.

About studying Kiswahili in their free time, 165(48.1%), 92(26.8%) and 61(17.8%) strongly disagreed, disagreed and were undecided, whereas 13(3.8%) and 12(3.5%) agreed and strongly agreed, translating to a mean of 1.8776 (SD = 1.05528). This implied that the majority of the students rarely studied Kiswahili in their free time.

Students' Attitude and Kiswahili Subject Performance

The study sought to establish how students' attitudes affected Kiswahili subject performance. Students were grouped into two. Kiswahili subject scores of students with positive and negative attitudes were computed to get the mean scores and the standard deviations. According to Veresova and Mala (2016)) the Academic achievement of a student was the ability of the student to study and remember facts and being able to communicate his knowledge orally or in written form even under examination conditions. The findings are presented in *Table 3*.

Table 3: Students' Attitude and Kiswahili subject performance

Students' attitude	N	Mean	SD
Positive attitude towards Kiswahili	148	67.59	13.79
Negative attitude towards Kiswahili	195	34.43	13.76
Total	343	48.74	21.44

Findings in *Table 3* indicated that students with positive attitudes toward Kiswahili attained a mean of 67.59 (SD = 13.79), while those with a negative attitude towards Kiswahili attained a mean of 34.43 (SD = 13.76). The findings implied that students with positive attitudes toward Kiswahili performed better than those with negative attitudes toward the subject. The study agreed with that of Sabiq et al. (2021) conducted in Indonesia, which indicated that both male and female students revealed moderately high attitudes and motivation toward English subjects; however, female students showed a higher average score in the survey.

Relationship between gender and Attitudes of Secondary School Students in Vihiga County Towards Kiswahili

The study also sought to establish students' attitudes towards Kiswahili subjects by gender. It was necessary to find out the attitudes exhibited by male and female students towards Kiswahili in public schools found in Vihiga County. The findings are shown in *Table 4*.

Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations of Students' Attitudes towards Kiswahili by gender

Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD
Female	192	2.7708	1.42512
Male	151	2.4636	1.23707
Total	343	2.6356	1.35233

Source: Field data 2021

From the results shown in *Table 4*, it was observed that female students had a mean attitude of 2.7708 (SD = 1.42512) and the Male students (M = 2.4636, SD = 1.23707). The findings implied that most female students liked the Kiswahili subject as compared to their male counterparts.

Relationship between gender and Kiswahili subject performance

Kiswahili scores from both male and female students were computed and analysed to obtain their means and standard deviations. The findings are presented in *Table 5* below.

Table 5: Mean scores and standard deviations of Kiswahili performance of students in Vihiga county by gender

Student gender	Mean	N	SD
Male	45.41	151	16.65
Female	48.09	192	17.92
Total	46.91	343	17.4

The results in *Table 5* indicated that Female students attained a mean of 48.09 (SD = 17.7) while the Male students attained a mean of 45.41 (SD = 16.65). The findings implied that female students in Vihiga County performed better in Kiswahili subjects as compared to the male students. Daviran (2014) concluded that positive academic attitudes of male students impacted their academic success. Similarly, the academic attitudes of female students impacted their success.

Hypothesis testing

Relationship between Students Attitudes towards Kiswahili and Performance.

The study adopted Pearson's Product moment correlation for the significance of r to establish how students' attitudes affected Kiswahili subject performance. The first null hypothesis was as follows:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between attitudes of secondary school students in Vihiga

County towards Kiswahili and their Kiswahili achievement.

A Pearson product-moment correlation was run to determine the relationship between students' attitudes in Kiswahili and performance in the subject. There was a strong positive correlation between attitudes and performance, which was statistically significant ($r=0.605$, $n=125$, $p=.000$). The correlation coefficient, r , tells us about the strength of the linear relationship between student attitude and performance in Kiswahili. However,

the reliability of the linear model also depended on how many observed data points were in the sample hence the need to look at both the value of the correlation coefficient r and the sample size. A hypothesis test of the significance of the correlation was performed to decide whether the linear relationship in the sample data was strong enough to use to model the relationship in the population.

Ho₁: There is no relationship between students' attitudes and students' performance in Kiswahili subject performance.

Table 6: Correlations between student attitudes and students' performance in Kiswahili

		Students' Attitude toward Kiswahili	Students' Performance	Kiswahili
Students' attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	-.767**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	343	343	
Kiswahili Performance	Pearson Correlation	-.767**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	343	343	

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

Calculation of T-Test for Significance of r

The study used the t-test for the significance of r to decide whether the linear relationship in the sample data is strong enough to use to model the relationship in the population. The correlation coefficient (r_{xy}) will be used in the t-test, as shown below.

$$t = \frac{r\sqrt{n-2}}{\sqrt{1-r^2}} = \frac{0.767\sqrt{341}}{\sqrt{1-0.767^2}} = 0.767\sqrt{828.3} = 0.767 \times 28.78 = 22.074$$

The calculated value is 22.07

In order to test for the significance of the correlation coefficient in the relationship between attitudes towards Kiswahili and student performance in the Kiswahili subject. The t-test for significance of r was performed. Results indicated that the t observed (22.07) was greater than the t critical value of (1.98) at a 0.05 level of significance. The study, therefore, rejected the null hypothesis of no relationship and concluded that there was a significant relationship between students' attitudes and performance in Kiswahili. The results suggested that with improved

student attitudes towards Kiswahili, there is a probability of an increase in performance. Therefore, schools that focus on encouraging positive attitudes among students with respect to Kiswahili were likely to report improved performance among students. According to Addisu (2020), students' attitudes are an integral part of learning and should become an essential component of second language learning pedagogy. This was because attitudes influenced one's behaviour, inner mood, and therefore learning. Both negative and positive attitudes have a strong impact on the success of language learning.

Findings of the study on the relationship between students' attitudes towards Kiswahili and performance agreed with the findings of Loan (2017), which examined attitude in English for specific purpose studies and English performance by medical students. The study findings established that there was a significant relationship between students' attitudes toward English studies and the student's English performance. Similarly, the study findings were in agreement with Attah et al. (2018), who investigated whether students' attitudes towards the English language had a significant

influence on their academic achievement in the English language. The results of the analysis showed that students' attitudes had a significant influence on their academic in English in Calabar. Oguta (2014) investigated learner attitudes towards Kiswahili subjects and found that the implementation of the Kiswahili curriculum was influenced by the attitude of the teachers and learners.

Relationship between gender and attitudes towards Kiswahili subject

The second null hypothesis was tested by an independent sample t-test. The findings are indicated below.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between student gender and attitude towards Kiswahili subject

Table 7: Independent Sample Test Results of Student Gender and Attitude in Kiswahili

		Lavene's test of equality	Test of equality of means			
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig. 2 tailed
Attitudes	Equal Variances Assumed	3.587	0.05	-2.099	341	0.037
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.135	337.65	0.033
						Mean diff
						-0.3072
						-0.3072

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare the mean attitudes of male and female students towards the Kiswahili subject. From the study findings in *Table 7*, the F value of 3.587 and significant value of .05 were equal to the p-value of 0.05; hence equal variance of the data was assumed. Consequently, the study also revealed $t(341) = -2.099$, $p = 0.037$ was found to be less than 0.05. Therefore, the study rejected the Null hypothesis of no difference between means of male and female students' attitude towards Kiswahili subject implying that there was a significant relationship between gender and attitude towards Kiswahili subject. The study agreed with that of Akeem et al. (2021), which revealed that there was a positive and meaningful relationship between the scores of the participants. Gender affected English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' attitudes and motivation as female participants' mini-AMTB were found to be higher than those of male participants.

Relationship between gender and Kiswahili performance

The study sought to establish whether there was a significant difference between the mean scores of female and male students in the Kiswahili subject. The substantive hypothesis stated that there was a relationship between gender and student performance in the Kiswahili subject. The Null hypothesis was as follows:

H₀₃ There is no significant difference between the mean scores of female and male students in the Kiswahili subject

An independent sample test was conducted to compare the performance of male and female students in the Kiswahili subjects in secondary schools in Vihiga County. The findings are indicated in *Table 8*.

Table 8: Independent Sample Test Results of Student Gender and Performance in Kiswahili

		Levene's test for equality of variance	Test of equality of Means			
		F	Sig	t	Df	Sig 2. tailed
Equal Variance assumed		.942	.332	-1.420	341	.157
				-1.432	331.65	.153
						Mean diff
						-2.683
						-2.683

From the study findings in *Table 8*, the F value of .942 and significant value of .332 were greater than the p-value of 0.05; hence equal variance of the data was assumed. Consequently, the study also revealed that $t(341) = -1.420$, $p=0.157$ was found to be greater than 0.05. Therefore, the study did not reject the Null hypothesis of no difference between means of male and female students in Kiswahili subject performance. This meant that even though the female students performed better than the male students in the Kiswahili subject, the difference between the mean scores of the two genders in the Kiswahili subject performance was not significant. The study findings were in agreement with Kang'ahi et al. (2012), which revealed a statistically non-significant difference between males and females in Kiswahili language examination $t(315) = 0.79$, $p = .94$.

CONCLUSION

The research study established that students with a positive attitude towards Kiswahili performed better than those with negative attitudes. Secondly, in relation to gender and attitudes, female students exhibited positive attitudes towards Kiswahili as compared to their male counterparts. Finally, female students performed better in Kiswahili than the male students in Vihiga county, although the mean difference was not significant. Most students admitted to not liking Kiswahili subject because they did not view it as relevant and useful in their future.

Recommendations

Teachers should come up with teaching methods that would foster positive attitudes toward Kiswahili among students like engaging them in co-curricular activities involving Kiswahili such as reciting of poems, debates, symposiums, dramatisation of set-books among others. Secondly, the administration should implement language policies and practices that would actively involve the male students and improve their attitudes towards Kiswahili. This could be done through provision of role models and Kiswahili motivation speakers.

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