

School Culture and Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Trans Nzoia County, Kenya

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Abstract- The educational performance of a learning institution is crucial in the attaining educational goals. Thus, the provision of quality education and subsequent high academic performance in school is inevitable for the realization of millennium development goals and the vision 2030. The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of school culture on academic performance in public secondary schools in Trans Nzoia County in Kenya. The study was considered significant and timely because the government, parents and other stakeholders in education spent a lot of resources in education. The study targeted 257 public secondary schools. Using census, all the 257 Directors of Studies from 257 schools were sampled, and 5 Teachers Service Commission Sub-County Director were purposively sampled. A Questionnaire and interview schedule were used for data collection. Data was analysed using frequencies, percentages, weighted averages, simple regression and multi-regression analysis. The study established that school culture significantly influenced academic performances in public secondary schools in Trans Nzoia.

Index Terms- Academic, Culture, Performance, School

I. INTRODUCTION

School culture refers to the kind of underlying norms, values, beliefs, rituals and traditions that make up the unwritten rules of think, feel, and act in an organization that affects performance in schools (DeWalt, DeWalt & Wayland, 2011). In a similar regard, according to Özdemir (2012), school culture is a whole of the values, beliefs, and norms peculiar to the school. To understand the culture of a school, symbols, traditions, ceremonies, rites, legends, and stories doing the rounds representing the school may be examined (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). Culture can be observed when the informal and unwritten relations among people are being investigated. Colley (1999) also considered the school culture as a structure that incorporates various students, teachers, school administration, and parents. It may be said that values adopted by school for years and attitudes of those working at school, of students receiving an education there and of parents of students in question are effective in the formation of the school culture. Thus, school culture refers to the reliance, perceptions, relationships, attitudes, and written and

verbal rules that produce and walk every aspect of how a school purpose and positive school culture is helpful to professional satisfaction, morale, and effectiveness, as well as to student learning, fulfillment, and success (Logan, 2019).

The school leader is responsible for forming a strong and positive school culture at school in the first place. School leaders have an important place in forming positive school culture at school by creating a common vision, placing importance on cooperation and a common participation in administration, and having effective communication with the people working at school (Köker & Yeniçeri, 2013). According to Gümüşeli (2006), the first thing that a principal should do on school culture is to create a strong school culture. School administration is responsible for the formation and conservation of strong school culture to a large extent. Therefore, the principal should know about what elements are forming the culture and s/he should define the school in which s/he is the principal by analyzing the school within that knowledge. Thus, sub-cultures that have destructive effects can not appear in strong school culture. There are common goals in the schools that have a strong and positive school culture and they are shared among people working there; those who work there are motivated to teach. To appreciate the achievements of students and teachers, some ceremonies are being held. They have become traditional; heroic stories have been doing the rounds unofficially; predetermined criteria are determined by the good works and developments of students (Deal & Peterson, 1998). Students are much more eager to learn at the schools having a strong school culture (Köker and Yeniçeri, 2013) It can be said that strong and positive school culture is formed by the school principal, teachers, and students. It can be expressed that the above-mentioned people have close relations with each other on the matter of realizing the common goals of the school

Harper (2019) stated that students are the most especially impacted by school culture and, in some ways, the most responsible for its execution on the bottom level. It only makes sense for school leaders to comprise their voices in efforts to create a more positive school culture. Positive school culture is a position where the efforts are pass on into positive experiences for both staff and students. Success, beatitude, and fulfillment are all the main features of positive school culture. When the school has a positive culture, teachers are thrilled to work because they see the bigger picture, and students are in a functional capacity, mentally

and emotionally to learn (Raudys, 2018). The academic performance of a student is important in every society. This is because of the belief that academic performance leads to success in life. Many factors come to play in determining one's academic performance. This study explored the influence of school culture on academic performance is discussed in the following sub section.

Hamida (2018) explored the influence of school culture and its influence on the students' performance in KCSE in public secondary schools in Mombasa County, Kenya. The study adopted descriptive survey design and was guided by Schein (1996) and Trompenar's (1998) theories on school organizational culture. Target population of schools was 25 Public secondary schools but only 8, thus 8 Principals and 8 Form 4 Class teachers were sampled using purposive sampling techniques. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to sample 200 Form Four Students. Therefore, a total of 216 respondents were involved in the study. A questionnaire was employed in data collection. The split-half technique and Spearman rank order correlation coefficient technique was used to establish reliability. Quantitative data organization was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program and was analysed using descriptive statistics and the results presented in form of graphs, pie charts, frequency distribution tables and explanatory statements. Data analysis showed that school culture influence students' performance in KCSE. In these regard, Hamida (2018) adopted descriptive survey design where results may have reflected certain level of bias due to the absence of statistical tests (Aggarwal and Ranganathan, 2019). To fill the gap, the current study used ex post facto research design.

Elsewhere, Melesse (2018) investigated the contribution of school culture to students' academic achievement in secondary and preparatory schools of Assosa zone, Benshangul Gumuz Regional State, Ethiopia. A mixed research approach was used. A study sample comprised of 82 teachers, 258 students, 5 school principals, and 3 school cluster supervisors. Research instruments; a questionnaire for students and teachers, interview with school principals and cluster supervisors were used. Percentages and one sample *t*-test were used to analyze the data. The quantitative data confirmed that the contribution of school culture to students' academic achievement was found statistically significant. Apparently, Hamida (2018) used a *t*-test to measure the statistical significance of the variables, which sometimes yields unreliable output depending on the data collected and the assumption of the *t*-test (Sadler *et al.*, 2007). In filling the gap, the current study employed regression analysis.

Further, Mutua (2014) explored the effects of school culture on students' performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education Examination in Matungulu district, Machakos County, Kenya. This study used descriptive survey design. The target population for this study was 35 head teachers, 336 teachers and the 8571 students in the district totaling to about 8,945 respondents. Stratified and random sampling technique was used to select the sample for the study. The sample size comprised of 333 respondents, categorized as all 9 head teachers in the nine sampled schools, 67 teachers (20% of the 336 teachers) and 257 students (3% of the 8571 students). Data was collected by use of questionnaires and was analysed by use of descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that the elements of

school culture affects the performance of students in KCSE examination in Matungulu District. Apparently, Mutua (2014) employed only one research tool which could not address issues like biasness in research. Therefore, generalization of the findings was to be done with a lot caution. The current study will use more than one research instruments to make the results more reliable, that is triangulation.

In relation to this study, Nakanwagi, Kagambirwe and Karim (2016) examined influence of school culture on student academic performance in private secondary schools in Wakiso district in Uganda. The study adopted a cross-sectional design in which both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were used to obtain data from a sample of 92 respondents who included head teachers, teachers and students. Data were collected using questionnaires and interviews. At univariate level, the quantitative data were presented in form of means to show the central tendency of responses. At bivariate level, the Pearson correlations and simple linear regressions were used to show the direction of relationship and the magnitude at which the independent variables affect the dependent variable. The study concluded that school culture has a positively significant influence in performance. However, since Nakanwagi, Kagambirwe and Karim (2016) carried out a study in Uganda, these limited generalizability of the study findings to other populations or countries including Kenya. To address the gap, the current study sought to investigate the influence of school culture on academic performance in Trans Nzoia County.

In a study by Sowid (2019) on school culture to students' academic performance, especially in a low-income community in southern Malmo at an elementary school where 9th graders were given the opportunity to participate. The study was anchored on identity theory (Burke and Stets, 2009). Descriptive survey design was used for this study. This research used a web-based survey as a method for gathering data. Nine (09) students answered a survey anonymously. The study concluded that school culture does play a part in affecting students' performance. In this regard, Sowid (2019) used qualitative approach which is not enough to address the research problem as the researcher may have influenced the conclusions researched through biasness. These, therefore limits generalizability of the findings to other populations. However, the current study employed both quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a better understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2012).

Njuguna (2021) explored school-based factors influencing academic performance of public primary schools in Murang'a South Sub County. The study adopted a descriptive survey design utilizing both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The study involved a sample of 21 deputy head teachers, 105 teachers and 210 pupils making a total of 336 participants. Data was collected using a pupils' questionnaire, focus group discussions for the deputy head teachers and teachers, and an observation checklist. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics: quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 17. The study concluded that lack of shared vision and focused mission significantly influenced academic performance. However, Njuguna (2021) findings were limited to generalizability as the researcher focused on academic performance in Primary schools. The current study sought to address the gap.

Bektas, et al. (2015) established the relationship between school culture and academic achievement in schools in Turkey. 54 studies of which only 25 can be included to the meta-analysis were examined in literature review. The study engaged a sample group of 20,287 people, formed by gathering 25 independent studies. The effect of school culture on students' academic achievement was tested through meta-analysis. Meta-analysis is a technique to find an effect size by combining the findings of independent quantitative studies on a specific issue statistically (Lipsey and Wilson 2001). Based on the findings of analysis which were made by using random effects model, there were no publication bias in the obtained data and it was confirmed that school culture had a statistically significant effect on students' academic achievement. The carried study employed a mixed approach to fill the gap.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which has enough provision for protection from bias and maximizes reliability (Kothari, 2016). In addition, the design was appropriate for this study because it is flexible and allows the researcher to get clarity of information given the diversity of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection (Orodho, 2013).

2.2 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Table 1: Sampling frame

Population Category	Target Population	Sample Proportion (%)	Sampling Technique	Sample Size
Schools	161	30	Simple Random	48
Principals	161	30	Purposive	48
Students respondents	959	15.6	Simple Random	150
Class Teachers	220	50	Simple Random	110
Total	1340			308

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. School Culture and Academic Performance

The study assessed the influence of school culture on academic performance in public secondary schools in Trans Nzoia County in Kenya. Subsection 3.2 describe the findings of the sample, 3.3 describes assumptions of linear regression, 3.4 indicates the correlation analysis results and 3.5 indicates the test of study hypothesis using linear regression analysis.

3.2. Descriptive Statistics on School Culture and Academic Performance

The researcher asked the respondents to state to what extent is the school culture in public secondary schools in Trans Nzoia County in Kenya in favor of academic performance and the findings were as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: The School Culture among Public Secondary Schools in Trans-Nzoia County: Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1, Disagree (D) = 2, Somewhat Agree (SWA) = 3, Agree (A) = 4, Strongly Agree (SA) = 5.

Involvement	SD	D	SWA	A	SA	Mean	% Mean
The school has sound academic values.	12	18	33	132	39	3.72	74.4%
	5.1%	7.7%	14.1%	56.4%	16.7%		
Clearly displayed and directional Motto, Mission and Vision.	5	98	45	35	51	3.12	62.4%
	2.1%	41.9%	19.2%	15.0%	21.8%		
Students are motivated for good academic performance	17	20	38	132	27	3.56	71.2%
	7.3%	8.5%	16.2%	56.4%	11.5%		
Friendly and supportive learning environment	13	15	125	56	25	3.28	65.6%
	5.6%	6.4%	53.4%	23.9%	10.7%		
The school has developed and committed to sound strategic objectives	13	9	109	54	49	3.5	70.0%
	5.6%	3.8%	46.6%	23.1%	20.9%		
The teachers are committed to high academic achievement	7	18	120	44	45	3.44	68.8%
	3.0%	7.7%	51.3%	18.8%	19.2%		
Average Level of positive School Cultural practices towards academic performance	Mean (%Mean)	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	Min.	Max.		
	3.4366(69.3%)	.68075	.04450	1.17	5.00		

Source: Teachers field data

From table 1, the findings show that most of the respondents, 56.4% and 16.7% agreed and strongly agreed that their respective schools have sound academic values while 7.7%

and 5.1% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that their respective schools have sound academic values. On average, the mean score was 3.72 (74.4%) rated highly satisfactory. These findings indicates that most of the teachers feel that public

secondary schools in Trans Nzoia County have sound academic values.

Similarly, majority of the respondents, 56.4% and 11.5% agreed and strongly agreed respectively that their students were motivated for academic performance while 8.5% and 7.3% disagreed and strongly disagreed that their students were motivated for good work. However, most of these public secondary schools in Trans Nzoia County seem not to have clearly displayed and directional Motto, Mission and Vision to guide them on the school strategic direction as indicated by majority of the respondents, 41.9% and 2.1% who disagreed and strongly disagreed that their respective schools had clearly displayed and directional Motto, Mission and Vision.

Similarly, the surrounding learning environment seem not to be adequately friendly and supportive enough for the students to pursue their studies as indicated by majority of the respondents, 53.5% who somewhat agreed that their schools had friendly and supportive learning environment with average mean score of 3.28 (65.6%) rated moderately satisfactory (see table 1).

Most of the schools seem to have the strategic objectives but not much committed to making sure that they are implemented as indicated by majority of the respondents, 46.6% who somewhat agreed that their schools had developed and committed to sound strategic objectives, and the average mean score was 3.5 (70.0%) rated satisfactory (see figure 1 above). Eubank and Heather (2012) opine that implementation of effective school discipline was not successful due to a school culture that did not allow professional dialogue. The level of commitment to high academic achievement among the teachers of the selected public secondary schools in Trans Nzoia County as indicated by 51.3% who somewhat agreed that in their respective schools' teachers are committed to high academic achievement, and the average mean score was 3.44 (68.8%) rated moderately satisfactory.

On average, the school cultural practices that support academic performance in the Public Secondary Schools in Trans-Nzoia County rated moderately supportive at 69.3% (see table 1). These findings were an indication that the school cultures among the Public Secondary Schools in Trans-Nzoia County were moderately favorable to teaching and learning.

3.3. Linear Regression Assumptions

In this section, linear regression analysis was used to test study second hypothesis with the aim of assessing for the significant influence of school culture on the academic performance among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County. To ascertain if the linear regression model was the best to model the influence of school culture on the academic performance among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County, the researcher carried out linear regression assessments which included Linearity, Normality, homoskedasticity and outliers. The findings are as shown in sub-sections 3.3.1, 3.3.2, and 3.3.3 respectively.

3.3.1. Test for Linearity

Normal probability plot was adopted to assess linear relationship between school culture and the academic performance among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County. The findings were as shown in figures 1.

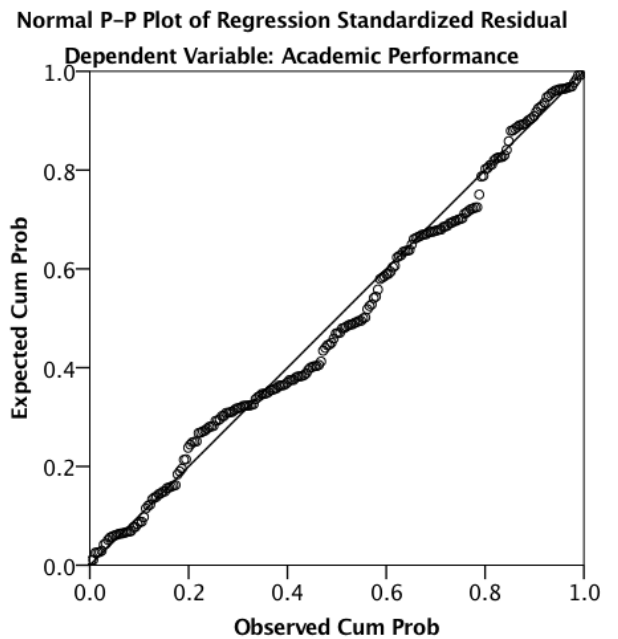


Figure 1: School Culture probability plot

The findings of figure 1 shows that the residual points are lying relatively along the straight diagonal line. This is indicating a linear relationship between school culture and the academic performance among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County.

3.3.2. Test for Normality.

In this study, Histogram of residuals was used to assess if the normal distribution of the staffing status variable scores. The findings were as shown in Figure 2.

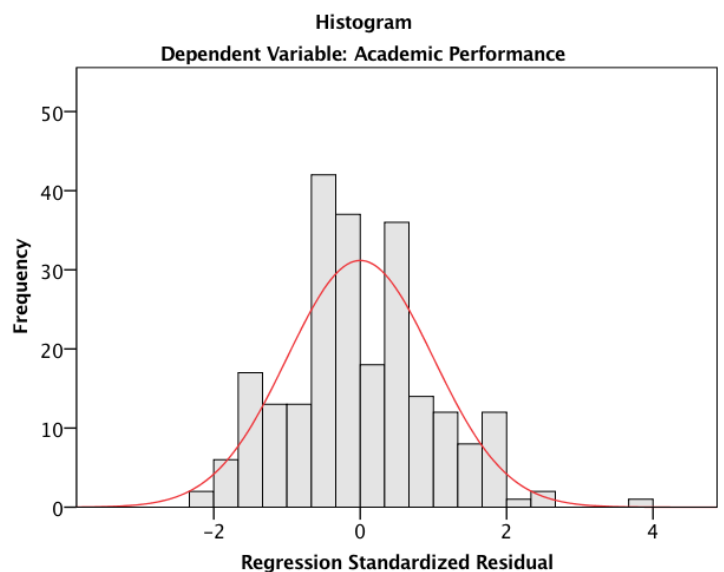


Figure 2: School Culture Histogram

The findings of figure 2 shows that the distribution curve is symmetrical in shape, an indication that the scores for school culture variables are normally distributed.

3.3.3. Test for Homoskedasticity and Outliers.

Homoscedasticity refers to a situation where the amounts of variance exhibited by the dependent variable across the range of values for an independent variable (Gill *et al.*, 2010). In this research, residual plot was used to assess homoscedasticity for the regression analysis between school culture and the academic performance among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County and findings of this test were as shown in figure 3.

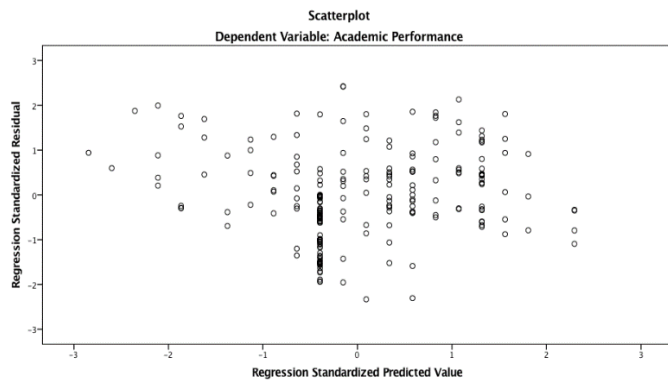


Figure 3: Residuals plot for School Culture

From the findings of Figure 3, it is evident that most of the residual points for the school culture are roughly distributed in a rectangular shape, and that most of the points are concentrated around the centre. This indicates homoscedasticity thus linear regression assumption of homoscedasticity holds. Similarly, all the residual points are within the range of +3 to -3 standard deviations on either axis. This indicates that there were no outliers in the scores for the relationship between school culture and the academic performance among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County.

3.4. Correlation Between School Culture and the Academic Performance among the Public Secondary Schools of Trans-Nzoia County

The researcher sought to assess the strength a direction of the relationship between school culture and the academic

performance among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County. To achieve this, Pearson moment correlation analysis was used and the findings were as shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: Correlation School Culture and the Academic Performance

		Academic Performance
<i>School culture</i>	Correlation coefficient (r)	0.619
	p-value	0.00
	N	234

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

Source: field data

The results of table 2 shows that the Pearson moment correlation coefficient was $r = 0.619$, $p\text{-values} = 0.000 < 0.05$. This significant correlation coefficient above 0.5 indicates that there was a strong linear correlation between school culture and the academic performance among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County. The positive coefficient indicated that there was a positive relationship between school culture and the academic performance among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County such that an improvement in the school culture is likely to lead to enhanced academic performance among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County.

3.5. Linear Regression between School Culture and the Academic Performance

The study objective was to assess the relationship between school culture and the academic performance among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County. To achieve this, the study tested the following null hypothesis (H_0);

H_0 : School culture has no significant influence on the academic performance among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County.

The findings were as shown in table 3 below

Table 3: Linear Regression of School Culture has no Significant Influence on the Academic Performance among the Public Secondary Schools of Trans-Nzoia County

Model Summary						
Model	r	r-square	Adjusted r-square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.619	.383	.380	.78207		
ANOVA						
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	
1 Regression	88.108	1	88.108	144.055	.000	
Residual	141.898	232	.612			
Total	230.006	233				
Coefficients						
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	p-value
	β	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	.532	.264			2.020	.045
School Culture	.903	.075	.619		12.002	.000

Source: field data

The findings of table 3 shows that the Analysis of variance (ANOVA) F-statistic was found to be significant; $F(1, 232) = 144.055$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$; the significant F-Statistics indicates that the linear regression model was a good fit to model the relationship between the school culture and the academic performance among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County. The model (school culture among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County) was able to explain 38% of the variation in the academic performance among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County as indicated by the $r\text{-square} = 0.380$ (see table 3).

The linear regression Coefficients findings in Table 3 shows that the unstandardized beta coefficient for the school culture among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County was significant; $\beta = 0.903$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$; the study therefore rejected the null hypothesis (H_0) that ‘School culture has no significant influence on the Academic Performance among the Public Secondary Schools of Trans-Nzoia County’. These results in Table 3 demonstrate that school culture had a significant influence on the academic performance among the public secondary should be rigor for necessary construction of school culture supporting the academic performance of students.

School culture among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County had a positive standardized beta coefficient value of 0.619 as shown in the coefficients results of table 3; these findings indicate that a unit improvement in the school culture among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County is likely to improve academic performance in KCSE among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County by 61.9%. The regression coefficients result also shows that the constant (slope) in the linear regression model is statistically significant; $\beta = 0.532$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ (see table 3); this finding indicates that, besides the school culture, there are other factors which had not been captured in the model that significantly affects the academic performance

in KCSE among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County. To predict the academic performance in KCSE among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County in relation to school culture, the study suggested use of the following model;

$$\text{Academic Performance} = 1.716 + 0.664 \text{ School Culture}$$

The empirical findings on the school culture and its influence on the academic performance of the selected Public Secondary Schools in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya was complemented by the key informants who stated that school culture influenced academic performance among the public secondary schools of Trans-Nzoia County as shown in figure 4 below.

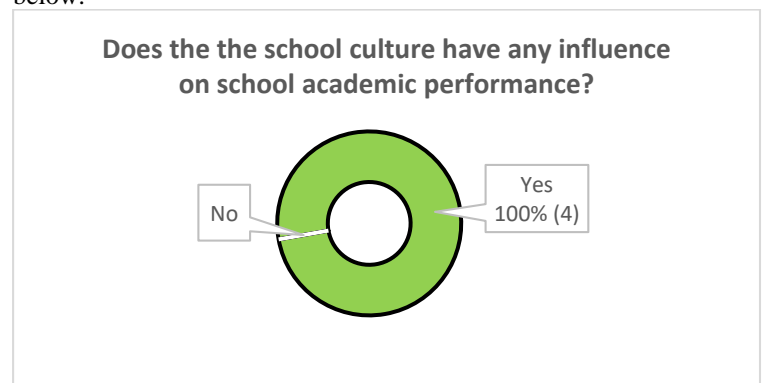


Figure 4: Key Informants on School Culture and Academic Performance

The findings of figure 4 shows that all the key informants (100%) agreed that school culture contributes towards the academic performance of the schools. It was noticed that some of the schools had a poor academic culture such as late coming to school among teachers and students, absenteeism, negative attitude towards teaching and learning which significantly derailed

the academic performance as stated in one of the quotes below:

'School cultures have made some schools continue recording poor academic performance every year. Unless these cultures are done away with, don't expect miracles to happen in their academic performance'.

The findings in Table 3 agrees with the interview data, that poor school cultures have contributed to the low academic performances among the public secondary schools in Trans Nzoia County in Kenya thus need for turning away from the poor cultures and work hard towards cultures of excellence. These implies that school culture directs and natures the academic well-beings of the students. Thus, school culture is critical in character and gives standards and expectations for the academic characteristic of the students.

Furthermore, the results in Table 3 concurs with those of Yebua (2017) and Pervez, et al. (2017) who established that pupils' success in education was influenced by school culture. However, these results in table 3 contradicts Jhoselle (2020) findings who assessed the respondents' perceptions of their school culture and its influence on their academic performance of senior high school students of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Strand in a Public School in Marilao, Bulacan in Philippines. The inconsistency in the findings could be attributed to differences in geographical, political and economic backgrounds from the countries of study.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the school culture has significance influence on academic performance in the public secondary schools of TransNzoia County

V. RECOMMENDATION

The study recommended that the school managers should create positive culture through learner motivation, sound strategic objectives, motto, vision, mission, friendly and supportive learning environment to enhance academic performance

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