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Influence of Principal-initiated Goal Setting Strategies on Students' Academic Achievement in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya: A Study across Secondary Schools, Mbita Sub County

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ABSTRACT: Goal setting is one of the most important principal initiated strategies that facilitate students' academic achievement in schools. This is because it energizes the students' participation in academic programs and as a result enhances their academic achievement. World over, research has shown that motivation of the students enhance their academic achievement. In Mbita Sub-County, despite the existence of motivation strategies put in place by principals, the Sub-County was still performing poorly as was revealed by the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination results of 2018, 2019 and 2020. The Sub-County was ranked last in KCSE Examinations compared to the five other neighbouring sub- counties in Homa Bay County. Mbita Sub-County was ranked position five with an average mean score of 4.886 compared to Rangwe which was position one with a mean score of 5.354, Rachuonyo South was second with a mean score of 5.022, Rachuonyo East was third with a mean score of 4.988 while Homa Bay town was fourth with a mean score of 4.958. The objective of this study was to establish the influence of Principal-initiated Goal Setting on students' academic achievement in public secondary schools. The study established that Principal-initiated goal setting strategy significantly influenced students' academic achievement in public secondary schools by promoting independent learning among students. The findings are beneficial to policy makers and education administrators in formulating policies that can be used to improve students' achievement in KCSE as well as improve practices in the initiation of motivational strategies in schools.

KEY WORDS: Influence, Principal-initiated Goal Setting Strategies, Students' Academic Achievement, Public Secondary Schools, Kenya: Secondary Schools, Mbita Sub County

INTRODUCTION

Principal-initiated goal setting strategy is one of the motivation strategies that is used to influence students' academic achievement. The other factors that influence students' academic achievement include; availability of teaching and learning material, the quality of teachers, school infrastructure, students' entry behaviour, class size, staffing, school location among others. Literature has revealed that motivation strategies play a critical role in students' academic achievement. Preliminary literature review indicates that "motivation of students has a great impact on their learning processes and as a result is a major contributor to the success of students in their academic endeavour" (Filgona, Sakiyo, Gwany & Okoronka, 2020; Rafiola, Setyosari,
Radjah & Ramli, 2020; & Agustina, Wahyudia & Pratini, 2021).

Singh and Singh (2021) observed that "many factors may motivate students to learn. These factors may be either intrinsic or extrinsic in dimension. However, teachers can to a great extent increase students' motivation to learn. While students may have an innate desire to learn, the external support provided by the teacher has a significant impact on students' learning. The teacher's role in motivation includes: creating an enabling environment conducive for learning, supporting of students' autonomy, relevance, and relatedness of the material; developing students' competence, interest in subjects taught, and perception of self-efficacy". These are all important factors that influence students' motivation to learn.

The responsibility of motivating students to learn lies squarely on the teachers and school administrators. According to Fizza (2019) "teachers have a significant effect on students' motivation towards learning. Sometimes teachers have a feeling that they have no control over students' attitudes about learning, but they actually do have an influence because generally, students learn if their teachers expect and motivate them to learn." According to Liebowitz and Porter (2019) "principals are understood to be

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critical actors in improving teaching and learning conditions in schools so as to improve academic achievement." However, relatively little is known about the motivation strategies to which principals should dedicate their time and effort to improve learning outcomes. They found out that "there is direct evidence of the relationship between principals' behaviors and student achievement, teacher well-being, teacher instructional practices, and school organizational health." In addition, they highlighted the importance of principals' behaviors beyond instructional management as potential tools to improve student achievement outcomes. In addition, in a study by Maponya (2020) the conclusion was made that "motivation is one of the instructional leadership strategies that principals can use to influence students' academic achievement."

Academic achievement of schools in Mbita-Sub County is a challenge with results showing that the performance of the Sub-County in the county ranking in terms of KCSE mean scores in a period of three consecutive years is down the grid. The overall ranking of the Sub-County in terms of average of KCSE mean scores show that the sub-county was ranked fifth out of the five sub- counties. This shows that majority of the students in the sub- County registered below average achievement in the KCSE examinations. This trend is indeed worrying. This study sought to establish the influence of principals' goal setting strategy on students' academic achievement. Table 1 indicates the ranking of Mbita Sub-County in Homa bay County in terms of mean scores in KCSE examinations from 2018-2020.

Table 1. Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education Performance of Mbita Sub County 2018-2020

Sub County	M.S.S 2018	M.S.S 2019	M.S.S 2020	Average	Rank
Rangwe	5.026	5.205	5.831	5.354	**1**
Rachuonyo South	4.616	4.976	5.474	5.022	**2**
Rachuonyo East	4.637	4.947	5.382	4.988	**3**
Homa Bay Town	4.486	4.79	5.598	4.958	**4**
Mbita	**4.471**	**4.886**	**5.302**	**4.886**	**5**

Key: M.S.S – Mean Standard Score

Table 1 shows the comparison of KCSE performance in five sub-counties of Homa Bay County from the year 2018-2020. From the Table, Mbita Sub-County was ranked position five at a Mean score of 4.886 while the highest ranked sub-county was Rangwe Sub County which is at an average Mean score of 5.354. The trend in the table shows that Mbita Sub-County was consistently ranked at the last position across the years

SYNTHESIS OF LITERATURE ON INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPAL-INITIATED GOAL SETTING STRATEGY ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

According to Deci and Ryan (2015) "goals are valued outcomes that people hope to attain when they engage in specific behaviors." In addition, "specific and challenging goals lead to better performance since the goals help to reduce the ambiguity of what is to be achieved" (Locke & Latham, 2002). Brophy (2004) and Srivastava et al (2009) pointed out that "goals are the drivers of behaviour and the immediate objectives of particular sequences of behaviour." Moreover, according to Kristnasamy (2014) "motivation might be indicated by personal goal setting."

According to Srivastava et al (2009) "an individual will be more persistent in pursuing a goal when that goal is greatly valued and when the individual expects to be successful in attaining the goal. The persistence that is generated by goal orientation might be indicative of the relationship between goal orientation and self-motivation." In addition, Saylo and Saylo (2015) identified the technique of goal setting as "a way of enhancing motivation in learners because higher standards tend to lead to higher performance." However, they realized that "learner-set goals have a tendency to become lower, hence, teacher's role in helping learners maintain high standards by monitoring the goals set and reinforcing high standards." Therefore, Saylo and Saylo (2015) concluded that "learners might be taught to be self-motivated to learn through the practice of goal setting." Furthermore, "goal-setting can enhance student's interest in the subject matter, increase sensitivity to performance outcomes, prompt self-monitoring of performance attainments, promote student's self-efficacy in learning, and help individuals pursue a level of challenge that optimally exceeds their present capacity." Previous studies show that "goal-setting is associated positively with growth mindsets,

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achievement, engagement, and academic outcomes" (Burns et al, 2017; Martin & Liem, 2010). In addition Deci and Ryan (2008) have posited that "people use long-term goals to guide their activities to achieve intrinsic aspirations and extrinsic aspirations in causality orientation."

In a study by Roebken (2007) to examine the relationship between student goal orientation and academic achievement in Germany, data collected from college students were analyzed and revealed that students pursuing both mastery and achievement goals were more motivated and had higher academic performance than students who pursued a mastery orientation alone. This study focused on college students whereas the current study involved the study of achievement of secondary school students. In addition, in this study data was obtained from students only while in the current study, data was obtained from both students and teachers.

In another study by Radosevich et al (2007) while investigating goal orientation and goal setting in South Korea by integrating four-factor goal orientation theory with goal setting theory and found that "goals positively influenced performance." This study only involved undergraduate students of Business while the current study involved secondary school students and focused on the influence of goal setting on academic achievement of students in all subjects.

Islam et al (2022) while conducting an at-scale randomized control trial among 18,000 secondary students in Tanzania to examine the effects of self-set academic goals on students' efforts and academic outcomes found out that "goal-setting had a significant positive effect on student time use, study effort, and self-discipline, which reflects in small but statistically insignificant improvements in the performance on the test." In addition, the study found out that "combining goal setting with recognition awards for achieving the goals does not demonstrate any complementary effects. The overall impact of the treatment does not vary significantly across gender, but it does have a stronger impact on students coming from weaker socio-economic backgrounds." This study did not examine the effect that goal setting has on students' self-motivation to learn. The current study filled this gap in the literature by seeking to establish whether goal setting initiated by Principals can increase students' self-motivation to learn and improve in academic achievement.

In a study in Kenya, Onguti et al (2019) while investigating the relationship between goal-setting and mathematics achievement among students in Kisii Central Sub-County. The study revealed that there is a statistically positive correlation between goal setting and mathematics achievement. The study further revealed that students who set goals performed better in mathematics than their counterparts who did not set goals." It therefore recommended that "universities and colleges to train teachers on goal setting techniques. This study only focused on Mathematics as a learning area while the present study will generalize and find out the influence of goal setting as a motivation strategy on all the learning areas in public secondary schools. In another study in Kenya, Muriuki et al (2022) sought to investigate the influence of Head teachers' use of goal setting on students' academic performance in private primary schools in Nyeri and Murang'a counties. The study found out that "there is a statistically significant association between goal setting and academic achievement." This study was done in private primary schools while the current study was done in public secondary schools. Again no similar study has been done on how Principal-initiated goal setting as a motivation strategy influences academic achievement among students. From the mentioned studies, it is evident that goal setting as a motivational strategy that influences students' academic achievement. However, no study has been done to determine the influence of Principals' use of goal setting as a motivation strategy on students' academic achievement in Mbita Sub-County.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework was informed by Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964). This theory states that a person's expectations directly relate to their level of motivation. The theory has three components which are; valence, expectancy, and instrumentality. This theory suggests that if a person puts in a specific amount of effort it will result in a specific reward. If a person's action results in their expected reward they'll be motivated to take the same action again. If, however, their actions do not result in their expected reward they will become demotivated. In other words, the theory's position is that a person's motivation is directly affected by how much they want as a reward, their belief that their effort will lead to an expected level of achievement, and that their achievement will result in the reward they want. This Vroom's expectancy theory is appropriate for this study because Principals of secondary schools do employ different motivational strategies in their endeavours to improve students' academic achievement.

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The Principal-initiated goal-setting is the independent variable while students' academic achievement in KCSE becomes the dependent variable. The conceptual framework postulates that Principal goal setting when undertaken are likely to enhance students' academic achievement. The factors influencing students' academic achievement in school such as students' entry behaviour and peer group influence are the intervening variables. The relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable was as shown in Figure 1.

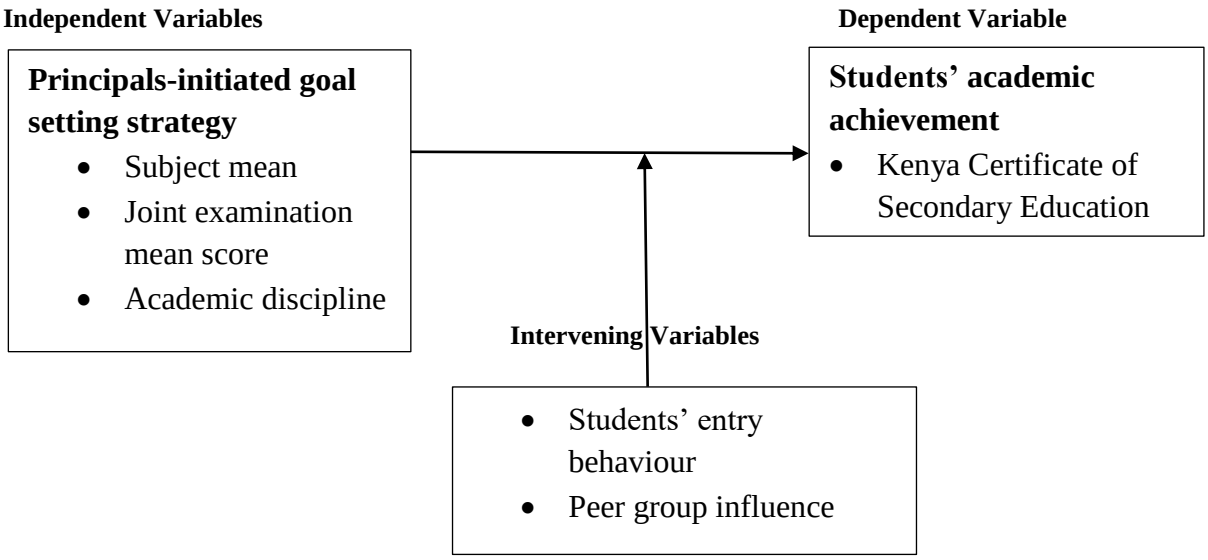

Figure 1. Influence of Principal-initiated goal setting strategy on Students' academic achievement

Through goal setting, the students can enhance academic discipline, focus in academic work, cooperative learning and make optimal use of outside class study time which help to improve their academic achievement. On the other hand, when goals are not set, the students may not optimize their study skills and as a result register low academic achievement.

Research Objective

The research objective was to determine the influence of Principal-initiated Goal Setting strategy on students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Kenya.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted mixed methods approach and used descriptive survey and Correlational research designs. The study was guided by Vroom's expectancy theory (1964). The target population was 1923 form four students (2023 cohort), 348 teachers, 25 principals and 25 Directors of studies in public secondary schools in Mbita sub-county. From this a sample of 320 students, 183 teachers, 20 principals and 20 Directors of studies were selected. Sampling procedures were; snowballing for students, simple random sampling for teachers and saturated sampling for principals and Directors of studies. Questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis guides were used to collect data. The validity of the data collection instruments were determined by experts in the Faculty of Education, while reliability of the instruments were determined by piloting in five schools outside the study sample and the Cronbach's alpha was used to compute the reliability coefficient. Quantitative data were analyzed by use of frequency counts, percentages, means and Regression analysis with the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Science while qualitative data from interview schedules were transcribed and analyzed for content in emergent themes and sub-themes.

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RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 2. Demographic Data for Directors of Studies

Aspect of Demographic Data		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	16	80
	Female	4	20
	Total	20	100
Age in years	26-30	2	10
	31-40	15	75
	Over 40	3	15
	Total	**20**	**100**
Highest academic level	Diploma	2	10
	B.ED	13	65
	Masters	4	20
	Nil	1	5
	Total	**20**	**100**
Teaching experience	Below 5	1	5
	6-10 years	8	40
	10-15 years	8	40
	More than 15 years	2	10
	Nil	1	5
	Total	**20**	**100**
Experience as DOS	Below 5 years	9	45
	6-10 years	9	45
	11-15 years	1	5
	More than 15 years	0	0
	Nil	1	5
	Total	**20**	**100**

Source: Field Data, 2024

From Table 2, it was observed that the number of male Directors of Studies 16(80%) is far more than the number of female Directors of Studies 4 (20) Table 2 revealed that majority of Directors of Studies (75%) were aged between 31-40 years, then 26-30 years (10%), over 40 years (15%). The fact that majority are aged over 30 years indicate that they had enough experience and therefore could respond to questions in relation to motivation strategies and student's academic achievement.

Table 2 also revealed that most Directors of Studies (DOS) in the sub-county (65%) had Bachelor's degree. This may be because of Teachers Service Commission employment score sheet which usually favours degree holders. Only 2 (10%) and 4 (20%) holds Diploma and Master's degree respectively. The diploma may be because the teachers entered the profession through diploma and have not got an opportunity to further their studies or few diploma teachers do qualify for Teachers Service Commission employment. The 4 Master's degree may be because of the long-time taken to graduate with Master's degree or because Teachers Service Commission does not pay salary increment for Masters Certificates. The fact that all respondents were trained and had professional qualifications means that they were credible respondents because they are highly educated and therefore matters of motivation of students are not new to them. Table 4.3 showed that in terms of teaching experience of Directors of Studies,

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majority of the respondents had an experience of between 6-10 years and between 11-15 years which are both at 40%. The levels of experience was relevant in the study because people with more experience are able to provide accurate evidence on the influence of motivation on academic achievement.

In terms of experience of Directors of Studies, majority of the respondents had an experience of below 5 years and between 6-10 years which are both at 45%.The levels of experience was relevant in the study because people with more experience are able to provide accurate evidence on the influence of motivation on academic achievement.

Table 3. Demographic Data for Teachers

Aspect of Demographic Data		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	117	63.9
	Female	54	29.5
	Nil	12	6.6
	Total	183	100
Age in years	26-30	81	44.3
	31-40	78	42.6
	Over 40	16	8.7
	Nil	8	4.4
	Total	183	100
Highest academic level	Diploma	7	3.8
	B.ED	153	83.6
	BSC/BA	11	6
	Masters	11	6
	Nil	1	0.6
	Total	183	100
Teaching experience	Below 5	88	48.1
	6-10 years	59	32.2
	11-15 years	21	11.5
	More than 15 years	14	7.7
	Nil	1	0.5
	Total	183	100
Designation	Teacher	138	75.4
	Head of Department	28	15.3
	Senior Master	9	4.9
	Deputy Principal	5	2.7
	Nil	7	1.7
	Total	183	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

From Table 3 it was observed that the number of male Teachers 117(63.9%) is far more than the number of female teachers 54 (29.5%). This means there is gender disparity in the sub-county with few women teachers in the sub-county. Majority of teachers (44.3%) were aged between 26-30 years. This is the prime age in the teaching service where majority of the teachers would wish to do their best. Then 31-40 years were (42.6%) and over 40 years (8.7%). Table 3 revealed also that most teachers in the sub-county (83.6%) had Bachelor's degree. This may be because of Teachers Service Commission employment score sheet which

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usually favours degree holders. Only 7(3.8%), 11 (6.0%) and 11 (6.0%) holds Diploma, BSC/BA and Master's degree respectively.

Table 3 showed that in terms of teaching experience, majority of the respondents had an experience of below 5 years at 48.1%. Between 6-10 years were at 32.2%, 11-15 years of experience was at 11.5% while more than 15 years of experience was at 7.7%. Table 3 revealed that more than three-quarters of teachers in the sub-county 138 (75.4%) were not holding any administrative position in the school. This signifies they have ample time to arrange and implement curriculum delivery in the schools. 28 teachers (15.3%) were Heads of Departments, 9 (4.9%) were senior masters and 5(2.7%) were Deputy Principals.

Research Objective

The research objective was to establish the influence of Principal-initiated goal setting on students' academic achievement in Mbita Sub County.

Directors of Studies and Teachers were asked to rate on a 5-point rating scale their perceptions on the influence of Principal-initiated Goal Setting on students' academic achievement. The results of distribution by aspects associated with Principal-initiated Goal Setting were in Table 4.

Table 4. Goal Setting Aspects Influencing Students' Academic Achievement in KCSE as rated by Director of Studies and Teachers

	Ratings							Ratings							
	Directors of Studies					NR	MR	Teachers					NR	MR	OMR
Aspects of goal setting	**1 %**	**2 %**	**3 %**	**4 %**	**5 %**	**%**		**1 %**	**2 %**	**3 %**	**4 %**	**5 %**	**%**		
High discipline	0	0	10	50	35	5	4.26	0	1.6	21.3	46.4	30.6	0	4.03	4.16
Academic discipline	0	0	15	40	40	5	4.26	0	2.2	15.3	52.2	29.5	0.5	4.1	4.18
Healthy academic competition	0	0	5	45	40	10	4.39	0	1.6	11.5	47.5	38.3	1.1	4.24	4.31
Focus in academics	0	0	10	45	40	5	4.32	0	0	16.9	44.3	37.7	1.1	4.21	4.26
Consultation with teachers	0	0	10	35	50	5	4.42	0.5	1.6	20.8	49.7	21.3	6	3.95	4.19
Positive attitude towards tests	0	0	5	60	30	5	4.26	0	3.8	29	44.3	23	0	3.86	4.06
Interactive learning	0	5	15	35	40	5	4.16	0	6	21.3	50.8	21.3	0.5	3.88	4.02
Group work	5	0	15	35	40	5	4.11	2.2	1.6	33.3	35.5	24	3.3	3.8	3.95
Independent learning	0	5	20	35	35	5	4.05	0.5	6	10.4	54.1	29	0	4.05	4.05
Optimal outside class time	0	0	15	45	35	5	4.21	0	12	16.4	50.8	20.8	0	3.8	4.01
Optimal use of teaching/ learning resource	0	0	15	35	45	5	4.32	1.1	1.6	24	56.3	16.9	0	3.86	4.09
Inspiration	0	0	5	50	40	5	4.37	0	0	19.7	48.6	30.1	1.6	4.11	4.24
Overall Mean Rating															**4.13**

KEY: MR=Mean Rating; NR=Nil Return; OMR=Overall Mean Rating; DOS – Director of Studies

Interpretation of Mean Rating

1.00-1.44 (No influence); 1.45-2.44 (low influence);
2.45-3.44 (Moderate influence); 3.45-4.44 (High influence);
4.45-5.0 (Very high influence)

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The Directors of Studies (DOS) rated the influence of Goal setting on high discipline as being high with a mean of 4.26 while the teachers rated learning by directed discovery at a mean of 4.06. The overall mean rating was 4.16 which was high influence. Influence of principal's goal setting on academic discipline was rated by the Directors of studies at 4.26 while the teachers had a mean rating of 4.10. The overall mean rating was 4.18 which was high influence. On healthy academic competition, the DOS rated at a mean of 4.39 while the teachers rated at a mean of 4.24. The overall mean rating was 4.31 which was high influence.

On focus in academics, the DOS mean rating was 4.32 while the teachers' mean rating was 4.21. The overall mean rating was 4.26 which was high influence. On consultation with teachers, the DOS mean rating was 4.42 while the Teachers' mean rating was 3.95. The overall mean rating was 4.19 which was high influence. On positive attitude towards tests, the DOS mean rating was 4.26 while the teachers' mean rating was 3.86. This was an overall mean rating of 4.06 which was high influence.

On promotion of interactive learning, the DOS rating was 4.16 while teachers rated at 3.88. This was an overall mean of 4.02 which was high influence. On the group work, the DOS rating was 4.11 while teachers rated at 3.80. This was an overall mean rating of 3.95 which was high influence. On independent learning, the DOS rating was 4.05 while the teachers' mean rating was 4.05. This was an overall mean rating of 4.05 which was high influence. On optimal use of outside class study time, the DOS mean rating was 4.21 while the teachers' mean rating was 3.80. The overall mean rating was 4.01 which was high influence. On optimal use of teaching/ learning resources, the DOS mean rating was 4.32 while teachers' mean rating was 3.86. This was an overall mean rating of 4.09 which was high influence. On inspiration, the DOS mean rating was 4.37 while teachers' mean rating was 4.11. This was an overall mean rating of 4.24 which was high influence. Overall, from the Questionnaire findings, Principal-initiated Goal Setting were found to have high influence on students' achievement in KCSE in Mbita Sub County since the overall mean rating was 4.13

Descriptive statistics are generally weak in determining the actual influence which is normally determined by inferential statistics. It is for this reason that the study invoked inferential statistics and therefore the need to have quantitative data on academic achievement of students. The data on academic achievement of students was collected for the period 2019-2023 in line with Principal-initiated goal setting variables .
To establish the influence of Principal-initiated goal setting on students' academic achievement, data on Principal-initiated goal setting was regressed against student academic achievement and results were as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Linear Regression Analysis of the Influence of Principal-initiated Goal setting on Students' Academic Achievement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.355[a]	0.126	0.017	1.24407	0.126	0.879	12	73	0.571

a. Predictors: (Constant), Principal-initiated Goal setting

From Table 5, the influence of Principal-initiated Goal Setting was statistically not significant because the p value was 0.571 which was greater than 0.05. Thus the null hypothesis was accepted, implying that the use of Principal-initiated Goal Setting could not be used in predicting students' academic achievement in KCSE.

In order to establish the influence of Principal-initiated Goal Setting on students' academic achievement in KCSE, ANOVA was used to calculate variance as shown in Table 6.

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Table 6. ANOVA on Influence of Principal-initiated Goal Setting on Students' Academic Achievement

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	16.325	12	1.36	0.879	.571[b]
	Residual	112.983	73	1.548		
	Total	129.308	85			

a. Dependent Variable: Student Academic achievement
b. Predictors: (Constant) Principal-initiated Goal setting

From Table 6, Goal Setting aspects influencing students achievement in KCSE was not a significant predictor F (12,73)=0.571 p > 0.05 This means that the influence of Goal Setting cannot be relied upon in determining students' academic achievement in KCSE.

To confirm the influence of Principal-initiated Goal Setting on Students' academic achievement in KCSE, multiple regression analysis was computed and the results were in Table 7.

Table 7. Multiple Regression Analysis of the Influence of Principal-initiated Goal Setting on Students' Academic Achievement

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	3.954	1.2		3.294	0.002
(X_1)	High Discipline	-0.021	0.279	-0.013	-0.076	0.94
(X_2)	Academic Discipline	-0.102	0.235	-0.062	-0.435	0.665
(X_3)	Healthy Academic Competition	-0.05	0.302	-0.029	-0.165	0.869
(X4)	Focus in Academics	0.072	0.271	0.04	0.265	0.792
(X_5)	Consultation with teachers	-0.114	0.261	-0.068	-0.438	0.663
(X_6)	Positive Attitude Towards Test	0.14	0.209	0.1	0.67	0.505
(X_7)	Interactive Learning	0.215	0.273	0.138	0.79	0.432
(X_8)	Encourages Group Work	-0.188	0.241	-0.126	-0.782	0.437
(X_9)	Independent Learning	0.477	0.186	0.328	2.565	0.012
(X_{10})	Optimal Outside Class Time	0.07	0.2	0.053	0.352	0.726
(X_{11})	Optimal Teaching Learning Resources	-0.093	0.277	-0.052	-0.337	0.737
(X_{12})	Inspiration towards goal attainment	-0.335	0.344	-0.179	-0.973	0.334

a. Dependent Variable: Mean

From Table 7, eleven out of 12 aspects of Goal setting like high discipline, academic discipline, healthy academic competition, focus in academics, consultation with teachers, positive attitude towards tests, interactive learning, group work, optimal outside class time, optimal use of teaching learning resources and inspiration had no significant influence on students' achievement. This

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was despite the fact that they seem to have had different levels of influence as indicated by the coefficients. For instance, high discipline had a coefficient of -0.021 meaning that for every unit of student achievement, high discipline reduced students' academic achievement by 0.021 units and the p value was 0.94 which is greater than 0.05 thus not significant and therefore high discipline cannot be relied upon to explain students' academic achievement in KCSE.

Focus in academics had a coefficient of 0.072 meaning that for every unit of students' achievement, focus in academics increased students' academic achievement by 0.072 units and the p value was 0.792 which is greater than 0.05 thus not significant and therefore focus in academics cannot be relied upon to explain student's academic achievement in KCSE. This may be because the students may show they are focused but serious academic engagement may not be taking place. The focus may be a way of pleasing the administration.

Optimal use of outside class study time had a coefficient of 0.07 meaning that for every unit of students' achievement, optimal use of outside class study time increased students' academic achievement by 0.07 units and the p value was 0.726 which is greater than 0.05 thus not significant**.** Independent learning had a coefficient of 0.447 meaning that for every unit of students' achievement, independent learning increased students' academic achievement by 0.447 units and the p value was 0.012 which was less than 0.05 and therefore independent learning can be relied upon to explain students' academic achievement in KCSE. This could be because during independent learning there is more focus by a student towards attainment of a goal that they set.

DISCUSSION

The interview findings revealed that Goal Setting initiated by Principals have positive influence on students' academic achievement in KCSE. In this respect, majority of the Principals interviewed confirmed that indeed principal –initiated goal setting to a great extent have high influence on students' academic achievement in KCSE. One of the Principals asserted: Goal setting is one of our motivation strategies, at the beginning of the year we set goals right from the subject level, departmental level and the whole school level. These goals are printed and clearly pinned on our walls and notice boards for our students to see clearly. The Targets challenge our students to work harder to break the targets initially targeted and achieved by various cohorts. We believe that this to a great extent psyche our students and that is part of the reason why we perform well over the years. These views of the Principals were supported by majority of students who reported that their Principals helped them towards setting of goals which enabled them to work hard in academics. One of the students asserted; I would have not performed to the extent I did if my principal did not help me set a goal to work on. The goals made me to easily identify my areas of weaknesses and work on them towards achieving positive results. The Principal and teachers always put us on toes to achieve our targets. This finding further indicate that Principal-initiated Goal Setting play a major role in influencing students' academic achievement in public secondary schools.

The interview with teachers also confirmed that goal setting is a major motivator of students to work extra hard in their academics. One teacher reported: At the beginning of every academic year, our Principal involve the Form fours and all the form four subject teachers in a goal setting program. This is when we come up with our target as a school. Targets make people to work hard. When our students stretch beyond their capability to achieve their targets, they perform well though most of the times the targets are not met. But they enhance academic discipline in our students. It is worthwhile to note that the findings in this study are also contrary to the studies that have been done before. Most studies like Roebken (2007), Radosevich et al (2007), Islam et al (2022), Onguti et al (2019) and Muriuki et al (2022) found a positive significant relationship between goal setting and students' academic achievement.

Aspects of Goal setting like high discipline, academic discipline, healthy academic competition, focus in academics, consultation with teachers, positive attitude towards tests, interactive learning, group work, optimal outside class time, optimal use of teaching learning resources and inspiration had no significant influence on students' academic achievement. This was despite the fact that they seem to have had different levels of influence as indicated by the coefficients. This could be because high discipline could be instilled in schools by other factors like use of school rules and regulations, student council and guidance and counselling. The finding on high discipline not being significant contradicts findings in a study by Islam et al (2022) which found that goal setting has a significant positive effect on students' self-discipline which reflects in small but insignificant improvements in the performance of tests. Focus on academics cannot be relied upon to explain student's academic achievement in KCSE. This may be

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because the students may show they are focused but serious academic engagement may not be taking place. The focus may be a way of pleasing the administration. This contradict the finding in a study by Burns et al (2017), Martin and Liem (2010) who found that goal setting is associated with engagement, academic outcomes and growth mind sets.

Therefore optimal use of outside class study time cannot be relied upon to explain the students' academic achievement. This could be because in most cases, there may not be serious learning when the students are alone and outside class un-supervised. Much of the learning normally takes place in the classroom environment. The finding of optimal use of study time as not being significant is contradicting a study by Islam (2022) which found that goal setting has a significant positive effect on student's time use. However one aspect of goal setting that is Independent learning had a significant influence on students' academic achievement. During independent learning there is more focus by a student towards attainment of a goal that they set. These goals set emphasize particular areas and skills that enhance students' learning. These areas and skills include: focus on academics, positive attitude towards tests, interactive learning, and independent learning.

Focus on academics make students to avoid issues that may distract them from academic work. This may make them have positive attitude towards tests and therefore have more exposure on how to answer questions in exams. Through interactive learning, students are able to share ideas while through independent learning students are able to identify their areas of weaknesses and make improvements where necessary. This shows that students' academic achievement accelerated by goal setting can not only be determined by one variable but by a combination of several variables working hand in hand. Essentially, goal setting positively influenced academic achievement through an aspect known as independent learning and therefore concurs with interview findings, descriptive analysis and the product of multiple regression analysis. Authoritatively, we can say that principal –initiated goal setting strategy do influence students' academic achievement. The study findings concur with the studies by Burns et al (2017); Martin and Liem (2010) who found that goal setting was associated with engagement, academic outcomes and growth mind sets. In addition, Islam (2022) while studying the effect of goal setting on academic achievement in Tanzania found out that goal setting has a significant positive effect on student's time use.

CONCLUSION

Principal-initiated goal setting significantly influences students' academic achievement in public secondary schools by promoting independent learning among students.
This achievement enables students to learn better when they transit to tertiary institutions where goal setting is highly cherished.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Goal setting by Principals should involve all stake holders so that students can embrace and work towards the goals set in their schools.
2. Goal setting should be realistic, specific, measurable and time bound.
3. Goal setting should be owned by the principal, teachers and students for success to be realised.

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