Influence of Socio-cultural Factors on Performance in Examinations in Kenya

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

Aim: To investigate the influence of sociocultural factors on academic performance in national examinations among candidates in Kisumu City, Kenya

Sample: The study population was 4480 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) candidates in public secondary schools of Kisumu City in 2017. Purposive sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 224 students.

Study design: The study employed phenomenological design in the qualitative approach.

Place and Duration of Study: The place of the study was Kasagam Secondary School in Kisumu City, Kenya, between September and October 2017.

Methodology: Focus group discussions were used to collect qualitative data. Focus group discussion guide was piloted with students who did not participate in the study to establish validity and reliability. Data was transcribed in summaries by the group secretary and analyzed thematically.

Conclusion: The findings revealed that sociocultural factors of collectivist cultural practices, involvement in political activism and participation in witchcraft promoted poor academic performance in national examinations among students in Kisumu City in 2017.

Keywords: sociocultural; collectivism; political activism; witchcraft; spiritism; examinations; students

1. INTRODUCTION
1.1 Background of Study

Sociocultural factors are shared values, norms and attitudes among a people that form a community [1]. Academic achievement of students is important because it is used to judge the effectiveness of schools besides affecting the future of youths [2]. Moreover, poor school performance leads to serious negative psychological, social, and economic outcomes [3]. In addition, [4] in India found out that poor school performance resulted in low self-esteem in children and significant stress to parents.

Therefore, in an academic set-up, sociocultural factors are those factors that affect the academic performance of students but originate from the unique circumstances surrounding their school or home. Consequently, [5] posited that academic performance is one of the best measures of the transfer of knowledge in modern society.

A study into the effects of sociocultural factors on students' academic performance is important because [4] and [6] found that certain sociocultural factors could promote poor academic performance in a school. However, neither [4] nor [6] elucidated what those particular sociocultural factors were. The present study filled this gap by pointing out the specific sociocultural factors that affect students.

However, [4] posited that identifying the particular sociocultural factors that affect students' academic performance is important for coming up with a treatment plan so that the child can perform up to full potential. Also, according to [7], identifying sociocultural factors that affect performance at national examinations is important to teachers because the teachers are unhappy when their students do not perform well academically.

According to a study by [8], students' sociocultural factors affected their academic performance. They studied social factors related to students' academic achievement in Serbia and found that social factors were related to students' academic achievement. Subsequently, [9] evaluated the influence of social context factors, which were neighbourhood violence and peer rejection, on academic performance in the USA. Findings suggested that social context factors of neighbourhood violence and peer rejection were negatively associated with academic performance. This meant that when students were engaged in the neighbourhood violence and peer rejection, their academic performance declined. Therefore, the study identified sociocultural factors that lead to the decline of academic performance of students.

On the other hand, [10] in Romania investigated the impact of socio-cultural environment on students' levels of failure in school. The study results indicated that a large part of the school achievements of students might not be explained solely by resorting to their socio-cultural environment. The study argued that this is because weak students are under the influence of several unfavourable conditions and a single factor cannot be responsible for students' failure. Consequently, [10] reported that the sociocultural factors in students' environment could not fully explain their performance in school.

Therefore, [11] examined the role of the sociocultural background of students for choosing STEM fields in universities in Switzerland. Their findings indicated that sociocultural backgrounds affected students' choice of subjects at the university. Moreover, in Pakistan, [12] found out that student performance in intermediate examinations was linked with students' family stress, which is a sociocultural factor. Also, [2] investigated the relationship of the home environment with academic achievement among elementary school students in India. The study revealed that home environment and academic achievement were significantly and positively correlated. However, the studies by [2, 11, 12] did not point out the aspects of students' home culture that affected the students' academic achievement. The present study fills this gap by pointing out the type of culture that promotes poor performance among students.

Also, [13] in Vietnam studied the role of cultural factors affecting the academic achievement of students. The findings indicated that cultural values emphasising school achievement predicted academic performance in school. This highlighted the impact of favourable sociocultural on students' academic performance without pointing out the negative impact of negative sociocultural. Therefore, [14] in India examined factors influencing students' academic performance. The survey collected data using questionnaire and analysed them inferentially to reveal an inverse relationship between the social factors such as romantic relationships and academic performance. This indicated that there are sociocultural factors that are detrimental to students' academic performance. Consequently, [13] and [14] highlighted the potential of sociocultural for either good or bad influence on students' academic performance. However, although [13] and [14] identified cultural values and romantic relationships respectively as the negative factors in sociocultural, they did not consider broader perspectives such as collectivism versus individualism in cultural orientation.

Subsequently, [15] in Iran investigated the relationship between academic performance measured as language proficiency and socio-cultural factors in a descriptive study. The data gathered were analysed descriptively and inferentially to reveal a significant difference among the participants' academic performance based on their sociocultural factors. This indicated that sociocultural factors affect students' academic performance without highlighting the particular factors in the sociocultural that brought about the lowered academic performance. For that reason, [16] identified parents' social factors as a factor in sociocultural that affected academic performance. In the study, [16] assessed the impact of social factors on students' academic performance in EFL in Dubai public secondary schools using a mixed methods research. The study found out that there was a relationship between parents' social factors and children's performance in learning the English language. However, [16] did not consider the broader culture outside the home, which was out of the influence of the parents.

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Therefore, [17] went further than [16] to identify other sociocultural factors, which were acculturation orientations and ethnic identity, as influencing students' academic performance. Régner and Loose (2010) investigated the relationship of sociocultural factors and academic achievement among North African French adolescents. The study found that the sociocultural elements of acculturation orientations and ethnic identity predicted academic performance. However, these studies were done in cultures that might be different from the Sub-Saharan cultures found in African countries south of the Sahara.

Consequently, [18], [19] and [20] examined the effects of sociocultural factors on students' academic performance. In Nigeria, [10] and [19] examined the influence of sociocultural factors on the academic performance of students in descriptive survey design. Data analysis revealed that students' academic performance is affected by sociocultural factors such as students' home background and religious differences. Moreover, in Ghana, [20] sought to determine whether sociocultural factors an influence the academic performance of students. Data was collected from a convenient sample using questionnaire and analyzed inferential statistics to reveal that sociocultural factors such as church, social group and place of residence influence the academic performance of students. Therefore, [18], [19] and [20] not only found out that sociocultural factors affect students' academic performance, but the studies also highlighted the particular aspects of sociocultural that affected students' academic performance.

The factors that [18], [19] and [20] pointed out were parental socioeconomic status, home environment, religious differences, social group and place of residence. Also, [21] who studied the sociocultural factors affecting the academic success of students confirmed the findings by [18], [19] and [20]. In South Africa, [21] did inferential analysis using Chi-square tests to reveal that sociocultural factors such as home language, type of high school and living/study space influenced students' performance. However, there remained the need for studies conducted to investigate the effect of East African sociocultural factors on students' academic performance in the East African region.

Therefore, [22] investigated factors that influence students' academic performance in Ethiopia. The study found that there was a strong association between the academic performance of students' and the sociocultural background, which was parental education level and family economic status. Also, in Tanzania, [23] and [24] assessed sociocultural factors that influence the academic performance of secondary school students. The findings of the studies by [23] and [24] revealed that sociocultural factors of parents' income, occupations and education, distance to and from school and students' time spent on doing domestic chores, influenced students' academic performance. However, the studies did not consider the effects of sociocultural factors such as witchcraft and spiritism, which are widespread in Africa in general and Kenya in particular with its unique sociocultural factors.

In Kenya, [6] and [25] investigated the sociocultural factors affecting student's performance in national examinations. In Machakos County, [6] investigated factors contributing to poor performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) in public day primary schools while in Isiolo County [25] investigated the socio-cultural factors affecting student's performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). The studies by [6] and [25] were descriptive surveys in design and analyzed the data quantitatively to reveal that sociocultural factors affected students' academic performance in national examinations. However, [6] and [25] did not identify the aspects in the sociocultural that affected students' academic performance.

Therefore, [26] and [27] in Kenya conducted studies on the effect of sociocultural factors on academic achievement in Meru County. Data analysis revealed that certain sociocultural factors negatively affected the pupils' academic performance. The sociocultural factors identified by [26] and [27] as having a negative influence on academic performance were initiation ceremonies, circumcising girls, polygamous family background cultural tendency towards early marriages and community attitudes towards education.

However, [6] and [25] conducted their studies in a Nilo-Hamitic sociocultural while [26] and [27] conducted their studies in a Bantu sociocultural. However, the majority people group in Kisumu City is the Luo ethnic community that has a Lake-Nilotic sociocultural. Therefore, the current study set out to investigate the influence of sociocultural factors on performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) of 2017 in Kisumu City, Kenya.

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1.2 Problem Statement

The present study examined the influence of sociocultural factors of collectivist culture, politics and witchcraft on students' academic performance because of the cultural richness of the ethnic communities around Kisumu, political upheavals in Kenya in 2017 and the underlying practices of witchcraft and spiritism among the people in Kisumu City. The ethnic communities with a collectivist view of community populate the City of Kisumu. The collectivist culture is characterized by students who are candidates visiting relatives on errands and social fetes even during exams. Also, there are disco dances, called *disco matanga*, which are held in the night a person is buried, and many young people might attend including candidates. These activities go on throughout the year and their effect on KCSE candidates' academic performance had not been examined before the present study.

Also, in the year 2017, Kisumu was arguably the epicentre of political demonstrations against the conduct of the Kenya Presidential General Elections. The annulled Presidential General Elections was in August 2017 when students who were candidates in the national examinations were in the home stretch to the exams. The fresh Presidential General Election was held in October 2017 when the federal investigations had begun. Both the annulled and fresh Presidential Elections were characterized by heightened political emotions and violent demonstrations which often ended with people, including candidates, being killed. However, no study has been conducted on the effect that the political disturbances might have had on the KCSE candidates.

Witchcraft activities are also practised by some people in the City of Kisumu. Indeed, it is common to see such services advertised to attract people who are in various crises. To many candidates, a national examination that is going to determine the outcomes of their lives for a long time is a major crisis. Therefore, some students might seek the services of witchdoctors and spiritists to help them face the national examinations. However, the influence on the performance in national examinations of witchcraft and spiritism practices has not been ascertained.

From the preceding, it might be surmised that sociocultural factors might affect students' academic performance. Therefore, there was a need to investigate the influence of sociocultural factors of collectivist culture, political activism and witchcraft on the academic performance of students sitting examinations in Kisumu City, Kenya. The relevance of the present study, after that, was established.

1.3 Relevance of Study

The findings of the study might be used to mitigate the effects of the factors that might contribute to poor performance and thereby improve the academic performance of students in Kisumu City, especially in national examinations.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to investigate the influence of sociocultural factors on students' academic performance in national examinations among students in Kisumu City, Kenya. The objective of the study was to identify the sociocultural factors that affect students' performance in national examinations.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW
3.1 Theoretical Framework

The present study was guided by [28] Triadic Reciprocal Determinism theory. This theory postulates that a model of reciprocal causation among behaviour, personal factors, and environmental influences. Moreover, [28] argued that students' expectations, cognitions, beliefs, feelings, self-perceptions, goals and intentions affect how they behave. In the context of the present study, sociocultural norms are seen in the light of this theory as personal factors expressed as students' values, norms and attitudes. Therefore, the behaviour of academic performance might be affected by such personal factors as beliefs, attitudes and thoughts derived from the student's sociocultural environment.

Consequently, [28] presented that social influences develop and modify student's expectations, beliefs, emotional bents and cognitive competencies through modelling, instruction and social

persuasion. From this postulate, the Triadic Reciprocal Determinism theory suggests that the sociocultural factors might influence students' performance in national examinations.

Moreover, [28] argued that behaviour, such as academic performance, alters environmental conditions, such as sociocultural factors; and behaviour, is in turn, altered by the sociocultural factors it creates. As a result, because of the bidirectionality of influence between behaviour and environmental circumstances, people are both products and producers of their environment. This leaves to conjecture whether students' academic performance affects their sociocultural environment or sociocultural factors affect students' academic performance. Wherefrom, there was a need for a review of the literature on sociocultural factors and students' academic performance.

3.2 Literature Review

The literature review was conducted according to the objective of the study, which was, to identify the sociocultural factors that affect students' academic performance in Kisumu City Kenya. Studies have identified sociocultural factors as affecting students' academic performance [29, 30]. Furthermore, [31] examined different factors influencing the academic performance of students in a tertiary institution in Singapore. Data was collected using semi-structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed quantitatively, and the results showed that sociocultural factors such as nationality of the student affected the academic performance of students. However, the [31] study was a quantitative one who imposed the researchers' constructs on the respondents and did not allow themes to emerge from the responses given. Therefore, the present study used the qualitative approach that allowed themes to emerge naturally from the responses given by the respondents.

However, [32] investigated factors that contribute to the decline in students' academic performance in junior secondary schools in Botswana since 2010 in a quantitative study, which collected data using questionnaires and document analysis. The findings of the study showed that parental involvement is critical for the attainment of high-quality education. The [32] study captured an aspect of the sociocultural environment, which was parental involvement in education but did not consider other factors such as the home cultural tendencies. The present study, therefore, filled this gap by seeking to identify sociocultural factors that affect students' performance in national examinations.

The aspect of sociocultural factors which is socioeconomic status was investigated by [30, 33, 34] in Nigeria and Ghana respectively. The [30] study examined the home environmental factors affecting students' academic performance while [34] investigated the causes of the low academic performance of primary school pupils. Also, [33] investigated factors affecting the academic performance of undergraduate students in Uganda. [30] found out that the socio-economic status of the students' family affects the students' academic performance while [34] results showed that the pupils in high-achieving schools regularly had breakfast and received more help with their studies at home than the pupils low-achieving schools did. The [33] findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between parents' social, economic status and former school background on the one hand and academic performance on the other hand. All the three studies indicated that home socioeconomic status affects students' academic performance. However, the studies investigated parental socioeconomic status, which is a factor of sociocultural, but did not consider other sociocultural factors. Therefore, the present study filled this gap in the literature by identifying the sociocultural factors that affect students' performance in national examinations.

In Kenya, [35] and [36] investigated the influence of learning environment on pupil academic performance in public primary schools in Makueni and Murang'a Counties respectively. The studies found out that non-conducive home environments characterized by work-oriented culture, traditional cultural practices and unorthodox spiritual practices contributed to poor performance. Therefore, [37] examined the influence of home environment on the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya. The study used inferential statistical analysis to identify the sociocultural factors affecting students' academic performance as parent's economic status, parental involvement and parenting styles. However, the [37] study used the quantitative approach and collected data using questionnaires that forced the respondents into preset themes, which might not necessarily be the respondents' themes. The present study fills this gap in the literature by using the qualitative approach which allowed the respondents to freely express themselves and from that, themes emerged from the sociocultural factors affecting students' performance in national examinations. The themes that emerged were collectivist culture, political activism and witchcraft and spiritism.

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3.2.1 Collectivist Culture

Culture has varied effects on the educational outcomes of students [38]. In California, USA, Asians fare significantly better than whites do in school outcomes such as grade point average, while blacks and Hispanics fare significantly worse [38]. However, [38] did not investigate whether these cultures were individualistic or collectivist. Therefore, [39] in the USA examined the differences in achievement between individualistic and collectivist groups in an online instructional environment. ANOVA analysis was used to examine the effects of individualism and collectivism on learner achievement. The study findings revealed a significant difference between a cultural dimension and learner achievement. Nevertheless, the study did not indicate between collectivist and individualistic cultures affected academic achievement positively. The present study filled this gap in the literature by identifying the type of culture that promoted low academic achievement. Also, [40] studied the influence of individualism-collectivism on learning barriers and performance in a study presented in Los Angeles, USA. The study found out that students' personal orientation of individualism or collectivism may influence social cognitions and behaviours that support academic achievement. However, the study investigated academic achievement obliquely through social cognitions and behaviours, unlike the present study that made students' academic achievement its main thrust.

Moreover, [41] and [42] both in Fiji Islands investigated the cultural influences on academics. The [41] study used students from communities with different cultures on which anecdotal evidence had pointed out that there was a consistent higher academic achievement from one community and consistent low achievement in another community. However, [42] studied the influence of culture on secondary school students' understanding of statistics. On the other hand, [41] found out that a collectivist culture with a strong communal sense and social obligations was working against high academic achievement among the students from that culture. On the other hand, the [42] findings revealed that students' explanations were not based on statistical principles but on their cultural beliefs and everyday experiences. Consequently, the present study sought to find out if collectivist cultures negatively would affect students' academic performance in an African country with different communities and levels of collectivism.

Consequently, in Africa, [43] and [5] examined the influence of cultural beliefs and social factors in Nigeria. The thrust of [43] was on secondary school students' understanding of atmospheric related physics concepts while [5] investigated the effect of social factors on students' academic performance. Both studies collected data using questionnaires in descriptive survey research design. The [43] study found that cultural beliefs of students have a negative influence on students' academic performance. On the other hand, [5] found that although excessive involvement in clubs and organizations by students does not have a significant effect on academic performance, membership in student cults and romantic relationships does have a significant negative effect. However, neither [43] nor [5] studies investigated influence of collectivism, as a sociocultural factor in Africa, on students' academic performance. The present study fills this gap in the literature by providing an African perspective from Kenya, on the influence of collectivist cultures on students' performance in national examinations.

In Kenya, [44] investigated the sociocultural and economic factors that affect the academic performance of secondary school students in Garrissa County using a descriptive research design. Data were collected using questionnaires and an interview guide. The findings identified sociocultural factors that affect students' academic performance as parental economic background and collectivism characterized by a strong attachment to culture. However, the [44] used a quantitative approach that did not allow the themes within sociocultural factors to emerge from the respondents, unlike in the present study.

3.2.2 Political Activism

A study by [45] in the USA explored the learning outcomes among college students involved in political activism. The findings revealed that students' involvement in activism generally led to lower learning outcomes. However, the study was conducted among college students who had different personal characteristics from the secondary school students who are the subjects in the present study. In addition, [46] in Pakistan investigated the relationship between political activities and students' academic performance. The data were analyzed using chi-square and the data analysis

showed a strong perceived association between political activities and academic performance of students. However, the study collected nominal data, which yields weak statistical strength in the analysis. In addition, chi-square test of association does not indicate the direction of causation. The present study filled this gap in the literature by using a qualitative approach that could identify the direction of influence between political activism and students' performance in national examinations.

The findings of [46] were supported by those of [47] in Portugal who considered the relationship between self-regulation strategies and youth political experiences. The [47] study found out that political experiences are related to learning because political participation stimulates higher-order cognitive engagement and, thus, contribute to the development of learning strategies that promote academic success. However, the [47] study collected quantitative data which imposed responses on the participants and did not allow for in-depth probing of responses. The present study filled this gap in the literature by using the qualitative approach, which allowed for in-depth probing of responses to get to respondents' meanings and feelings that provides a more accurate picture on the construct under study.

3.2.3 Witchcraft and Spiritism

Witchcraft is the practice of and belief in magical abilities to manipulate circumstances and situations exercised by persons with some secret knowledge [48]. On the other hand, spiritism is the belief in, and consequently attempt to contact, spirits to influence the outcome of an event [49].

A study by [50] in Ghana posits that students might see spirituality-based practices as a source of inspiration to focus on studies and succeed in their studies. In addition, [49] found no significant relationship between student spirituality and their academic performance. However, the [49] study considered the influence of orthodox spiritual practices and not witchcraft and spiritism. The present study, therefore, considered the influence of witchcraft and unorthodox spiritual practices, as aspects of students' sociocultural, on students' performance in national examinations.

Consequently, [48] examined the effect of witchcraft on students' academic achievement in Zimbabwe's rural secondary schools using a case study methodology. The study gathered data through participant-observations, questionnaires, focus group interviews, and documents review. The results showed that witchcraft practices negatively affected students' academic performance. However, the study was a quantitative study that did not let themes emerge, unlike the present study that used a qualitative approach.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

4.1 Research Design
The present study employed the qualitative approach with the phenomenological design. Phenomenology is a qualitative approach in which researchers aim to develop new understandings of human lived experience, relying on first-person accounts [51]. Phenomenological design, according to [52], is a fact-based design that seeks to describe the phenomenon accurately. It was appropriate for the present study because of the explorative nature of the study [53]. The present study, therefore, examined the sociocultural factors that influence students' performance in national examinations.

4.2 Study Participants
The study participants were Grade 12 secondary school students in Kisumu City. The population of the study was 4480 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) candidates in 2017. The sampling technique used to select the sample was purposive sampling technique that was used to select a sample of 224 students who participated in the study. The sample was then divided into four groups of 56 students each from which qualitative data was collected using focus group discussion technique. Focus groups were used to collect data because teenagers find it easier to express themselves in groups [54].

Sampling in qualitative research is the selection of specific data sources from which data are collected to address the research objectives [51]. The present study used a purposive sampling technique to select the participants for the Focus Group Discussions. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling used to deliberately select information-rich participants who are proficient, well-informed, expressive and willing to participate in a study of a cultural domain of a phenomenon [51, 55, 56, 57].

According to [55] and [56], purposive sampling is used in qualitative research such as the present study to achieve the depth of understanding of a phenomenon.

Purposive sampling was used because, according to [56], although it has an inherent bias, the bias contributes to its efficiency and internal validity. Also, purposive sampling was used in the present study because this is a phenomenological study. Within phenomenology, the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study [51]. Moreover, purposive sampling stays robust even when tested against random probability sampling because of the reliability and competence of the informants from its intentional bias [56, 57]. Reliability in purposive sampling refers to how honest and truthful the informant is, while competency involves how qualified the person is to answer questions about the cultural domain the researcher is studying [56]. The participants in the present study were placed in groups so that they might be honest and truthful without feeling threatened.

The present study used purposive sampling to select a sample out of the study population. The steps followed in purposive sampling in the present study were as recommended by [56]. First, the research problem was decided; secondly, the type of information needed was determined; thirdly, the qualities the informants were defined and fourthly, informants based on defined qualities were selected. This yielded a sample of 224 participants out of a population of 4480 candidates.

This sample represented 5% of the population, which was fairly small about the population [56]. The sample sizes in qualitative research are small because the aim is to acquire information for understanding the complexity, depth, variation, or context surrounding a phenomenon, rather than to represent populations as in quantitative research [51]. Also, the sample size is small because qualitative methods emphasise data saturation and not on quantitative representativeness [55, 56, 57]. Data saturation is obtaining a comprehensive understanding by continuing to sample until no new substantive information is acquired [51, 55, 56]. The present study attained data saturation with 224 participants and four focus groups.

4.3 Demographic Information
Demographics information is crucial because it affects how important decisions are made [58]. Demographic information includes socioeconomic information, age, gender, employment status and home status [59]. In the current study, there were 112 girls and 112 boys. The sample was aged between 17 and 20 years old. The students came from low-income socioeconomic status with most of them coming from homes in slums.

Age (years old)	Female	Male
17	2	3
18	60	52
19	38	42
20	12	15
Total	**112**	**112**

4.4 Research Instrument
The research instrument was a focus group discussion guide which was piloted for trustworthiness using students who did not participate in the final study. Focus Group is a method of conducting in-depth interviews with participants by a moderator that is accomplished in a group with characteristics that are defined by size, composition and procedures [60]. Therefore, [58] advises the use of focus group discussions for generating ideas for investigation of new fields such as identification of sociocultural factors affecting students' performance in national examinations. Focus group discussions were used in the current study because it has high face validity and the results obtained it yields are effective in supplying information about how people think, feel, or act regarding an issue [60].

4.5 Data Collection Procedures

The participants were informed of the study objectives and purpose before the discussion and adequately debriefed. After that, the Focus Group members were selected on the bases of part volunteering and part researcher selection. Each focus group elected a secretary who was writing down what the participants said in summarized form. The researcher selected some members who had not volunteered to ensure proportionate demographic representation to fill the sampling frame. A sampling frame is a list or other device used to define a researcher's population of interest. The sampling frame defines a set of elements from which a researcher can select a sample of the target population [61].

4.6 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis using the steps of [61]. Thematic analysis is essentially a method for identifying and analyzing patterns in qualitative data [61]. The steps, according to [61], are familiarization with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and writing up.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study findings revealed that sociocultural factors in Kisumu City have an overall negative influence on students' academic performance in national examinations. Some of these sociocultural activities were recreational such as watching football and video games, relational such as visiting relatives, social such as storytelling with their friends, interpersonal such as interactions with members of other classes and personal such as how they feel about themselves.

On recreational activities, a participant reported that *"Some candidates perform poorly in school because they love going to video rooms to watch football which they always follow and feel they must not miss."* About social activities that negatively affect performance, another respondent said, *"The candidates also waste time, energy and effort on betting on the outcomes of football matches."* Yet another respondent said, *"They waste time chatting and story-telling and sometimes they do this under the pretext of holding a discussion."* Concerning visiting relatives, a participant said, *"Some of the students visit their relatives just before or even during exams time and in those visits they can easily get engaged in activities that are detrimental to their performance such as promiscuous behaviour besides generally wasting time."*

This finding was similar to findings by [29], [30], [33], [36] and [37] which had found that sociocultural factors influence students' performance in national examinations. Therefore, the present study analyzed the data and the emergent themes were collectivist culture, political activism and witchcraft and spiritism as influences on students academic performance among the sociocultural factors.

5.1 Collectivist Culture

The collectivist culture was shown when the respondents indicated that among factors that influence students' academic performance negatively were visiting relatives, bad company, attending burial disco dance (called *disco manga*), going to wild barroom parties called clubbing and holding teen music parties called bash.

Some of the respondents reported that *"Some of the students like visiting their relatives but some are sent by their parents regardless of whether it is exam time. In those visits, they can easily get engaged in activities that are detrimental to their performance such as promiscuous behaviour besides generally wasting time."* Another respondent said, *"Some of the candidates never miss disco manga when someone has died. And when there are no funerals, then they go clubbing and hold bash."* but another respondent said, *"There are some who have a bad company with whom they walk – people who have left school are their best friends. Such people make them feel education is not important."*

Therefore, the respondents indicated that these aspects of the collectivist culture that is prevalent among the ethnic communities where most of the students came from were influencing their performance negatively. The finding in the present study that a collectivist culture was detrimental to students' academic performance was similar to findings by [38] and [40].

5.2 Political Activism

The respondents indicated this by reporting that some of the things that promote poor performance among the students included participation in political demonstrations (called *maandamano*), debating the political issues of the day, and spending a lot of time on updating themselves on the details of the political on-goings through news presented in print and electronic media.

One of the participants said, *"Some of the students get involved in maandamano which is dangerous because people get injured or even killed in the maandamano."* Another student reported that *"Some students are political commentators who watch and read the news in detail and then spend their time on political discussions in school instead of reading."*

This finding was similar to the findings by [45] who had found that political activism negatively affected students' academic performance. However, it was contrary to the finding of [46] and [47] who reported that civic engagement enabled students to have higher order cognitive processes.

5.3 Witchcraft and Spiritism

This was captured when the respondents reported that candidates often resort to witchcraft when the national examinations are approaching. Also, the respondents indicated that some candidates also go to spiritists who pray for the candidates using paraphernalia such as black clothes, candles, chants and concoctions. The respondents reported that resorting to witchdoctors (called *waganga*) and spiritists promoted poor academic performance among the people who believed and used such practices.

One of the respondents reported that *"Some candidates who are not prepared for exams go to Prayer people who pray for them using incantations and strange things such as black clothes, candles and other concoctions."* Another respondent said, *"Some candidates either are taken or seek out waganga to perform witchcraft over them such as scarification which results in physical injury to the student."*

The finding that such spiritual activities negatively affected students' performance in national examinations was similar to that of [48] who reported that education services suffered because of witchcraft in a part of Zimbabwe because of witchcraft. It was, however, contrary to the finding of [50] in Ghana who found no significant relationship between spiritual activities and academic performance.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that sociocultural factors affect the performance of students in national examinations in Kisumu County, Kenya. Therefore, the study concludes that involvement in collectivist cultural practices, political activism and different spiritual activities negatively affect the academic performance of students. Consequently, the study recommends that communities with a traditional collectivist background should be sensitised on practices that thwart the academic progress of students. Secondly, the study suggests that candidates in national examinations should be advised to refrain from political activism. Thirdly, the study recommends that candidates should be counselled and guided to avoid from witchcraft and spiritism.

ETHICAL APPROVAL
The authors declare that written informed consent was obtained from the participants and research permit was received from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation of Kenya (NACOSTI) for conducting this study.

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