

## **The Status of Primary School Libraries in Limuru Sub-County, Kiambu County**

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### **Abstract**

*School libraries contribute significantly to the improvement of students' academic performance by complementing the work of the classroom teacher. Their ultimate goal is ensuring that each student has equitable access to resources, irrespective of home opportunities or constraints. However, school libraries face a number of challenges and in most of the countries, the struggle of establishing and supporting school libraries continues. The study provides a comprehensive analysis on the status of school libraries in Limuru Sub County, Kiambu County. The objectives of the study were to; establish the status of school libraries in Limuru Sub County, Kiambu County and evaluate the challenges affecting primary school libraries in Limuru Sub County, Kiambu County. The study employed mixed methods design which combines the qualitative and quantitative approaches within different phases of the research process. The target population consisted of all teachers in charge of libraries in the 40 primary schools in Limuru Sub-County. Printed questionnaires with both closed and open-ended questions as well as observation schedules were used for data collection. Collected data was processed, analyzed and presented in tables, charts and graphs. The qualitative data obtained from interviews was analyzed using inductive thematic analysis. From the study, it was noted that the schools had some form of libraries and the available resources were organized in a systematic way to ease retrieval. It was also noted that the presence of school libraries had a great impact on the learners as majority of the school's indicated improvement in mean score, research skills, writing, reading and spoken language. However, the libraries faced various challenges especially lack of sufficient resources, trained personnel, availability of purpose-built school libraries and lack of government policies on to guide on school libraries. The study recommended that St. Paul's University library train teacher librarians in Limuru Sub County on library skills as part of Corporate Social Responsibility, and that key stakeholders should continue supporting the school libraries with locally published materials that seemed to be more relevant to pupils. In conclusion, the stakeholders concerned with education in primary schools must play their roles to facilitate the establishment and running of school libraries within Limuru Sub-County.*

**Keywords: Libraries, School Libraries, Corporate Social Responsibility, Literacy, Examination Performance**

### **Introduction**

The role of academic libraries extends beyond supporting teaching and learning in their parent organization to reaching out to the broader community as a pillar of social responsibility to various stakeholders (Adegbaye, 2023). Like other institutions and businesses, university libraries have not been left out in the drive for sustainable relevance in contemporary society through participation in corporate social responsibility programmes (Ngozi et al., 2020). These libraries may participate

in socially responsible initiatives, which may include book donations to public schools, imparting skills and knowledge and hosting academic events, among others. In Kenya, university libraries have been involved in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives to support school children in primary and high school libraries. These initiatives have been fragmented and undocumented due to a lack of legal and policy frameworks, and hence they are not practised systematically (Wanjiru et al., 2015). Notwithstanding this challenge, a number of university libraries have engaged in CSR programmes as part of their community outreach (Kenya Methodist University, 2017; University of Embu, 2017). St. Paul's University Library had endeavoured to enhance library CSR by donating books to primary and secondary schools and supporting the rehabilitation of library spaces in some schools in Limuru Sub-County, Kiambu County.

According to Todd (2021) School libraries are an important part of the education system in any country, as they not only support literacy but also have a positive impact on children's mental well-being. Key among the benefits is leisure reading, exposure to the world and increased language development. In addition, these libraries contribute significantly to the improvement of students' academic performance (Baro & Eze, 2016). The performance of national examinations is a sensitive issue because it determines the direction and future of an individual (Irungu & Nyaga, 2013). The performance in schools' examinations is determined by many factors, among them the availability of teaching and learning facilities and reading resources. A school library is key among the learning and teaching facilities critical to achieving high-quality performance. It enhances the work of the classroom teacher with the aim of ensuring that each learner has equitable access to information resources (Akande & Bamise, 2017).

For many years in Kenya, examinations have been integral to the education system (Njuguna, 2011). At the primary school level, the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE), which came into being barely five years after the establishment of KNEC in 1980, offered in November each year for standard eight pupils, had been the main parameter for gauging academic performance in primary schools. In most countries, progress from one level of education to the next is determined by performance in national examinations. Ngaruiya (2013) explains that the KCPE determined not only who would continue to secondary school but also in which category of school, that is, national, provincial, or district school. In a study carried out in Ndeiya Division,

Limuru Sub-County, Waringu (2014), noted that primary schools had continued to record dismal performance in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) over the years. The author listed several factors that contributed to poor performance, including the school's administration and inadequate teaching and learning facilities. In fact, school libraries form the core of teaching and learning facilities critical to improved school performance in national examinations.

The 8-4-4 education system was criticised for focusing on summative tests, examination and being competitive, which burdened students with cramming to pass examinations (Amutabi, 2019). It also used a system in which learners progressed to the next level only if they passed examinations; otherwise, they were regarded as having failed to meet the required pass mark. As a result, the education system was changed, and competency-based education (CBC) was introduced to accommodate all the learners who learn at their own pace. The CBC curriculum eliminates unhealthy competition and allows a 100% transition to the next level, aiming to shift learners from memorisation to demonstrating competencies. In addition, 40% of the learners' grade is determined in school by teachers' assessment, and 60% by the KIPSEA and KIJSEA national examinations. For learners to join senior school, pathways are determined by a combination of assessments, both in school and in the KIJSEA national examination. As such, school libraries play a significant role in supporting learners gain the expected competencies. According to Thiruaine et al., (2024) A survey carried out in 24 schools in Meru County on the role of school libraries in the implementation of CBC indicated that well-equipped and managed libraries provide access to both print and digital resources. The study recommended that schools invest in library resources, train students in their use, and conduct regular evaluations of the status of these libraries.

Schultz-Jones and Oberg (2015) define a school library as a 'school's physical and digital learning space where reading, inquiry, research, thinking, imagination and creativity are central to students' information-to-knowledge journey and to their personal, social and cultural growth. School libraries are mostly found in schools, and they are used by students and their teachers. They can be at the primary school level, where they mainly stock basic books and other information materials meant to encourage reading, such as picture books, which they can use alone or with the help of their teachers. The role of the library is to develop and sustain in children the habit and enjoyment of reading and learning, and the use of libraries throughout their lives for lifelong

learning purposes. To emphasize on the importance of the school libraries, Ndeke (2013) carried out a study in Chuka Division where 70% of the primary schools did not have libraries. This, she notes, has a negative impact on the pupils' academic performance. In a report on the future of school libraries in the United Kingdom, Todd (2021) noted that there were no statutory requirements for primary schools to have libraries, which had a negative impact on children from disadvantaged backgrounds since they did not have access to information materials. It is apparent that there is a significant gap in the availability of well-managed school libraries in Kenya, as in other countries. The lack of policies on staffing and collection development has been a challenge for the existing school libraries. Limuru Sub-County may not be unique to the current situation in the country as far as the school libraries are concerned.

### **Challenges Affecting the Development and Management of School Libraries**

Generally, in Africa, the need for education has been recognized but not for school libraries (Weche & Liyai, 2005). In most countries, the battle to establish and support school libraries continues. Several studies indicate that well-established and managed school libraries are significantly related to high academic achievement. The schools which have well-equipped libraries normally maintain high academic performance (Karimi, 2011; Ontario Library Association, 2006; Waringu, 2014).

The studies further indicate that this evidence has not had much impact on the development of school libraries, mainly because of the entrenched views of educators and administrators that see the school library as being peripheral to teaching and learning (Chan, 2008). Provision of library services in most primary schools is undoubtedly inadequate (Ojijo, 2011). The researcher acknowledges the fact that most schools lack purpose-built libraries, and buildings have been set aside to serve as libraries. However, the space set aside for libraries is inadequate, and they are poorly equipped, leading to poor utilisation by students. Mutindi (2013) explains that most schools do not have libraries at all. National Library of New Zealand (2018) asserts that schools utilised rooms stocked with some books, some very outdated, which students borrowed during break time and returned within two or three days. There was also insufficient budget allocation to cater for library-related issues and few trained professionals to manage the libraries.

Proposed solutions to some of these challenges include: provision of space, budget and employment of trained school librarians. It is of great importance that schools and other

stakeholders ensure that spacious libraries are constructed in schools, and the teachers responsible allocate more time to students for library use. In addition, school administrations ought to regularly renovate existing library facilities to make them more suitable for use (Mojapelo, 2016).

Weche and Liyai (2005) advised that it is important to define the needs of library users, set the missions and goals and decide on the type of library that is required before setting up one. They also advised that a committee comprising the school management, pupils, parents, and teachers should be formed to oversee the running of the school libraries, since they operate within the wider context of the school's plans, goals, and aspirations for its students and the community. The school library projects are most likely to succeed if the community understands why the library development is necessary. The stakeholders should also be well informed and accorded the support required to carry out the task. This also requires adequate funding and development of staff expertise. Mutungi et al. (2014) observed that the school principal's support is very necessary to have a successful library. The principals show their support by working with the teachers, demonstrating their commitment towards the programme and using the Board of Management (BOM). The government also needs to show support by hiring librarians and allocating a budget to purchase books. Professional bodies such as the Kenya Library Association (KLA) need to sensitise the government on the importance of hiring trained librarians to manage the school libraries.

### **Problem Statement**

Although Kenyan university libraries have continued to conduct CSR activities, the activities are not institutionalized and mostly it is a one-off, non-strategic events driven by philanthropy (Wanjiru et al., 2015). If university libraries are to successfully implement CSR initiatives, it is pertinent that they involve the beneficiaries for relevance and easy implementation of CSR (Akpom et al., 2020). This is true for St. Paul's University Library's CSR activities, as the status of school libraries in Limuru Sub-County was unclear before the study was undertaken. Without clear guidelines or a policy to support the school libraries, the Library CSR effort remained a significant challenge. Therefore, the study's main aim was to gain a better understanding of school libraries in Limuru Sub-County to enhance future St. Paul's University Library CSR plans and programs.

## **Study Objectives**

The main aim of the study was to establish the status of school libraries in Limuru Sub-County, Kiambu County. Specifically, the study sought to;

- i. Establish the status of school libraries in Limuru Sub-County, Kiambu County.
- ii. Evaluate the challenges affecting primary school libraries in Limuru Sub-County, Kiambu County.

## **Significance of the Study**

The findings were important in guiding future Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs for schools in the St Paul's University Library Sub-County. The efforts were geared towards improving schools' performance in national examinations in Limuru Sub-County, which in turn would have a ripple effect on potential students joining St. Paul's University for study. The findings were also important for guiding the development and management of school libraries.

## **Methodology**

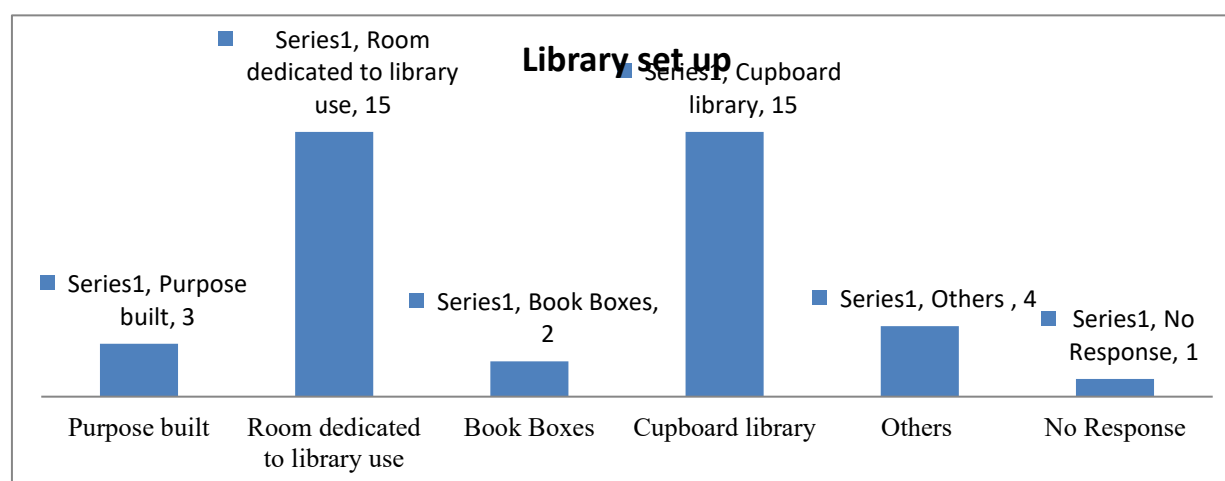
The study employed a mixed methods design. The mixed methods design combines the qualitative and quantitative approaches within different phases of the research process (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). The target population consisted of all teachers in charge of libraries in the 40 primary schools in Limuru Sub-County. Writing on strategies for determining sample sizes in small populations, Singh and Masuku (2014) advised on the use of the entire population as the sample. The authors assert that a census is more attractive for small populations (e.g., 200 or fewer) because it eliminates sampling error and provides data on all the individuals in the population. In this regard, the total population in the study was small ( $<200$ ) and therefore the survey was distributed to a census sample of all teachers in charge of libraries ( $P=40$ ) in primary schools in Limuru Sub County as of August, 2018. A printed questionnaire with both closed-ended and open-ended questions, along with observation schedules, was used for data collection. Collected data was processed, analyzed and presented in tables, charts and graphs. The qualitative data obtained from interviews were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis.

## Research Findings

### Status of school libraries in Limuru Sub-County, Kiambu County

The findings indicated that 53% (n=21) of the respondents were female, while 47% (n=19) were male. This implied that the majority of the teacher librarians were women, albeit marginally. In terms of education level, only one teacher librarian (2.5%) had masters' level qualification. 40% (n=16) had a bachelor's as the highest qualification, 45% (n=28) with diplomas, and 12.5% (n=5) of respondents were certificate holders. The findings also showed that the majority of the respondents, 70% (n=28), had only been in charge of the libraries for between 0 and 5 years. 20% (n=8) respondents had been in charge for between 6-11 years, whereas 10% (n=4) respondents had been in charge for more than 12 years. In terms of training, the research found that an overwhelming 95% (n=38) of the 40 respondents did not have training in librarianship, and only two respondents (5%) had some sort of training in this field. Cole et al., (2023) reporting on schools in the United Kingdom noted that only 2 in 5 schools with designated library had a designated library staff. In addition, even where the designated staff was available, 92% had additional roles beyond library work. Similar situations are replicated in Kenya where Shonhe, (2019) observed that there are poor staffing practices in school libraries which means there is no qualified librarian or there is only one qualified librarian. This leads to further challenges such as irrelevant collection, uncatalogued and poorly organized materials. In addition, there is also poor marketing of the library and information literacy skills.

Apparently, majority of the primary schools in Limuru Sub County had rooms set aside as libraries. The library set up varied depending on the school as indicated in the figure below.



Majority of the schools had rooms which were dedicated for library use as well as cupboard libraries whereas few of them had purpose-built libraries and book boxes. According to Otiike and Kiruki (2011), there is no official policy in Kenya that requires schools to establish libraries. School libraries are not given official support from the government and as a result, the heads of schools and parent associations have to take an initiative to establish, equip and maintain libraries in their schools.

Regarding personnel running the libraries, the majority of teacher librarians, 45% (n=18), held deputy head teacher positions as their primary responsibility. The other responsibilities included: class teachers 25% (n=10), head teachers 15% (n=6), head of department and senior teacher 7.5% each. Notably, there was no school librarian at any of the schools. Shonhe (2019) observed that school libraries are managed by teacher librarians who are more focused on teaching, so the library suffers because opening times are limited and controlled by the teacher's availability. The study findings also showed that the majority of the schools did not have purpose-built libraries. 42.5% (n=17) of the schools reported having no library seating space. 25% (n=10) had a sitting \*capacity of more than 40, while another 25% (n=10) had less than 40. 17.5% (n=5) did not respond. These findings agree with Otiike and Kiruki (2011) observations that most public schools convert their classrooms to temporary library buildings. 52.5% (n=21) of the schools indicated that their school libraries have been in existence for less than ten years. 22.5% (n=9) of schools have had their libraries running for between 10 and 20 years, and 1 school (2.5%) for more than 20 years. Five schools indicated that this question was not applicable to them, and four did not respond. This observation implied that the majority of the schools in Limuru Sub-County have had operational libraries for up to about 20 years.

The table below summarizes the reasons which motivated different schools to establish libraries. It is evident that developing and promoting a reading culture and improving reading, writing and speaking skills were a top priority with 37% each. Primary schools also established libraries to help pupils improve in their performance, serve as a storage facility for books and past papers as well as provide diverse information resources.



<b>Factors</b>	<b>Tally</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Develop and promote a reading Culture	19	37
To improve reading, writing and speaking skills	19	37
To help Children improve in performance	7	14
To store supplementary books donated by the government	2	4
To store past exam papers	2	4
Diversify information resources	2	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>100</b>

### Number of Resources Available by Item Types

The table below summarizes the resources available in the different libraries in varied formats. The majority of the libraries had print resources, whereas print magazine titles had the least mean. The computers and audiovisual materials were also available in high numbers. This is beneficial for the pupils, as they have an opportunity to interact with modern technology.

<b>Information Resources</b>	<b>Mean (<math>\mu</math>)</b>
Print books	2.68
Computers	2.67
Audio visual Material(Such as CDs DVDs )	2.46
Electronic resources	2.33
Newspaper titles	2.16
Print magazine titles	1.90

### Organization of Library Resources

As indicated below, most teacher librarians organized the available information materials by subject for easier retrieval. Some of them were also organised by class and serial number. The computers and other electronic devices were labelled for ease of use. Some of the information materials were organised by title, and some libraries did not organise their resources. The essence of organising the resources was to ease retrieval and enhance usage, since it had already been observed that there were no trained librarians to catalogue them.

	<b>Tally</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
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Arranged according to subjects	10	31.26
Arranged according to classes	4	12.5
Arranged by serial Numbers	4	12.5
Labeling of shelves	4	12.5
Labeling of books	3	9.37
Coding of computers and other devices	3	9.37
Arranged by titles	2	6.25
Not organized	2	6.25
	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>

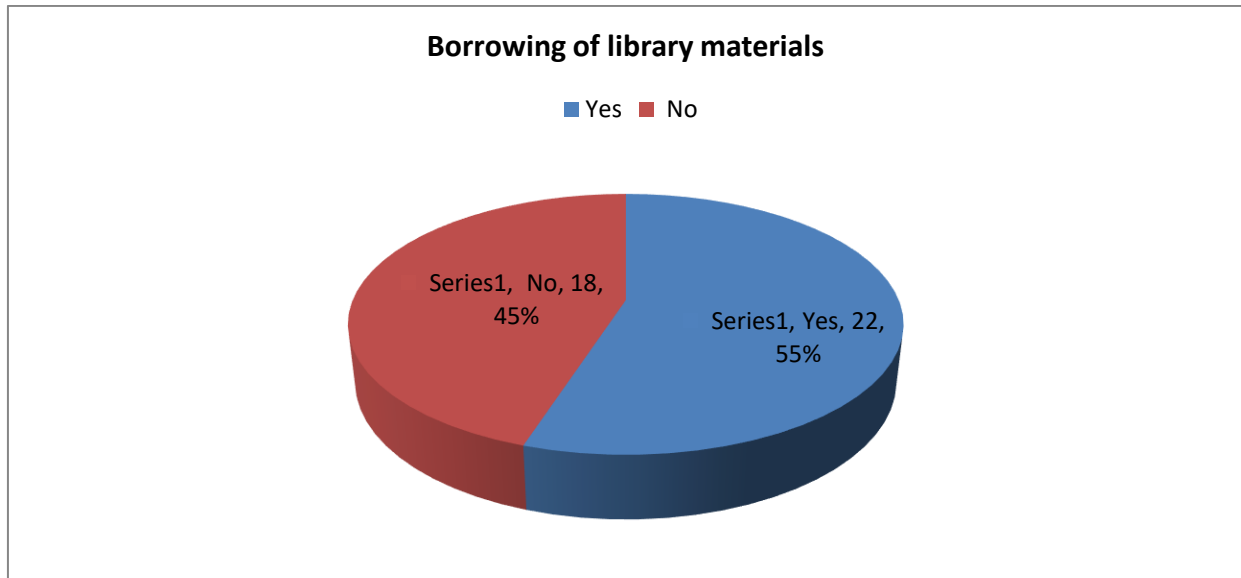
### Number of Resources Available by Subjects

The table below shows that English and Kiswahili had the most books, whereas social studies had the fewest. This may have been because there were more storybooks in both English and Kiswahili.

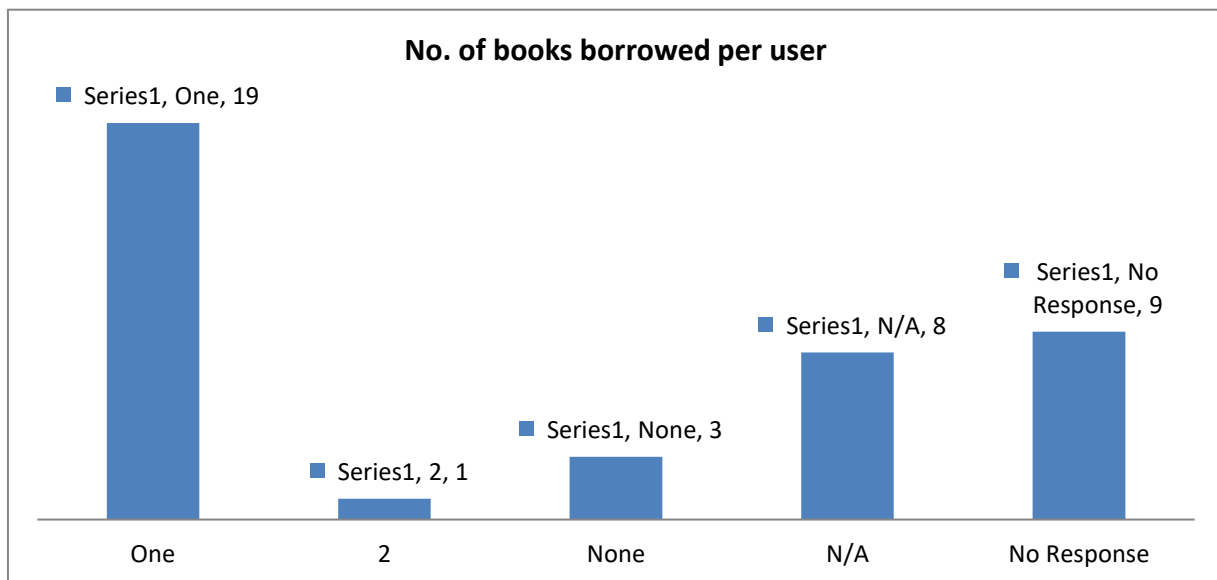
Information Resources	Mean ( $\mu$ )
English	2.97
Kiswahili	2.89
Fiction Story books	2.61
Science	2.58
Mathematics	2.55
Social Studies	2.37

### Usage- Borrowing

According to the figure below, 55% of the libraries allowed users to borrow books, whereas 45% did not provide this service. This may be explained by the fact that some schools had very few resources, which were inadequate for pupils to borrow.



For the school libraries where books were borrowed out, the majority allowed one book out at a time, according to the figure below. Only one school library issued out two books; the rest either did not lend out or did not respond. This may imply that the resources were not adequate to be borrowed out in these school libraries.



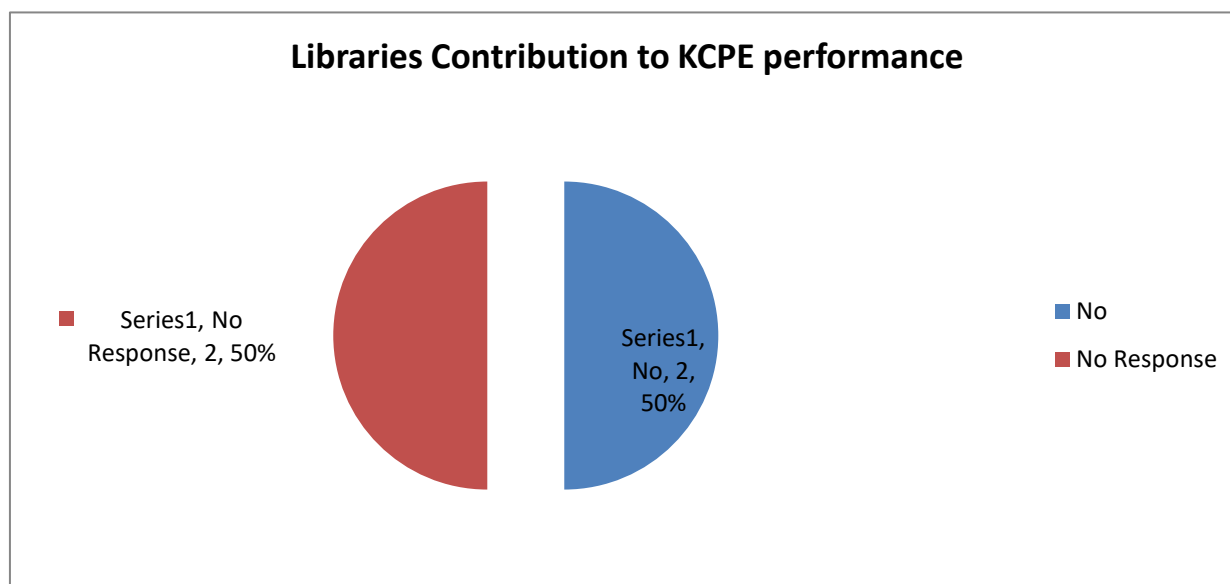
### Reading Promotion Methods

To promote reading culture in the different schools, the majority of respondents indicated that they encouraged pupils to read aloud and retell stories, as shown in the table below. The other schools

had reading games and competitions. This shows that the respondents appreciated the development of the reading culture among the pupils and created interest in reading.

Reading promotional methods	Mean ( $\mu$ )
Retelling stories	3.26
Reading aloud	3.19
Reading competition	2.75
Reading games	2.21
None	0

According to the figure below, half of the respondents indicated that the presence of a school library contributed to improved performance in KCPE, whereas the other half indicated that it did not make a difference. Although the responses were split, research studies have indicated that well-equipped school libraries help students improve their performance, especially in national examinations.



### Libraries' Contribution to Better Performance

Method	Tally	Percentage
Writing better composition and Insha	8	18.66
Enhancing reading and comprehension	7	16.27
Improvement in languages performance	6	13.95
Improvement in creativity and critical thinking	6	13.95

Improved mean score	5	11.62
Developing reading culture	3	6.97
Develop interest in reading	2	4.65
Improved verbal communication	2	4.65
Improved computer literacy	1	2.32
Improved research skills	1	2.32
Reading for Leisure	1	2.32
Improved readings skills	1	2.32
	<b>43</b>	<b>100</b>

In the table above, the researchers found that the presence of school libraries had a great impact on the learners. The majority of the schools indicated improvement in writing, reading and spoken language. Some of the schools also recorded improved mean scores and research skills. There was also improved creativity and critical thinking, as well as the development of a reading culture among the pupils (Otiye & Kiruki, 2011). In support of this, Mutungi (2014) observed that children who use a library develop better information skills, cultivate a culture of lifelong learning, and have enhanced life chances, as they have an open mind.

### Challenges Experienced and Suggested Solutions in School Libraries

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Tally</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Inadequate books and other information resources	24	34.78
Lack of a dedicated library room	15	21.74
Lack of trained librarian	8	11.59
Inadequate library furniture	5	7.25
Poor security	4	5.79
Inadequate library space	3	4.35
Mishandling of books	2	2.90
Insufficient time for library usage by teachers and pupils	2	2.90
Poor storage of books and other information resources	1	1.45
Poor parental support	1	1.45
Noncurrent books and other information materials	1	1.45
Lack of variety of titles	1	1.45
Irrelevant books	1	1.45
Inability to control what content pupils' access	1	1.45
	<b>69</b>	<b>100</b>

The challenges above support the observations made by Otike and Kiruki, (2011) that Kenyan government supports public primary schools by acquiring textbooks and other informational materials, but leaves the development of school libraries to the schools, parents and well-wishers. This supports the research findings that the availability of purpose-built school libraries was a challenge. In another research, Shonhe (2019) observed that school libraries in Kenya face such challenges as a lack of government policies on school libraries, a lack of financial support, and an inability to embrace contemporary trends in technology, among others, and Limuru sub-county is no exception. The researchers also observed that school libraries are managed by teacher librarians who are more focused on teaching, which means the library suffers because opening times are limited and controlled by the teacher's availability. The other observations noted included a lack of relevant resources and multimedia, a lack of electricity, untrained library personnel, inadequate and outdated resources, and a lack of purpose-built libraries, among others.

<b>Solutions</b>	<b>Tally</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Acquisition of books and other information resources through purchases or donations	22	34.38
Construction of a purpose-built school library	19	29.69
Acquisition of furniture	6	9.38
Training of teachers on library management	5	7.81
Hiring of school librarians	5	7.81
Parents/guardians sensitization	3	4.69
More funding for schools	1	1.56
Preservation and maintenance of books	1	1.56
Vetting of the content by teachers	1	1.56
Training of pupils on proper handling of books	1	1.56
	<b>64</b>	<b>100</b>

The table above summarizes some of the solutions that were gathered in the research. In addition to these solutions, Shonhe, (2019) recommends allocating a library lesson to each class, establishing a school library fund to be managed by the school authorities and the PTA to reduce dependence on the government, and collaborating between school and public libraries, among others.

### **Stakeholders' Involvement**

The findings indicated that different stakeholders had roles to play in support of school libraries. The stakeholders mentioned included alumni, the Board of Management (BOM), the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), the County Government, and parents, among others. The roles abrogated to the alumni included mobilizing the locals to start school libraries, initiating reading competitions and donating books to the libraries. The respondents also felt that the Board of Management would help in facilitating the buying of books and building a library, setting funds that would go into maintaining the library, providing quality storage for the library resources, mobilizing resources to uplift the library through donor funds and book donations, calling meetings and encouraging parents to participate in the provision of reading materials. The respondents indicated that CDF could help construct and equip classrooms on a per-school basis, build libraries, provide furniture, renovate infrastructure, and reinforce rooms to ensure the security of books. The findings also revealed that the government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education had the following roles to play; provision of books, starting a reading competition, providing funds to buy the books and other resources, employing full time school librarians, organizing training sessions for teacher librarians, following up and ensuring library lessons are slotted in the timetable, providing guidelines and personnel to advice on the construction and providing internet services to all schools.

The parents had a role to play as stakeholders, too. The respondents assigned them the roles of providing books, encouraging learners to read at home, borrowing old newspapers from the community for the children to read through, supporting pupils fully to ensure they complete their education, motivating the pupils by buying books for them, encouraging learners to read educational books that they come across and financing the school's development agenda. Moreover, teachers had a great role in manning the library lessons, encouraging learners to bring reading materials from home, supporting teaching and discipline, being innovative and creative to provide materials children can use in the library, storing and making available the resources to students, motivating students to have a reading culture and attending training on managing libraries. Finally, the respondents also felt that different NGOs, politicians, and other learning institutions could play a role in donating books, helping construct libraries, and starting motivational programs to encourage a reading culture among students.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study sought to find out the status of school libraries in Limuru Sub-County. It is apparent that schools had various types of libraries where pupils accessed available resources. There were also challenges experienced, especially a lack of sufficient resources and trained personnel. It was evident that the key stakeholders concerned with education in primary schools must play their roles to facilitate the establishment and running of school libraries within Limuru Sub-County.

The study therefore recommended that St. Paul's University library prioritise training in its CSR plans going forward, since library skills training emerged as the greatest need for the teacher librarians. Secondly, the Kenyan Government, through the Ministry of Education and specifically the Teachers Service Commission, should play a major role in employing trained school librarians. The teacher librarians felt they were not managing the libraries effectively because of their core business of teaching, and therefore had little time for the libraries. The Teachers' Training colleges should also include library skills in their training curriculum, and St. Paul's University and other stakeholders should continue supporting school libraries with books, especially locally published materials that are more relevant to pupils. Knowledge on the status of school libraries in Limuru Sub-County will be enhanced by further studies to determine the influence of libraries on academic performance. This will also help determine the actual contribution of libraries in national examinations and patterns of reading habits amongst the pupils, with a view to enhancing a reading culture and replicating the same study in high Schools in Limuru Sub-County, Kiambu County.

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