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## Sources of Variations in the Kenyan Sign Language and its Effects on Academic Performance of Students in Hearing Impairment Schools. A Case Study

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### Abstract

Sign language is a system of communication that uses a manual alphabet, hand gestures, facial expressions and finger spelling to convey meaning. It is used in communication as well as instructional language during the teaching and learning process. However, there are variations in sign language worldwide and Kenya is no exception. The variations in sign language may affect academic performance among students in secondary school with hearing impairment (HI). This study aimed at identifying the sources of variations and the effects of variations on the academic performance of students in HI schools. The study was guided by the ecological system theory of human development. A descriptive research design was employed. The target population for the study was 17 secondary schools for HI students, 589 forms four students and 189 teachers. Two questionnaires were used, one for the teachers and the other for the HI students. A pilot study was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of research instruments. Data were analyzed descriptively with the help of SPSS version 25. The results were presented in tables and figures in the form of frequencies and percentages. Results from the respondents established that there were variations in the KSL which were brought about by the family background, the teacher-student interactions, peers and friends, the curriculum and also regional variations. It was also established that the variations affected the way the students receive and respond to various concepts during the teaching and learning process which affected their academic performance. The study concluded that there were variations in the KSL, which influenced students' academic performance. The researcher recommends that curriculum developers should consider these findings and adapt the curriculum to reduce variations. Curriculum developers to use the media to teach the concepts about the appropriate signs used for communication in Kenya more in service courses. Also, trained teachers to all other teachers to get the basic sign languages used in Kenya.

**Keywords:** Variation; hearing impairment; performance; Students; Teachers

