The Overview of Kiswahili Academic Writing: Challenges and Perspectives

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Abstract This study examines the challenges and opportunities in Kiswahili academic writing by focusing on its historical evolution, key features, and theoretical underpinnings. By using a quantitative approach that incorporates a questionnaire survey with 151 respondents (academic writers), the study ascertains prominent obstacles faced by Kiswahili academic writers, such as insufficient resources, lexical limitations, and the pervasive influence of English. Additionally, it analyses the contexts in which Kiswahili is employed for scholarly purposes and evaluates the proficiency levels of academic writers. The study concludes by offering actionable strategies to enhance Kiswahili academic writing, including the creation of comprehensive resources, increased institutional support, and the integration of digital and technological tools. By addressing these challenges and leveraging opportunities, the study seeks to advance Kiswahili's role as a medium for scholarship and research so as to contribute to its growth as an academic and intellectual language.

Keywords: *Kiswahili, academic writing, technology and writing, academic discourse, Kiswahili scholarship, challenges, perspectives, language proficiency, scholarly language.*

I.   INTRODUCTION

Kiswahili academic writing is a critical component of scholarly communication. It is characterised by its formal structure, precision, and adherence to academic conventions. It plays a vital role in knowledge dissemination within the Swahili-speaking world. This fosters intellectual discourse and preserves the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Swahili people (Mawere & Mubaya, 2014). The scope of Swahili academic writing extends to various academic contexts. It includes universities, research institutions, and scholarly publications, where it serves as a medium for expressing complex ideas, arguments, and research findings. The importance of Swahili academic writing is underscored by its ability to contribute to the intellectual development of the Swahili-speaking community and to provide a platform for the articulation of indigenous knowledge systems (Mazrui, 1998; Mbae, 2016). Despite Kiswahili's growing importance as a language of instruction and communication in East Africa, academic writing in Kiswahili remains fraught with challenges. These challenges include complex grammar structures, limited vocabulary and terminology, lack of specialised resources such as dictionaries, style guides, and academic writing manuals, and difficulties in finding scholarly sources in Kiswahili. Moreover, there is limited institutional support for Kiswahili academic writers, and few opportunities for training in academic writing in Kiswahili. As a result, many scholars and students encounter significant barriers when writing academic papers, theses, and research in Kiswahili. While some progress has been made, there is a clear need to explore the perspectives of academic writers and propose strategies to improve Kiswahili academic writing by addressing these challenges. This study aims to investigate the current state of Kiswahili academic writing, identify the obstacles faced by writers, and explore potential solutions to enhance proficiency and resources for effective academic writing in Kiswahili.

i.   The Study Objectives

The main objectives of this study are to identify and analyse the challenges faced by Kiswahili academic writers, including issues related to grammar, vocabulary limitations, and the scarcity of academic resources. The study also aims to evaluate the proficiency

levels of Kiswahili academic writers, examining their frequency of engagement in academic writing and the contexts in which Kiswahili is used. Finally, the study seeks to propose strategies for improving Kiswahili academic writing, focusing on the development of resources, institutional support, and the integration of technology to address the identified challenges and enhance overall proficiency.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1.   Academic writing

Academic writing is distinct from other forms of writing, such as creative writing, journalistic writing, or transactional writing, in that its primary purpose is to search for truth. Unlike fiction and poetry, where the goal is to entertain, or journalistic writing, which aims to inform, academic writing is centred on learning about the world, understanding what is true, and analysing how things came to be and how we know them (Bean, 2011). The essence of academic writing lies in its analytical nature; there can be no politics, ethics, or arguments without thorough analysis, making it a crucial tool for expanding our understanding of the world (Graff & Birkenstein, 2016). The goal of academic writing is to contribute something new to the existing body of knowledge, whether by revealing previously unknown information or offering a fresh interpretation of well-known facts (Carter, 2007). This pursuit of originality requires a significant shift from being a mere receptor of knowledge to becoming a creator of knowledge, which is both challenging and exciting, as it provides an opportunity to contribute unique insights to scholarly discourse (Booth et al., 2008).

1.2.   Pillars of Kiswahili Academic Writing

There are three pillars of academic writing; firstly, "Writing is Thinking," secondly "Writing is a Process," and "We Write Best in Conversation with Others" (Wilson, 2022 p. 2) These are foundational concepts in the study of composition and writing. Initially, the idea that "writing is thinking" suggests that writing is not merely a tool for expressing thought but is integral to the thought process itself, as highlighted by Elbow (1981) and further explored through cognitive process theories by Flower and Hayes (1981). Additionally, there is the notion that "writing is a process". This notion emphasises the sequential nature of developing and presenting arguments, where each step builds on the previous one, a concept central to the work of Murray (1980) and Graves (1983). Finally, the other pillar is lying in the idea that "we write best in conversation with others", challenges the solitary image of the writer, proposing instead that writing is most effective when it involves collaboration and input from others, a perspective supported by Bruffee (1984) and further developed by Lunsford and Ede (1990). These principles collectively underscore the complexity and social nature of academic writing, reinforcing its role as both a cognitive and collaborative activity (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010).

1.3.   Historical Background of Swahili Academic Writing

The evolution of Swahili academic writing is deeply rooted in the historical contexts of the Swahili-speaking regions, particularly in East Africa. During the pre-colonial period, Swahili was primarily an oral language, with limited use in written forms (Chiraghdin & Mnyampala, 1977). However, the advent of colonialism and missionary activities in the 19th and 20th centuries brought about significant changes. The introduction of formal education by missionaries led to the standardisation of Swahili as a written language in the 1930s, which eventually paved the way for its use in academic settings (Whiteley, 1969). Post-independence, countries like Tanzania and Kenya adopted Swahili as a national and official language, further promoting its use in academia (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1999). This period saw a proliferation of Swahili academic texts, driven by a growing demand for education in the national language (Abdulaziz, 1982).

1.4.   Key Characteristics of Swahili Academic Writing

Swahili academic writing is distinguished by its formal and precise language, which adheres to establish grammatical structures and vocabulary (Massamba, 2004). The style of writing is often characterised by clarity, coherence, and a logical flow of ideas, which are essential for effective scholarly communication (Mbae, 2016). The structure of Swahili academic texts typically follows a conventional format, including an introduction, literature review, methodology, results, and conclusion, similar to academic writing in other languages (Mwansoko, 1990). In terms of citation and referencing, Swahili academic writing generally adopts international citation styles, such as APA or MLA, but with adaptations to accommodate Swahili linguistic and cultural norms (TUKI, 2004). This includes translating key terms and concepts to ensure that they are comprehensible to Swahili-speaking audiences.

It is generally agreed that, when writing, the main concern of any specialist "is to define his subject matter precisely and to establish a clear and logical progression of ideas" (Crystal & Davy, 1969, p. 15). To achieve these objectives, the language used in academic writing has developed specialised characteristics. These features include a high degree of abstraction and generalisation of concepts (Swales, 1990), precision of terminology (Hyland, 2000), and objectivity (Biber, 1988). Furthermore, academic writing often employs a multiplicity of impersonal expressions and demonstrates a rare use of figures of speech and imagery (Jaffe, 2009). As a result, academic language tends to be less emotional and expressive, appearing stringent and rather dry, particularly to those not accustomed to its register (Cameron, 2001). These characteristics are typically reflected in academic texts through specific linguistic markers, including syntactical and lexical features (Halliday & Martin, 1993).

Despite its growing prominence, Swahili academic writing faces several challenges. One of the primary issues is the limited availability of academic resources in Swahili, including specialised dictionaries and style guides (Abdulaziz, 1982). This scarcity often forces scholars to rely on English-language resources, which can lead to inconsistencies and difficulties in maintaining the

authenticity of Swahili academic writing (Mekacha, 1993). Additionally, the influence of English, particularly in technical and scientific disciplines, poses a challenge to the development of Swahili academic terminologies (Mazrui, 1998). However, these challenges also present opportunities for growth. The increasing demand for Swahili academic texts, driven by the expansion of higher education in East Africa, offers a unique opportunity to develop and refine Swahili academic writing (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1999). Moreover, the rise of digital resources and online platforms provides new avenues for the dissemination and standardisation of Swahili academic writing (Mbae, 2016). The future of Swahili academic writing lies in continued research and development. There is a pressing need for more specialised dictionaries, style guides, and academic resources to support scholars writing in Swahili (Massamba, 2004).

Additionally, further research is needed to explore the impact of globalisation and digitalisation on Swahili academic writing, particularly in terms of accessibility and collaboration across the Swahili-speaking world (Blommaert, 2010). The development of online platforms and digital repositories could play a crucial role in making Swahili academic texts more accessible to a broader audience, thereby enhancing the visibility and impact of Swahili scholarship (Mbae, 2016). In summary, Swahili academic writing is a vital aspect of scholarly communication within the Swahili-speaking world, characterised by its formal structure, precise language, and adherence to academic conventions. While it faces several challenges, including the limited availability of resources and the influence of English, there are also significant opportunities for growth and development. The continued research and development of Swahili academic writing, particularly in the context of globalisation and digitalisation, will be essential for its future success.

1.5. Theoretical Foundations

The development of Swahili academic writing has been influenced by various linguistic and genre theories. Linguistic theories, particularly functionalism and structuralism, have played a significant role in shaping the structure and use of Swahili in academic writing (Kishe, 1994). Functionalist approaches emphasise the adaptability of Swahili to various academic contexts, while structuralist theories have contributed to the understanding of its grammatical and syntactical features (Mekacha, 1993). Sociolinguistics has also been instrumental in examining the interaction between Swahili and other languages, particularly English, in academic writing (Blommaert, 2010). Genre theories, on the other hand, provide a framework for understanding the conventions and structures of different types of academic texts in Swahili, such as research papers, theses, and dissertations (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993).

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative approach to investigate Kiswahili academic writing styles, utilising data collected through questionnaires administered to 151 Kiswahili academic writers by using *Microsoft Forms*. The sampling criteria focused on participants' academic background, including students, lecturers, or researchers engaged in Kiswahili academic writing within linguistics, literature, or education; language proficiency, incorporating both native and non-native Kiswahili speakers to capture diverse perspectives; geographic representation, targeting individuals from Kiswahili-speaking regions (e.g. Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda) and those studying Kiswahili as a second language elsewhere; and experience with academic writing. Ethical considerations ensured participant confidentiality, informed consent, and respect for intellectual property. Triangulation and inter-rater reliability were applied to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, which were analysed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

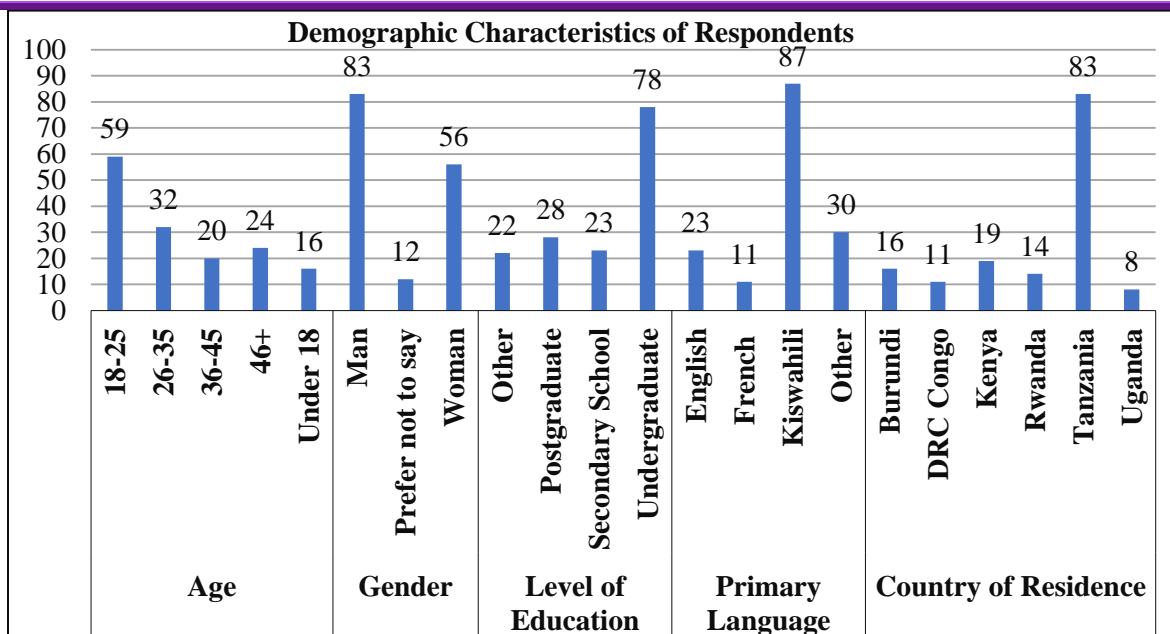### 4.1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Figure 1: Demographic information of respondents

The demographic data provides insights into the diverse profiles of respondents relevant to the study on Kiswahili academic writing. The majority of respondents (39.1%) are aged between 18 and 25 years, suggesting a youthful demographic predominantly composed of students, with 55% identifying as men and 37.1% as women. A substantial proportion of respondents (51.7%) are undergraduates, indicating their potential engagement in Kiswahili academic activities. Regarding primary language, most respondents (57.6%) reported Kiswahili, highlighting their direct relevance to the study topic. Geographically, Tanzania (55%) was the most represented country, followed by Kenya (12.6%), reflecting significant regional input. The data underscores a robust representation across age, education level, primary language, and country of residence, facilitating comprehensive insights into Kiswahili academic writing challenges and perspectives across varied demographic contexts.

4.2. Engagement, Contexts of Use and Kiswahili Proficiency in Academic Writing

Table 1: Frequency, context, and proficiency in Kiswahili academic writing.

	Frequency of engaging in Kiswahili academic writing				Contexts of using Kiswahili for academic writing				Rate on proficiency in Kiswahili academic writing			
	Never	Occasionally	Rarely	Very often	Coursework/Assignments	Other	Professional publications	Research/Thesis writing	Average	Excellent	Good	Poor
Count	20	71	29	31	56	34	29	32	28	33	73	17
%	13.2%	47.0%	19.2%	20.5%	37.1%	22.5%	19.2%	21.2%	18.5%	21.9%	48.3%	11.3%

The data reveals that the majority of respondents engage in Kiswahili academic writing occasionally (47.0%) or rarely (19.2%), while 20.5% report doing so very often and 13.2% never engage in it. In terms of context, the primary use of Kiswahili for academic writing is for coursework/assignments (37.1%), followed by research/dissertation or thesis writing (21.9%). Fewer respondents use Kiswahili for professional publications (18.5%) or other academic contexts (22.5%). Regarding proficiency, most participants rate their Kiswahili academic writing as good (48.3%) or average (21.2%), with a smaller proportion considering it excellent (18.5%) or poor (11.3%). These findings suggest that while Kiswahili is widely used in academic settings, proficiency levels vary, and its application is most common in coursework and assignments.

4.3. Challenges and Issues in Kiswahili Academic Writing

Table 2: Various areas of concerns and challenges during Kiswahili academic writing

		Count	%
Main reported challenges faced when writing in Kiswahili academically	Complex grammar rules	20	13.2%
	Difficulties in formatting and structuring	71	47.0%
	Lack of resources (dictionaries, style guides)	30	19.9%
	Limited vocabulary	2	1.3%
	Limited vocabulary and terminology	28	18.5%
Opinion on if the existing Kiswahili resources (e.g., books, articles, dictionaries) meet the needs of academic writers	Maybe	18	11.9%
	No	32	21.2%
	Not sure	21	13.9%
	Yes	80	53.0%
Rate on how challenging it is to find scholarly sources in Kiswahili	Extremely challenging	10	6.6%
	Moderately challenging	28	18.5%
	Not challenging at all	44	29.1%
	Slightly challenging	50	33.1%
	Very challenging	19	12.6%
Challenges encountered in translating academic concepts into Kiswahili effectively	No	24	15.9%
	Rarely	36	23.8%
	Yes, frequently	22	14.6%
	Yes, occasionally	69	45.7%

The survey data reveals several challenges faced by academic writers in Kiswahili. A significant 47.0% struggle with formatting and structuring their work, while 19.9% cite a lack of resources like dictionaries and style guides. Although 53.0% feel that existing resources meet their needs, 21.2% disagree, highlighting a gap. Vocabulary issues, including limited terminology, affect 18.5% of respondents, though only 1.3% face challenges with basic vocabulary. Finding scholarly sources in Kiswahili is moderately challenging for many, with 33.1% reporting slight difficulty and 29.1% saying it's not challenging at all. When it comes to translating academic concepts, 45.7% encounter occasional difficulties, and 14.6% face frequent challenges. This data underscores the ongoing need for improved resources and support for Kiswahili academic writing.

4.4. Perspectives in Kiswahili Academic Writing
Table 3: Advocated actions for improving Kiswahili academic writing

Effective measures for improving Kiswahili academic writing	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Increasing access to Kiswahili academic writing workshops	73	23.0%	48.3%
Development of more Kiswahili academic resources	94	29.7%	62.3%
Collaboration between Kiswahili writers and translators	75	23.7%	49.7%
Integration of Kiswahili in more educational curricula	75	23.7%	49.7%

The data highlights key measures for improving Kiswahili academic writing, with a strong emphasis on the need for more resources and collaborative efforts. The most frequently mentioned suggestion is the development of more Kiswahili academic resources, cited by 29.7% of respondents, which corresponds to 62.3% of the cases. This underscores a clear need for specialised materials to support academic writing. Following closely, 23.0% of respondents (48.3% of the cases) recommend increasing access to Kiswahili academic writing workshops, emphasising the need for practical training. Collaboration between Kiswahili writers and translators, along with the integration of Kiswahili into more educational curricula, each garnered 23.7% of the responses and 49.7% of the cases, suggesting a strong desire for interdisciplinary cooperation and institutional support for Kiswahili in education. Overall, the data points to a collective call for enhanced resources, training, and structural integration of Kiswahili in academic settings.

4.5. Technology and Kiswahili Academic writing
Table 4: Perceived role of technology in Kiswahili academic writing

Perception on the role of technology (e.g., online tools, software) in enhancing Kiswahili academic writing

	Agree	Neutral	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Total
Frequency	21	44	75	11	151
Percent	13.9	29.1	49.7	7.3	100.0

The data indicates a strong belief in the role of technology, such as online tools and software, in enhancing Kiswahili academic writing. A majority of respondents (49.7%) strongly agree with this statement, while 29.1% remain neutral, showing some hesitancy or uncertainty. Only 13.9% agree, and a smaller percentage (7.3%) strongly disagree. This suggests that a significant portion of the respondents recognises the potential of technology to improve Kiswahili academic writing, with a cumulative 92.7% either agreeing or being neutral about the positive impact of technological tools in this context. The overall trend highlights the growing acceptance and interest in integrating digital resources to support Kiswahili academic writing.

4.6. Institution and Kiswahili Academic Writing
Table 5: Recommended roles of institutions for Kiswahili academic writing

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Proposed roles to be played by institutions in promoting Kiswahili academic writing	develop and offer more Kiswahili-focused academic programs and courses.	75	15.4%	49.7%
	Provide funding and grants for Kiswahili language research and academic writing initiatives.	94	19.3%	62.3%
	Support the publication and distribution of Kiswahili academic resources (books, journals, guides).	75	15.4%	49.7%
	Organise workshops and seminars on Kiswahili academic writing skills.	56	11.5%	37.1%
	Collaborate with local and international Kiswahili institutions to share resources and expertise.	56	11.5%	37.1%
	Encourage students and researchers to use Kiswahili for academic papers, theses, and conferences.	75	15.4%	49.7%
	Integrate Kiswahili as a language of instruction and assessment in more academic fields.	56	11.5%	37.1%

The data highlights several roles that institutions can play in enhancing Kiswahili academic writing, with various suggestions receiving varying levels of support. The most frequent response was providing funding and grants for Kiswahili language research and academic writing initiatives, which garnered 94 responses (19.3% of the total). This was followed by developing and offering more Kiswahili-focused academic programs and courses, supporting the publication and distribution of Kiswahili academic resources, and encouraging students and researchers to use Kiswahili for academic papers, theses, and conferences, all receiving 75 responses (15.4%). Organising workshops and seminars on Kiswahili academic writing skills, collaborating with local and international Kiswahili institutions, and integrating Kiswahili as a language of instruction and assessment in more academic fields each garnered 56 responses (11.5%). These results indicate strong support for the development and dissemination of resources, as well as for institutional initiatives that encourage the use of Kiswahili in academic contexts, showing that institutions play a significant role in advancing Kiswahili academic writing.

4.7. Improvement of Kiswahili Academic Writing
Table 6: Suggestions on the improvement of Kiswahili academic writing

Additional comments or suggestions on how to improve Kiswahili academic writing.	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Increase access to Kiswahili dictionaries, glossaries, and terminology databases.	75	15.2%	49.7%
Develop more Kiswahili writing and grammar guides tailored for academic purposes.	94	19.1%	62.3%
Encourage collaboration between native speakers and language learners for better mentorship.	89	19.1%	62.3%

Leverage technology to create interactive Kiswahili writing tools (e.g., spellcheckers, writing apps).	59	12.0%	39.1%
Promote Kiswahili language competitions to foster creativity and excellence in academic writing.	56	11.4%	37.1%
Involve experts in translating complex academic concepts into Kiswahili to standardise terminology.	57	11.6%	37.7%
Strengthen partnerships between universities, government bodies, and cultural organisations focused on Kiswahili.	51	11.6%	37.7%

The data highlights several key recommendations for improving Kiswahili academic writing, based on respondents' feedback. The most frequent suggestion, made by 62.3% of respondents, is to develop more Kiswahili writing and grammar guides tailored for academic purposes, along with encouraging collaboration between native speakers and language learners (also 62.3%). These two measures are seen as vital for enhancing the quality of academic writing in Kiswahili. The next most frequent recommendation is to increase access to Kiswahili dictionaries, glossaries, and terminology databases (49.7%). Additionally, respondents suggest leveraging technology to create interactive writing tools such as spellcheckers and writing apps (39.1%), and promoting Kiswahili language competitions to foster creativity (37.1%). The involvement of experts in translating complex academic concepts and strengthening partnerships between universities, government bodies, and cultural organisations are also valued, with 37.7% of respondents supporting these actions. Overall, the recommendations reflect a diverse approach, blending traditional methods with modern technological tools to enhance Kiswahili academic writing.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by Kiswahili academic writers, their proficiency levels, and the contexts in which Kiswahili is used in academic writing. These results highlight the significant barriers to effective Kiswahili academic writing and suggest actionable strategies for improvement.

5.1. Proficiency Levels and Frequency of Engagement in Kiswahili Academic Writing

The study found that a majority of respondents engage in Kiswahili academic writing occasionally (47.0%) or rarely (19.2%). A smaller percentage (20.5%) reported writing very often, with 13.2% never engaging in Kiswahili academic writing. This indicates that while Kiswahili academic writing is an important activity for some respondents, it is not yet a widespread practice for all. The primary contexts for Kiswahili academic writing are coursework/assignments (37.1%) and research/thesis writing (21.9%), suggesting that academic writing in Kiswahili is most commonly linked to educational tasks, rather than professional or publication contexts. In terms of proficiency, most respondents rated their Kiswahili academic writing as good (48.3%) or average (21.2%), indicating a general confidence in their writing abilities. However, 11.3% rated their proficiency as poor, suggesting that there is a notable proportion of writers who struggle with academic writing in Kiswahili, possibly due to the challenges identified earlier.

5.2. Challenges Faced by Kiswahili Academic Writers

A major challenge reported by respondents in this study is the difficulty in formatting and structuring academic writing, with 47.0% of participants citing this as a key issue. This suggests that while there is a general understanding of the content being communicated in Kiswahili, the technical aspects of academic writing, such as organisation, layout, and adherence to academic conventions, remain a significant hurdle for many writers. Additionally, 19.9% of respondents highlighted a lack of resources, including dictionaries and style guides, as another substantial challenge. This finding aligns with the need for specialised academic resources that are crucial for effective writing in Kiswahili.

Limited vocabulary and terminology emerged as another issue, with 18.5% of respondents reporting difficulties in these areas. However, the fact that only 1.3% of respondents found basic vocabulary to be a challenge indicates that the issue is more about specialised academic terminology, rather than a general lack of language proficiency. This is particularly important for academic writing, where precise and varied vocabulary is critical for conveying complex ideas effectively. The challenges also extend to the translation of academic concepts into Kiswahili. Nearly half of the respondents (45.7%) reported encountering occasional difficulties in translating academic concepts, while 14.6% experienced these challenges frequently. This suggests that Kiswahili academic writers often face challenges when attempting to convey complex or specialised knowledge, underscoring the need for standardised academic terminology and better translation resources.

5.3. Strategies for Improving Kiswahili Academic Writing

The study highlights several key strategies for improving Kiswahili academic writing, with a strong emphasis on the development of resources. The most frequently suggested measure (62.3%) is the creation of more Kiswahili writing and grammar guides tailored specifically for academic purposes. This would directly address the challenges related to grammar, vocabulary, and writing structure. In addition, increasing access to Kiswahili dictionaries, glossaries, and terminology databases (49.7%) was also identified as a crucial step in supporting academic writers, particularly in overcoming the challenges associated with limited academic vocabulary.

Respondents also emphasised the need for increased collaboration between native Kiswahili speakers and language learners. This collaboration (62.3%) is viewed as an effective means of mentorship and knowledge exchange, particularly for non-native learners who may face additional hurdles in mastering the language. Moreover, the integration of technology in Kiswahili academic writing received significant support, with 49.7% of respondents strongly agreeing that online tools, such as writing apps and spellcheckers, could play a vital role in improving writing proficiency.

Institutional support was also identified as a key factor for enhancing Kiswahili academic writing. Respondents suggested that institutions should develop more Kiswahili-focused academic programs and courses (49.7%) and provide funding for Kiswahili language research (62.3%). Furthermore, the organisation of workshops and seminars (37.1%) was highlighted as an essential step in improving writing skills. This suggests that practical training and institutional encouragement are necessary to foster a more supportive environment for Kiswahili academic writing.

5.4. Role of Technology in Enhancing Kiswahili Academic Writing

The role of technology, including online tools and software, in enhancing Kiswahili academic writing was widely acknowledged, with 49.7% of respondents strongly agreeing that technology could improve their writing skills. This reflects a growing recognition of the importance of digital resources in academic contexts. Technology can provide much-needed support in areas such as grammar checking, vocabulary building, and overall writing assistance. The results also indicate that there is considerable room for the development of more interactive tools and platforms to meet the specific needs of Kiswahili academic writers.

5.5. Institutional Roles in Promoting Kiswahili Academic Writing

The study also underscores the critical role that institutions can play in promoting Kiswahili academic writing. A significant proportion of respondents emphasised the need for institutions to develop and offer more Kiswahili-focused academic programs (49.7%) and provide funding for language research (62.3%). These measures would not only enhance the quality of Kiswahili academic writing but also ensure that Kiswahili is more widely recognised and utilised in academic settings. Furthermore, supporting the publication and distribution of Kiswahili academic resources (49.7%) and encouraging the use of Kiswahili in academic papers, theses, and conferences (49.7%) were also highlighted as important strategies for promoting Kiswahili in academia.

To sum up, this study reveals that Kiswahili academic writers face a range of challenges, including issues with grammar, vocabulary limitations, and a lack of academic resources. While proficiency levels vary, there is a strong desire for more resources, training, and institutional support to address these challenges. The integration of technology and the development of more Kiswahili academic resources are crucial steps in improving Kiswahili academic writing. By addressing these needs, it is possible to foster a more robust academic writing culture in Kiswahili, ultimately enhancing the language's role in academic and professional contexts.

VI.   RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it is recommended that efforts be made to enhance Kiswahili academic writing through the development of more specialised resources such as writing and grammar guides tailored to academic contexts, as well as the creation of comprehensive Kiswahili dictionaries, glossaries, and terminology databases. Institutions should also focus on increasing access to Kiswahili academic writing workshops and promoting collaboration between native speakers and language learners for mentorship. Furthermore, leveraging technology to create interactive tools such as spellcheckers and writing apps could significantly improve the writing experience. The integration of Kiswahili into more educational curricula and the provision of funding for Kiswahili research and academic initiatives should be prioritised to foster the growth of Kiswahili academic writing. Additionally, promoting Kiswahili language competitions could encourage creativity and excellence in academic writing, while partnerships between universities, government bodies, and cultural organisations should be strengthened to support the broader development of the language in academic settings.

VII.   CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant challenges faced by Kiswahili academic writers, particularly regarding complex grammar rules, limited vocabulary, and the scarcity of academic resources. While proficiency in Kiswahili academic writing is generally rated as good by many respondents, there is still a noticeable gap in the availability of tailored resources and scholarly sources in the language. The findings also emphasise the importance of enhancing institutional support, developing more Kiswahili-focused academic programs, and leveraging technology to improve writing tools. The active collaboration between native speakers and learners, alongside the integration of Kiswahili into more educational curricula, is crucial to advancing the quality of academic writing in Kiswahili. By addressing these challenges and implementing the proposed strategies, Kiswahili academic writing can be significantly

improved, contributing to the wider recognition and use of Kiswahili in academic contexts across the region.

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