

INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC MIXED DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KURESOI SUB-COUNTY, NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA.

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ABSTRACT

This main objective of this study was to investigate the influence of parental involvement on academic performance of public mixed day secondary school students. The study employed *ex-post facto* design. The researcher used stratified random sampling technique. The study involved 6 secondary schools. A sample of 180 form four students was selected to participate in the study. The research instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire. A pilot study was carried out and a split-half method was used to determine the reliability of the research instrument. Expert judgment was employed to determine the validity of the research instrument. The research was based on ecological systems theory which was advanced by Bronfenbrenner and the theory of overlapping spheres of influence proposed by Epstein. The researcher carried out analytical review of relevant literature. The data collected in the field was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, and null hypotheses tested at $\alpha= 0.05$. The finding of this study revealed that parental involvement in education did not significantly influence students' academic performance in Kuresoi district. The researcher recommends that parents who through encouragement should not pressure their children by making too high demands that may create in them anxiety and fear of failure instead they should provide effective motivation.

Key words: Academic performance, Parental involvement, Public day secondary, students.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Examinations and certifications are actually central to education and training processes as a means of evaluating the level of achievement for purposes of further education, training and employment. This has led schools to concentrate largely on preparing students to pass examinations for the purpose of acquiring good academic certificates which are considered essential for securing employment in both public and private sectors of the economy. It is for this reason that academic excellence is of paramount importance in the Kenyan education system.

Ford and Harris (1997) followed this logic while examining parental influence on African-American students' school achievement by focusing on specific socio-demographic factors, including parental involvement in education and parental occupation. Researchers generally agree that a constellation of familial factors exert significant influence on the educational aspiration and academic achievement of adolescents (Garg, Kauppi, Lewko & Urajnik, 2002; Garg, Melanson & Levin, 2007; Sanchez, Reyes, & Singh, 2006; Teachman, & Paasch, 1998). Sanchez, Reyes, and Singh, (2006) identified negative domains within the family such as low parental school involvement to explain Latino Youth's educational failure. Therefore, it is important to have a clear understanding of what benefits or hinders one's educational attainment. The United States Department of Education (2004) has identified academic achievement gaps in low socio-economic background. Starting from a young age, low SEB children have the odds stacked against them. They have slower language acquisition, literacy development and success in academic (Barton, 2003). After children entered elementary school, the differences in achievement widened (Borman, 2002). A family's income impacted academic achievement, with a wide achievement gap among various socio-economic backgrounds. Beginning with pre-school, low income children are more likely to attend early childhood programs of lower quality. Classroom comprised of 60% of children from low-income homes had significantly lower quality indicators of teaching, teacher-child interaction, and material for learning than classroom with fewer low-income children (Klein & Knitzer, 2007).

One of the Eight Millennium Development Goal is that by 2015 all children in developing countries should complete primary school even though learners who completed primary school often perform poorly on academic tests (Glewwe and Kremer, 2006). The socio-economic background of a secondary school student can either assist his/her progress or retard it; therefore there was need to inquire into how a student's socio-economic background affects him or her. An inquiry of this nature was particularly relevant in a Kenyan context, because a student's performance in secondary school, as determined by the Kenya Certificate of Secondary.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Muola, (2010) found low correlation between parental involvement or encouragement and academic achievement. The researcher explained that the nature of encouragement given to the child by his parents is important as far as the academic achievement is concerned. Parents who through encouragement pressurize their children by making too high demands may create in them anxiety and fear of failure instead of providing effective morale to do well in academic work (Muola, 2010). Koskei (2012), pointed out that 90.9% of students whose parents were involved in education scored below average in the standardized scores. According to Ayodo, (2009), research findings shows that children guided in doing homework by parents must be involved in their children, especially in lower primary for better academic foundation. Parents hold expectations for their children's schooling and may communicate their expectations to their children. There are many reason that parents may seem uninterested or don't hold high expectations for their children's performance. Kenya's education system puts a lot of emphasis on academic performances. In national examination, schools are ranked according to how well they excel in the examinations. Parents are willing to sacrifice and spend more on their children to get quality relevant education (Ongeti, 2005). Parents put a lot of pressure on their children to get high grades without taking into consideration their ability. Children are affected academically if they lack parental support especially with regard to education even though they live with their biological parents. Parents who are uninvolved in their children education present such a case. Wandabwa (1996) noted that factors

enhancing children's academic performance include parents setting high goals for their children, encouragement of self reliance, autonomy and achievement motivation. Uninvolved parents less often do so.

A study by Mwiria (1987) noted that economically well parents are concerned about their children's academic performance and not their creative potential. He noted that well to do parents are likely to encourage their children to worry about passing exams because of the importance they attach to education. He also emphasizes the importance of the amount of time that the parent and the child spend interacting. He argues that the parent and the child interaction are important to the child's social and cognitive development. Children find it satisfying to receive positive regard from parents so as to view themselves positively by having high self-esteem. Parents of a higher socio-economic status expect their children to advance further in their education career and these higher expectations results in a significant effect on student achievement and their own perceptions of academic success (Benner and Mistry, 2007). The lower expectations expressed by parents will take its toll on student's perceptions of their own academic abilities. When there is no support to be successful, and no push from those who are the most influential in a students' education, lower expectations should be expected from students (Vanlaar and Sidanius, 2001). It is thought that the type of involvement may make a difference and that in some cases parents become involved after their child has already had academic difficulties (Domina 2005, McNeal 2001). Mothers who provide supportive environments at home have a positive effect on school performance (Eamon, 2005). A study on the effects of parental involvement as a form of social capital found a greater likelihood of the youth enrolling in a 2-year and 4-year college (Perna & Titus, 2005). The data used for the analysis in Lippman, Guzman, Dombrowski, Kelth, Kinukawa, Schwalb, and Tice's (2008) report originated from the 2003 National House Surveys Program (NHES), Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (PFI). They found 88% of students whose parents had earned at least a bachelors degree had parents who expected them to finish college compared to 44% of students whose parents had graduated from diploma (Lippman et al., 2008). Teachman and Paasch (1998) reported it was mother's expectations and the student's grades in school that had a positive correlation to educational aspiration. According to Majoribanks (1996) in independence training parents insist on the child's self reliance and autonomy in decision making situations. While in achievement training they insist on high achievement through imposing high standards of excellence in tasks, setting high goals for the child and expecting the child to show competence in doing tasks well. Parental encouragement reflects attempts to develop mature behavior in their adolescence when parents spell out a definable set of expected behavior in a demanding but non conflictual manner, adolescents know what is expected of them in school and attempt to perform at this level, particularly when they have rewarding parents who are actively involved in their education. For example, Connell, Spencer, and Abel (1994) reported that for African-American adolescents, family support and involvement in schooling was a substantial predictor of involvement in school over and above economic level. Parental involvement is likely to decrease from childhood to adolescence. Sanders and Epstein (2000) have revealed that even though adolescents need more freedoms as compared to younger children, the need for guidance and support of the elderly in the home, school, and community during this period in their lives is very essential. Unfortunately, despite its significant contributions to the educational achievement of students, it has been observed that parental/family involvement in education tends to decrease across middle and secondary school, due to adolescents' increasing desire for autonomy (Jessor, 1993).

A parent may be having difficulty in making ends meet or simply overwhelmed by parenting responsibilities. In addition, many parents do not understand their role in the education of their children, seeing their children's education as solely the schools responsibility. If parents don't seem to care about learning, their children will pick this attitude. Parents who are uneducated or feel uncomfortable in the school environment may not know how to join with teachers in partnership. They may feel intimidated. However, parents are not only important reinforcers for their children but also models for them. Anything the teacher can do to create a healthy parent- teacher partnership can help student performance. Fredericks 1984 as cited by Biehler (1997), parents of middle class children in the United States frequently function as teachers and every time they talk to their children, answer questions, take them to trips, and buy books or educational toys, they provide knowledge and experience that accumulate to make school learning familiar and easy. A child who does not receive such continual tutoring in the home is clearly disadvantaged when placed in competitive academic situation. (Levine & Havighurst, 1992 as cited by Biehler (1997). Thompson (1998) as cited by Hetherington (1999) states that parental involvement in students academic work play a crucial role in the development of both social and cognitive competence in children, he also observes that infants who lack parental involvement are associated with aggressive behaviors and low self-esteem. Hetherington (1999) reported that the family support and involvement to their children was an important predictor of high scores in schools. Research shows that supportive and attentive parenting practices affect academically achievement (Eamon, 2005). In addition, high parent aspirations have been associated with increasing student's interest in education (Majoribanks, 2005). Also parental involvement in school has been linked to both positive and negative influences on academic performance (Domina 2005, McNeal 2001). It is thought that the type of involvement may make a difference and that in some cases parents become involved after their children has already had academic difficulties. Parental involvement may not help academic scores; it does help prevent behavioral problems (Domina, 2005). Therefore, it was necessary to investigate the influence of parental involvement in education on students' academic performance of public mixed day secondary schools in Kuresoi Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed *ex-post facto* design. The main purpose of this design was to determine causes and effects for the current status of the phenomena under study. Parental involvement in education which served as the independent variable could not be directly manipulated (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996; Kerlinger, 2000, Mugenda and Mugenda 2003). This design was also found appropriate because it allowed the investigation of subsequent relationships between variables. The academic performances of public mixed day secondary school students are taken as the dependent variable. Thus, the researcher was able to relate an after-the-fact analysis to an outcome or the dependent variable (Kathuri & Pals, 1993). The researcher used the design to investigate the relationship between Parental involvement in education and students' academic performance in public mixed day secondary school in Kuresoi district.

1.3.2 STUDY POPULATION

One hundred and eighty form four students were selected from the six schools and used for the study. The study population was 3,913 students enrolled in public mixed day secondary schools in Kuresoi District. The accessible population was the form four students who were used as respondents because they were assumed to be mature enough in terms of age and education thus having an idea about their family socio-economic background. Stratified random sampling was adopted. The technique placed the respondents into two strata on the basis of gender (boys and girls). Simple random sampling was adopted because it necessitated selecting of schools in such a way that the schools had an equal probability of being equal. The main factor to consider in determining the sample size was the need to keep it manageable.

1.3.3 INSTRUMENTATION

Data was collected from students in the selected secondary schools. The researcher used questionnaire for students as the data collection instruments. Open-ended items were used in the questionnaire. Open-ended questionnaire is not followed by any kind of choice and the answers have to be recorded in full in order to support and check the alternative choice responses given by the respondent.

Data concerning the academic performance of the students was obtained from school records. Through the principals of the selected schools, the researcher requested for the last one year marks (2009) of the respondents from the teacher in charge of academics. It was assumed that each subject was graded in percentages. An average mark was based on teachers rating the end of term test marks. The marks were standardized using T-score formula. The standardized scores provided a common basis for academic comparison of students' performance. In order to achieve this scale, raw scores were transformed using the raw-score mean and standard deviation. The transformation yields a scale of Z- scores and this is used in transforming raw-scores into T-scores formulae.

1.3.4 PROCEDURE

The researcher and research assistants ensured the sampled respondents were the ones providing appropriate responses in the questionnaire. The research assistants were trained in administering of the instrument and participated in piloting and correcting of the instrument before the final use. The researcher read the items to the students one after another without offering any interpretation to the items. Enough time was allowed for all the respondents to finish. A researcher asked the students to use permanent ink pens. According to the study, involved parents were the ones who provided time for their children to do school work at home in the evening and during weekends, make sure that children do homework, give advice about education, encourage their children, discuss school progress with their children, and motivate them to try harder when they make poor grades. Uninvolved parents were those who did not provided the above mention conditions.

1.4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main reason for this study was to determine whether relationship existed in academic performance of secondary school students from parental involvement in education.

Table 1

Chi-square computation of parental involvement in education and performance of boys

Parental Involvement in Education	Boys' Scores			
	Above Average (N=5)	Average (N=44)	Below Average (N=53)	Total
Involved	4 (4.6)	40 (40.5)	50 (48.8)	94
Uninvolved	1 (0.4)	4 (3.5)	3 (4.2)	8
Total	5	44	53	102

N = Numbers of students (boys) in the respective category.

Figures in the brackets are the Expected frequencies

Chi-square $\chi^2_{(ob)} = 1.43$

df = 2

Chi-square $\chi^2_{crit(0.05, 4)} = 5.49$

Since $\chi^2_{(ob)} \leq \chi^2_{crit(0.05, 2)}$, H_0 was accepted.

Contingency coefficient = 0.12.

The Chi-square value of 1.43 indicates no significant influence of parental involvement in education on boys' performance in secondary school level. This was supported by a low contingency coefficient of 0.12 which shows low degree of association existed between the two variables. This implies that the performance of boys is not influenced significantly by the parental involvement in secondary schools in Kuresoi Sub-County.

Table 2

Chi-square computation of parental involvement in education and performance of girls.

Parental Involvement in Education	Girls' scores			
	Above Average (N=1)	Average (N=19)	Below Average (N=58)	Total
Involved	1 (0.8)	14 (16.1)	51 (49.1)	66
Uninvolved	0 (0.2)	5 (2.9)	7 (8.9)	12
Total	1	19	58	78

N = Numbers of students (boys) in the respective category.

Figures in the brackets are the Expected frequencies

Chi-square $\chi^2_{(ob)} = 2.52$

df = 2

Chi-square $\chi^2_{crit(0.05, 2)} = 5.49$

Since $\chi^2_{(ob)} \leq \chi^2_{crit(0.05, 2)}$, H_0 was accepted.

Contingency coefficient = 0.18.

The χ^2 value 2.52 indicates insignificance between the variables measured. However, the contingency coefficient of 0.18 shows some degree of association, nevertheless, the association was not significant at 0.05 level. This implies, therefore, that parental involvement in education does not have a significant influence on the performance of girls at the secondary school level in Kuresoi Sub-County.

The results obtained from analysis showed that the level of parental involvement appear to have no direct influence on students' performance in public mixed day secondary schools. The result obtained from analysis showed $\chi^2_{(ob)} = 1.32$, $\chi^2_{crit(0.05, 2)} = 5.99$ with degree of freedom being 2, hence $\chi^2_{(ob)} \leq \chi^2_{crit(0.05, 2)}$ then the null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, the H_0 which stated that parental involvement has no significant relationship on academic performance of secondary students was accepted. This was supported by a very low contingency coefficient of 0.09 which showed a low degree of association between the two variables.

Involvement of parents did not significantly influence students' school work in secondary school. This possibly may be pressure exerted by parents to get high grades without taking into consideration their abilities. This finding supported the finding of Ongeti (2005), and Muola (2010). The nature of encouragement given to the child by his parents is important. Parents who through encouragement pressure their children by making too high demands may create in them anxiety and fear of failure instead of providing effective motivation to do well in their academic work.

1.5 CONCLUSION

The findings of the study have supported previous findings which have indicated a negative relationship between students' academic performance and parental involvement in education. It was revealed from the findings that parental involvement in education had no significant influence on academic performance of secondary students.

1.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings and foregoing conclusions, the following recommendations were made:

1. Many parents may not be aware of the influence of parental involvement in education on the academic performance of their children. Parents need to be informed that they can contribute to the education of their children through provision of learning facilities at home, checking school report forms and to appreciate children's ability and active assistance among other strategies.

2. Parents need to know their role in the education of their children so that they do not put the blame entirely on the teachers when their children do not perform well in school. However, precaution should be taken when it comes to parental involvement since unreasonably high demand and too much pressure for good performance made by some parents on their children may cause anxiety and fear of failure which may affect the child's academic performance negatively.

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