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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INFLUENCE OF PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL LEVEL ON PUPILS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NANDI SOUTH SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Socio-economic status is a definite background variable that represents a feature of the social structure in society. Many studies on the influence of socio-economic background on the academic performance of pupils have been conducted in developed countries. This paper specifically examines the influence of parents' educational levels on the academic performance of their children in schools. The paper is based on a study whose purpose was to determine the influence of parents' socio-economic factors on pupil's academic performance in public primary schools in Nandi South Sub-County. The study adopted a survey design targeting population 1821 pupils and 528 teachers from 74 public primary schools. Simple random sampling technique was used to select22 public primary schools, 158 teachers and 273 class 8 parents. The instruments used for collection included 2 sets of a questionnaire, one for teachers and another for parents. Quantitative data was coded, entered and analysed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 20). Descriptive statistics percentages, frequencies, means and standard deviation together with inferential statistics; Chi-square analysis was also used. The study found out that educational level of a parent did not significantly influence the academic performance of pupils (p=.251). It was, therefore, recommended that schools should introduce parent-teacher engagement programmes to help teachers and parents share their experiences and measures through which pupils' academic performance can be improved. This will equip parents with necessary knowledge and skills to enable them play specific and fruitful roles as parents and as first teachers for their children.

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INTRODUCTION

The United Nations (2010) has declared education as a basic right and need that is necessary in the accomplishment of the second Millennium Development Goals. Good education enables a nation to have skilled and dynamic human resource to power its economic development. In Kenya, one of the aspects of the social pillar of the development blueprint, Kenya Vision 2030, is education. The Vision 2030 identifies education and training as the media that will take Kenya to be a middle-income economy and as a means of selection for educational advancement and employment. In Kenya, financial constraints, education level of the parent and the marital status of the parents are the key determinant of student motivation in academics. A study by Pamela and Davis-Kean (2010) has found that those students whose parents have attained at least tertiary level education perform significantly better in tests of science, reading and mathematics than do those whose parents have only basic schooling. Therefore, across these three disciplines, the average grades achieved by students with well-educated parents ranged from 7% higher than those achieved by students with poorly educated parents in developing countries to45% higher in most developed countries. This, therefore, shows that parents' education has some influence on students' beliefs and behaviours, leading to positive outcomes for children and the youth. A study conducted by Kamar (as cited in Muthoni, 2013) has revealed that parents of moderate to high income and educational background holdbeliefs and expectations that are closer than those of low-income families to the actual performance of their children. Low-income families instead have high expectations and performance beliefs that donot correlate well with their children's actual school performance.

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Parents' Educational Level and Academic Performance

Parental education that leads to good income empowers parents to give their children a solid foundation for school and life success and enables them to build up strong partnerships

between parents and schools in order to sustain achievement standards (Okantey, 2008). Rothestein (2004) and Hill *et al.* (2004) opine that children who were raised by parents with higher educational training are more inquisitive about learning than those children whose parents have low educational training. Parental cognitive ability is substantially associated with parental education and parental occupation only trivially associated with offspring. Tella, Adu, Tella and Toyobo (2007) have investigated the effects of parental education, peer and gender on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Botswana and found that academic achievements correlate with peer parental education. The same study revealed that students whose parents have high educational qualification perform better than those whose parents have lower educational qualifications. All these imply that socio-economic background is a potent influential factor in factual recall and academic achievement. Alokan, Osakinle and Onijingin (2013) note that there has been an outcry against poor academic performance of students in the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination in Nigeria. The authors, therefore, investigated the influence of parents' educational background on the academic performance among secondary school students. The population for the study by Alokan *et al.* (2013) comprised all public secondary school students in Ondo State and the researchers used a questionnaire tagged 'Academic Performance Questionnaire' to collect data from a sample of 240 students and six schools. From the findings, parents' education level has an influence on academic performance in Nigeria. Desarrollo (2007) argue that active involvement of parents or other family members in their children's education has apositive influence on the students' academic achievement. Muola (2010) has reported that parental educational attainment correlates significantly with academic achievement. Educated parent stend to get more involved in the education of their children. Maundu (1986) found that, unlike in Tanzania, there is a positive relationship between the parental educational attainment and students' Form Four examinations performance in Kenya. Parental education has a significant influence on students' performance in both primary and secondary examinations in Kenya. It has been observed in many countries that children from educated backgrounds are at an advantage in academic competition. Learners with more educated parents also have better access and exposure to cognitive development resources and find appropriate attitudes and support at home to pursue their academic ambitions.

Geberselassie and Gebry (2000), in a study carried out in Ethiopia, have established that educated parents who are government employees favour enrolment of their children in school. The study also revealed that parental education positively and significantly influences school enrolment; for instance, additional years of further schooling was seen to raise the school enrolment of boys and girls by 2% whereas an additional year in mother schooling raised the probability of enrolment of boys by 2% and girls by 3% and this indirectly enhances academic performance. Okumu *et al*. (2008), in a study of socio-economic determinants of primary school drop-outs, has found that high academic attainment of a mother and father significantly reduces chances of primary school drop-out for both boys and girls in rural and urban areas in Uganda. This phenomenon can be attributed to the fact that more educated mothers reduce the time they spend doing household chores and save time for their children than their uneducated counterparts. Moreover, educated mothers are better able to help their children in academic work. They are also able to monitor and supervise their children's academic progress. Similarly, educated fathers are interested in and more willing to their children's academic endeavours than uneducated fathers. Educated fathers are also more likely to have access to information and social networks necessary for their children to engage into the requisite human capital and intensive activities that bring about higher aptitudes in education. Korir and Kipkemboi (2014) note that despite the Government of Kenya providing subsides for secondary education, many schools still register poor academic performance as indicated in their Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE) results. The authors argue that family background is the most potent predictor of students' academic performance. For a student to attain high academic performance in public day secondary schools, home environment must be conducive. Learning does not only take place in school, but also at home where students engage inprivate studies and revision as well as learn from life experiences. Consequently, the person(s) with whom the student stays at home and the level of education of that person have far-reaching influenceonthe student's academic performance.

Statement of the Problem

Due to the vital role that education plays in nation-building, researchers have since time immemorial been concerned with the quality of education given to, especially, children (Ubogu, 2004; Suizzo & Stapleton, 2007; Reche *et al.,* 2012). Nandi South Sub-County has recorded poor performance in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education many years to date. In the year 2008, for example, the mean score for this area was 266.05 and it has declined to reach 262.16 in 2013 (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology [MOEST], 2013). Morumbwa (2006) attributes this dismal performance to factors such as absenteeism of pupils from school, lack of facilities, lack of motivation, understaffing and lack of role models. These factors differ from region to another in terms of their manifestation and effects. Many studies have been conducted on the influence of socio-economic background on the academic performance of learners in Kenya. For instance, Ongeti (2005) has researched on how selected family and individual factors influence academic performance of primary schools in Bungoma County.

Reche *et al.* (2012) have researched on factors influencing performance of pupils in KCPE in Maara District. Mbugua *et al.* (2012) have investigated factors causing poor performance of students in mathematics. In the same line, the study that informs this paper sought to investigate the influence of socio-economic factors on academic performance in public primary schools in Nandi South Sub-County in order to contextualize the issues that past researchers have identified, provide recommendations that are relevant to this region and add to existing knowledge on the relationship between socio-economic factors with academic achievements.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted among public primary schools in Nandi South Sub-County. The author adopted a survey research design because the study focused on describing acurrent phenomenon as it is within its context. The target population for the research was 1821 Class 8 parents whose children were enrolled in 74 public primary schools and 528 teachers. The Standard Eight parents were used as respondents because they were assumed to have been participating for a longer period in the target schools' academic activities than parents of learners in the lower classes. Further, since these parents were in the process of preparing their children to sit for a major examination, it was assumed that the home environment of learners had had some influence on their (children) motivation to perform well. Teachers were selected because they are the implementers of the curriculum and they understand the socio-economic factors that affect pupils' academic performance in schools. Probability sampling was used to identify and select respondents for the study. Thus is a type of sampling that gives every member of the accessible population anequal chance of being selected. The main factor considered in determining the sample size was the need to keep it manageable. The study utilized sets of a questionnaires for data collection. The collected data was then analysed using quantitative (for closed-ended questions) and qualitative (for open-ended questions) methods. Quantitative analysiswas facilitated by the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 20) which aided in data coding, entry and analysis. In general, quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics. Chi-square test was conducted to determine the influence of socio-economic factors onpupils' academic performance. The confidence level was set at 95%. Qualitative data from open ended questions in the questionnaires was analysed using content analysis. This involved arranging the items presented in the open-ended questions undervarious themes and sub-themes derived from the objectives of the study. The responses from open-ended questions were edited for grammatical correctness, coherence, chronology and precision and presented as quotations so as to triangulate the data obtained through the administration of the closed-ended questions. Data analysed from the sets of questionnaire were presented using tables, pie charts, column graphs and narrations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Influence of Parents' Educational Level on Pupils' Academic Performance

The research sought to determine the influence of parents' educational level on pupils' academic performance in primary schools in Nandi South Sub-County. To achieve this objective, the study sought to assess parents' or guardians' educational level and then find out from teachers how parents supported the academic activities of their schools. The results on parents' educational level were as shown in Table 1.

Male parents'/guardians' responses on their level of education indicated that 3(2.5%) had no formal education, 44(36.4%) had primary education, 50(41.3%) had secondary education, 17(14.1%) had college level of education while 7(5.8%) had university level of education.

Table 1. Parents' Educational Level

Father's/Male Guardian's Education	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
No formal education	3	2.5
Primary	44	36.4
Secondary	50	41.3
College	17	14.1
University	7	5.8
Total	121	100.0
Mother's/Female Guardian's Education		
No formal education	2	1.2
Primary	64	42.0
Secondary	62	40.7
College	18	11.7
University	7	4.5
Total	152	100.0

As for the mothers/female guardians, 2(1.2%) had no formal education, 64(42.0%) had primary education, 62(40.7%) had secondary education, 18(11.7%) had college education and 7(4.5%) had university level education. The combined mother/female and father/male education level findings revealed that majority of the parents had at least basic education (primary and secondary) with few having advanced and tertiary level of education. The findings agree with the findings of Mbugua *et al.* (2012) that most (66.3%) parents/guardians do not have education beyond secondary school education, 27.5% have college education and only 6.2% have university education. Further, Atieno *et al.* (2012) have found that the level of education of fathers is generally higher than that of mothers, noting that at least 55.5% of the fathers have college and university education while only 36.6% of mothers have college and university education. Similarly, in Uganda, Onzima (2011) has found that majority of parents of primary school learners have low level of education. These statistics show that many parents may not be good role models for their children in as fare as academic matters are concerned.

The Influence of Parental Education on Pupils' Academic Performance

The teacher respondents were also asked to indicate their opinions on the relationship between parental education level and pupils' academic performance. To achieve this, the teachers were requested indicate on a scale the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements on the matter. Table 2 presents the findings. The above results on teachers' perceptions show that majority of teachers agreed (M=3.94 and SD=1.25) with the statement that parents who are educated provide material and financial support for the education of their children. This finding corresponds with pupils' perception that parents who are educated provide material and financial support to boost their academic achievements. On whether or not parents who are educated provided moral and inspirational support to their children to succeed in academics, the teachers also agreed (M=3.76 and SD=1.35). This shows that literate parents who are tend to inspire their children to do well in class compared to those who are illiterate. When asked to give their perceptions on the view that children from more educated homes also have better opportunities to acquire cognitive skills and appropriate attitudes in the home, the teachers tended to agree (M=3.7 and SD=1.23) with the statement.

Table 2. The Influence of parental education and academic performance

Teachers' perception	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Provision of material and financial support	158	1.00	5.00	3.94	1.25
Provision of moral and inspirational support	158	1.00	5.00	3.77	1.36
Children frommore educated homes have better opportunities to acquire cognitive skills and appropriate attitudes athome	158	1.00	5.00	3.71	1.24
Parents who are literate monitor their children's educational progress in our school than those who are illiterate	158	1.00	5.00	3.56	1.38
The educational level of a parent is a predictor of academic success of their children	158	1.00	5.00	3.23	1.42
Children with parents who have tertiary education levels perform better than those whose parents have lower education levels	158	1.00	5.00	3.20	1.23
Children with uneducated parents absent themselves regularly and this affects their performance	158	1.00	5.00	3.17	1.40
Children with uneducated parents drop out of school	158	1.00	5.00	2.91	1.37
Valid N (List wise)	158	1	5	3.44	1.33

Table 3. Cross-tabulation of parents' education levels and pupils' academic performance

			Performance			Total
			Low	Average	High	
Parent's education level	Low	Count	0	3	0	3
		% within Parent educational level	.0	100.0	.0	100.0
	Basic	Count	2	29	2	33
		% within Parent educational level	6.1	87.9	6.1	100.0
	High	Count	17	171	49	237
		% within Parent educational level	7.2	72.2	20.7	100.0
Total		Count	19	203	51	273
		% within Parent educational level	7.0	74.4	18.7	100.0

Table 4. Chi-square test results

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-square	5.373[a]	4	.251
Likelihood Ratio	7.070	4	.132
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.176	1	.140
N of Valid Cases	273		

This implies that the educational background of families predict pupils' reasoning which ultimately influences their academic achievement. When asked as to state whether or not literate parents followed up on their children's education progress in school other than did illiterate parents, a significant proportion (M=3.56 and SD=1.37) of teachers supported the statement. The teachers said that literate parents make school visits to check on their children's academic progress and this is important factor predicted their examination performance. On the contrary, the results of the study showed mixed responses (M=3.22 and SD=1.41) from teachers on the view that the educational level of a parent is a predictor of academic success of their children. This implies that to a considerable degree, the education level of a parent can determine what his/her children obtains at the end of a school course. When probed further to indicate whether or not children whose had at least tertiary education level performed better than those whose parents had lower level education, the teachers seemed undecided (M=3.19 and SD=1.22). This means that, to some teachers, children whose parents have advanced educational qualifications tend to outdo those whose parents have lower education levels in academic performance while, to some other teachers, this may not always be true.

Moreover, the teachers were asked to indicate if they agreed or disagreed with the view that children whose parents are uneducated absent themselves regularly and this affects their academic performance. The responses on this view revealed that teachers were uncertain (M=3.16 and SD=1.40). Half of the teachers held the view that children whose parents were educated regularly attended classes compared to those whose family members were uneducated. When asked to state whether or not children with uneducated parents were more likely to drop out of school than those with educated parents, the computed descriptive statistics shows neutrality (M=2.91 and SD=1.37) in the lowest ranked item. This implies that parental education level does not always cause, in all cases, truancy and drop-out in schools. In general, it is clear that teachers generally (M=3.43 and SD=1.32) believe that parental education affects pupils' academic performance. Only a few teachers believed that parental education level is not a significant predictor of academic achievement of pupils in their schools.

To test the level of education for parents and academic performance, a cross-tabulation analysis was computed on the data obtained. The results were as shown in Table 3. The cross-tabulation results above show that pupils whose parents had low levels of education tended to perform averagely. Of those whose parents possessed basic education, 87.9% scored average marks and 6.1% scored high and low marks in examinations. For those whose parents had high levels of education, 72.2% scored average marks, 20.7% scored higher marks (above 300) with only 7.2% managing lower scores. In

contrast to the findings, Atieno *et al.* (2012) have found that educated parents have greater influence on the academic performance of their daughters in Kisumu East secondary schools. To ascertainif there existed significant differences, a Chi-square was computed at 95% confidence level and the results were as presented in Table 4. The decision rule was that if p- value is less than or equal to 0.05, the null hypothesis would be rejected, and if p- value is greater than 0.05 the null hypothesis would be accepted. The null hypothesis tested stated that parents' educational level has no significant relationship on pupils' academic performance. The results showed that x^2=5.373, df=4 and p=.251 which is greater than the level of significance 0.05.This threshold fails to reject the null hypothesis, which suggests that there exists no significant relationship (p>0.05) between parental level of education and pupils' academic achievement in primary schools in Nandi South Sub-County. This implies that parents' level of education is not related to performance in examinations. These findings find support in Onzima (2011) research in Malaba town (Uganda's side) who found that parents who have not been to school still had children who performed well (scoring Divisions II and III) while some children whose parents had higher educational qualifications obtained Division U in the mock examinations. The results do not, however, concur with the views of Ndiku *et al.* (2011) that pupils whose mothers and fathers have higher educational attainment tend to perform better in Kisumu primary schools. Similar findings have also been obtained in Kisumu East secondary schools where Atieno *et al.* (2012) observed that there is a relationship between parental level of education and girls' academic achievement in examinations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The analysis and discussion of research results in this paper have proven that the education level of a parent does not influence the academic performance of pupils in primary schools. Since education level of a parent does not have significant influence on pupils' academic achievement, the study recommends that schools should introduce parent-teacher engagement programmes to help teachers and parents share their experiences and measures through which pupils' academic performance can be improved. This will equip parents with necessary knowledge and skills to enable them play specific and fruitful roles as parents and as first teachers for their children.

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