Full Length Research Paper

A study of the relationship between academic achievement motivation and home environment among standard eight pupils

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The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between academic achievement motivation and home environment among standard eight pupils. The study was carried out on 235 standard eight Kenyan pupils from six urban and rural primary schools randomly selected from Machakos district. Their age ranged between 13 and 17 years. Two questionnaires, the simple profile (SP) and home environment questionnaire, were used to provide information on the pupil's levels of academic motivation and home environment. A significant (p < 0.05) positive relationship was found between six of the home environmental factors, that is fathers' occupation (r = 0.22), mothers' occupation (r = 0.26), fathers' education (r = 0.15), mothers' education (r = 0.14), family size(r = 0.26) and learning facilities at home(r = 0.23) and academic achievement motivation. Parental encouragement was the only factor that was not significantly (r = 0.03) related to academic achievement motivation. Although these correlations are low, they showed that pupils' motivation to do well in academic work is to some extend dependent on the nature of their home environment. It was recommended that parents need to be aware of the importance of their role in their children's academic achievement motivation so that they can provide the necessary facilities at home.

Key words: relationship, achievement motivation, home environment, pupils, questionnaire.

INTRODUCTION

For many years in Kenya, examinations have been accepted as an important aspect of the educational system. Examinations have always been used as the main basis for judging a student's ability and also as a means of selection for educational advancement and employment. Every year, thousands of Kenyan pupils sit for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examination. This examination is done at the end of the eighth year of primary education. Over the years, discrepancies have been observed in the performance of pupils in the KCPE examination. Although pupils may be of comparable abilities, learn in the same environment and follow the same syllabus, their academic performance still vary. Bright students who fail to excel due to other factors miss the opportunity to advance in education and to get employment.

At the same time, there are students who may be bright but perform poorly despite the good learning facilities in their schools. Among the factors that are blamed for the pupils' poor academic performance and low motivation, the home environment is hardly mentioned. A pupil who performs poorly will not be able to get admission into a good secondary school or may fail to get into any school at all. It is estimated that about 50% of more than half a million primary school leavers do not gain admission into secondary schools every year. This is partly due to their poor performance and lack of admission into the existing secondary schools. The poor performance has raised concern and efforts have been made to find out the reasons behind it. Many factors such as lack of facilities in school, lack of teachers, indiscipline, unfavourable home environment, low intelligence, anxiety, pupils' need to achieve and so on have been found to cause poor academic performance (Cantu, 1975; Maundu, 1980; Osire, 1983; Bali et al., 1984; Ndirangu, 2007). While, these factors have been identified as possible factors that contribute to the variations in academic performance not much has been done in Kenya to show the role played by

the pupil's home environment on his/her academic achievement motivation (the need or desire to excel in academic work).

Pupils who are motivated are likely to perform well in their examinations. There are many factors that may contribute towards pupils' motivation to achieve high grades in school. This study focuses on one possible factor, that is, the child's home environment. This study attempted to find out whether the differences in academic achievement motivation among pupils can be attributed to differences in their home environments. In this study it was assumed that children's home environments could be a possible determinant of their variations in academic achievement motivation. The value that different families attach to education could affect the child's attitude to school and eventually affect his motivation for success in school work. Many homes differ on factors such as family size, availability of learning materials, the parents' level of education, parents' occupation, income, parental encouragement and involvement.

In Kenya, little attention has been paid to the home environment as a possible factor that affects a pupil's motivation to perform well in school. This study assumed that children come from varied home environments that may influence their motivation to excel in school differently.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic achievement motivation is used to mean the pupil's need or drive towards the achievement of success in academic work (Amalaha, 1975; Moen and Doyle, 1977). It is assumed that people differ in their need to achieve in situations that call for excellence. Gesinde (2000) argues that the urge to achieve varies from one individual to the other. For some, the need for achievement is very high while, for others it is very low. He adds that achievement motivation is learnt through the socialization process. Those who have high achievers as their role models in their early life experience would develop a high need for achievement, while those who have low achievers as their role models will hardly develop the need for achievement. The family is obviously, a major socializing agent and therefore important in determining the child's motivation to achieve success in various areas. Sandven (1975) conceives the motive to excel in academic work as an activating force, a drive or an urge to achieve good results and recognition which to some degree accounts to progress in school.

According to Slavin (2006), motivation is what gets one going, keeps one going, and determines where one is to go. Motivation is one of the factors that contribute to academic success. It is important for both parents and educators to understand why promoting and encouraging academic motivation from an early age is very important. Motivation is crucial to a student's academic success at any age. Because students form self-concepts, values, and beliefs about their abilities at a young age, the development of early academic motivation has

significant implications for later academic careers. A great deal of research has found that students high in academic motivation are more likely to have increased levels of academic achievement and have lower dropout rates (Blank, 1997). Other studies have reported positive relationship between motivation and academic performance and success (Gottrieb, 1990; Johnson, 1996; Kushman, Sieber, and Harold, 2000; Sandra, 2002; Broussard and Garrison, 2004; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2004; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2006).

The term "home environment" refers to all the objects, forces and conditions in the home which influence the child physically, intellectually and emotionally. Different home environments vary in many aspects such as the parents' level of education, economic status, occupational status, religious background, attitudes, values, interests, parents' expectation for their children, and family size among others.

Children coming from different home environments are affected differently by such variations. Out of the many effects that the home environment may have on the child, academic achievement motivation was singled out for study in this research.

Atkinson and Feather (1966) observed that the achievement motivation of children whose fathers have attained high educational level and are in high income occupations tend to be high. Heckhausen (1967) cites several studies which have shown that achievement motivation increases with socio-economic status. Achievement motivation has been shown to be higher in middle class than in the working class (Atkinson and Feather, 1966).

The development of high level achievement motivation is attributed to early independence training and achievement training according to Atkinson and Feather and Majoribanks (1979). Atkinson and Feather argue that successful parents tend to provide early independence training which is necessary in the development of achievement motivation.

According to Majoribanks (1979), 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. Thus, achievement motivation is among other factors dependent on child-parent interactions.

In a study by Gottfried, Fleming, and Gotfried (1998), home environment was found to have a statistically positive and significant effect on academic intrinsic motivation. Children whose homes had greater emphasis on learning opportunities and activities were more academically intrinsically motivated (available at http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/record Details/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_&ERICExtSearch_Se archValue_0=EJ576099&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0 =no&accno=EJ576099, accessed on 18/10/2008). A study by Bansal, Thind and Jaswal (2006) based on 100 eleventh grade students drawn from 10 senior secondary

schools in Ludhiana City of India showed that good quality of home environment had significant positive correlation with 'high' level (P < 0.001) of achievement motivation among high achievers. It was found that as the quality of home environment deteriorates, the level of achievement motivation also deteriorates.

In a longitudinal study of 89 first grade children of low income mothers, parental support was not found to be related to academic motivation (available at ttp://eric.ed.gov/   ERIC WebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=EJ731114&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EJ731114, accessed on 18/10/2008). This may imply that, findings in this area are yet to be conclusive and hence the need for more research.

In this research, the following home environmental factors were considered:

(i)   Parental encouragement.
(ii) Parents' occupation.
(iii) Parents' education.
(iv) Family size.
(v)   Learning facilities at home.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study used the ex-post facto correlational method to determine whether there is a relationship between home environment and academic achievement motivation of standard eight pupils selected from urban and rural areas of Machakos district. In the ex-post facto design the researcher does not have direct control over independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred or because they can not be inherently manipulated. The investigator therefore examined the impact of home environment (independent variable) on academic achievement motivation (dependent variable) after the effects have been experienced.

Participants

The subjects of study comprised of 235 (118 boys and 117 girls) standard eight pupils from urban (N = 107) and rural (N = 128) schools from Machakos district. The stratified random sampling technique was used to have urban and rural representation. Three schools were selected through simple random sampling from each of the two settings. In each selected school, all the pupils in the standard eight classes were used except in schools which had more than one stream. In such schools, only one stream was randomly selected to participate in the study. The standard eight pupils were found to be a suitable sample because they were preparing to sit for a major examination and therefore the home environment could have exerted the greatest influence on their motivation to perform well. This is the time when parents are likely to encourage their children and also do all that they can to ensure that their children pass their examinations.

Instrumentation

The SP profile was used to measure academic achievement motivation. The SP profile developed by Sandven (1995) consists of 18 stimulus situations in the form of short stories constructed in such a way as to call forth reaction tendencies along the dimension of academic achievement motivation. After each story, four pairs of statements are given. Each pair of statements describes two opposing responses to the stimulus. The stimulus situations are designed in such a way as to invoke achievement responses which reflect the subject's level of academic achievement motivation. The subject's responses to each paired statements are scored with values ranging from 0 to 6. The highest possible score was 432 and the lowest was 0. This is a group test that takes an average of one and half hours to complete. The original instrument had a very high internal consistency (Sandven, 1975). The reliability coefficient reported by Sandven using the split-half and Kuder-Richardson methods were 0.92 and 0.91, respectively. A split-half reliability coefficient of 0.57 was reported after modification of the instrument to make it suitable to the local population. This reliability coefficient was considered to be adequate using the pilot study sample of 42 subjects. The SP profile was preferred because it measures the subject's level of academic achievement motivation in an indirect way through the use of forced-choice item variety. The subjects project the variable being measured without knowing.

The home environment questionnaire consisted of 32 items. It measured the following selected factors:

(i)   Parents' occupation.
(ii) Parents' level of education.
(iii) Family size.
(iv) Parental encouragement.
(v)   Learning facilities.

Structured items in the questionnaire were coded by giving the values that preceded the different alternative responses whereas coding procedures were devised for the open-ended items. The correlation coefficient reliability obtained through the Cronbach's method was 0.70.

Procedure

To ensure that the subjects had understood the test procedure, the test instructions were read aloud and demonstrations on how to respond to the items were shown on the chalkboard.

The respondents were not allowed to fill in the instruments until they indicated that they had clearly understood the procedure. Enough time was allowed for all the respondents to finish.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the findings of this study, significant (p < 0.05) relationship was found between the pupils' scores in academic achievement motivation and six of the home environmental factors, that is, the fathers' occupation (r = 0.22), mothers' occupation (r = 0.26), fathers' education (r = 0.15), mothers' education (r = 0.14), family size(r = 0.26) and learning facilities at home(r = 0.23) (Table 1).

These findings imply that, a more favourable home environment motivates a child to excel in school. The high level of education which most often goes with high occupational status means that the parents will be able to provide the necessary learning facilities and to assist the child with schoolwork. This parental involvement which could be lacking in parents whose education and occupation are low may have a motivating effect on the child. A parent with a small family will not only find it easy to provide for the physical needs of the child, but will also be in a position to give him attention, encouragement, stimulation and support with his schoolwork. This could

Table 1. The relationship between home environmental factors and academic achievement motivation (N = 235).

Home environmental factors	Academic achievement motivation
Fathers' occupation	0.22**
Mothers' occupation	0.26**
Fathers' education	0.15*
Mothers' education	0.14*
Family size	0.26**
Learning facilities at home	0.23**
Parental encouragement	0.03

*$P < 0.05$
**$P < 0.01$.

have a motivating effect on a child from the small family in comparison with a child from a large family where the parents are always busy trying to find ways of meeting the basic needs of the family.

A child whose effort to do well in school is supplemented by the provision of the required learning facilities would tend to have a high academic achievement motivation as the results suggest. From the results obtained, it can logically be argued that the studied home environmental factors are among the variables that determine the child's motivation to do well in academic work.

The low correlation between parental encouragement and academic achievement motivation may imply that the nature of the encouragement given to the child by his parents is important as far as the academic achievement motivation 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 motivation to do well in their academic work. Parents should understand that it is not the amount of encouragement and pressure that matters but the way it is given.

These findings support the observation made by Atkinson and Feather (1966) that, children from favourable home environments tend to have a high need for achievement as opposed to those from unfavourable home environments. The development of a high need for achievement can be traced to childhood training techniques in which successful parents are known to provide independent training which is likely to foster high achievement motivation (Atkinson and Feather, 1966; Heckhaussen, 1967). Child rearing practices vary with socio-economic background and parental level of education. The findings also support earlier findings by other researchers (Gottfried et al., 1998; Bansal et al., 2006).

Conclusion

The findings of the study have supported previous findings which have indicated a positive relationship between academic achievement motivation and home environment.

The home environment is one of the determinants of academic achievement motivation. An academically

favourable home environment is likely to enhance the child's motivation to achieve academic success which in turn will contribute to good performance in school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made:

i. Many parents may not be aware of the influence of various home environmental factors on the academic achievement motivation of their children. It is recommended that, teachers, educationists and leaders should try to create awareness in parents on the importance of the home environment on academic achievement motivation which can improve the children's performance. Parents need to be informed that they can contribute to the education of their children through encouragement, provision of learning facilities, and active assistance among other strategies.

ii. Parents need to know their role in the education of their children so that they do not put the blame entirely on teachers when their children do not perform well in school.

iii. Precaution should be taken when it comes to parental encouragement 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.

iv. For the various family variables to have a significant effect on children's academic achievement motivation, parents should set achievable targets within their means.

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