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An Assessment of Parental Literacy Level on Academic Performance of their Secondary School Level Children in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to establish the influence of parental level of education on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kangundo Sub-county. It adopted a descriptive survey research design. It targeted all (27) public secondary schools in Kangundo Sub-county, all (27) school heads, all (27) parents' association chairpersons, all (339) teachers and all (2,663) form three students. The study employed a census technique to include all schools; 24 in the main study and 3 in the pilot study. All the 24 school heads as well as all the 24 parents' association chairpersons of the participating schools were included in the study. It sampled 30.0% of teachers that gave 102 teachers. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select participating teachers where a proportionate weighted sample was identified per school using proportional allocation method. Then, simple random sampling technique was adopted to select the participating teachers in each school. Yamene (1967) formula was used to give a sample of 348 students. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to identify and select weighted random samples per school. In total, 498 respondents participated in the study. Data collection instruments included questionnaires for school heads, teachers, students and an interview guide for parents' association chairpersons. Validity of the research instruments was ascertained through expert judgment and piloting. Reliability was achieved through test re-test method where the instruments were piloted in schools at a time interval of two weeks and the two results were correlated using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation method. Data were entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 26.0) for analysis. Further, inferential analysis was employed that involved correlational analysis at a 0.05 level of significance. The hypothesis was accepted or rejected at a 0.01 level of significance. Results establishes: a moderate positive correlation between parents' level of education and students' academic performance which was statistically significant (R=.602; p=0.003. Recommendations are put forth such as: the Ministry of Education to establish more adult education centres, the to create awareness of how parents can assist their school-going children and schools to hold parents' meetings and train them on the roles they are required to play to facilitate their children's learning.

Key words: Parental literacy Level, Academic Performance

Introduction

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF] (2014) has stated that access to education is more than a fundamental human right for every child. This agenda has however been undermined by several challenges in many countries. The quality of education is measured through academic performance. Yusuf, Onifade, and Bello (2016) define academic performance as an observable and measurable behavior of a student within a specified period. To Narad and Abdullah (2016), academic performance refers to acquired knowledge that is measured through marks by a teacher and/or a set of educational goals which are assessed through examinations.

Academic performance is influenced by many factors among them parents' level of education which is of interest to this study. Parents play a crucial role in the academic success of their children. In support of this line of argument, Naite (2021) stated that parents exert a significant influence on the performance of their children because of the authority and skills they have to shape and develop their children into motivated, inspired, and lenient people. Parents can influence the academic performance of their children by investing their time and money (Bengesai & Nzimande, 2020). However, the amount of time and money available to a parent to support the academic enterprise of their children may depend on many factors. For instance, previous research has shown that parent's level of education, level of income, level of monitoring the academic activities and family type are important predictor variables for academic success (Amato, 2010; Johnson, 2015; Liu & Qiu, 2018; Karunakaran, Jusoh & Chinna, 2019; Naite, 2021). Poor academic performance is more often than not connected to parental influence and remains a major global challenge. On what could be contributing to low performance, Burns, Darling-Hammond, and Scott (2019) in a study done in California contend that children born to low-income parents perform poorer than their peers from high-income parents. A study done in Ethiopia by Fekadu, Negassa, and Tegegne (2019) on the impact of parents' socioeconomic status on academic performance established that parent level of education was statistically correlated with students' academic performance It can be seen from the findings of this study that parent level of education exerts a significant positive influence on academic performance. The quality of education at the secondary school level remains relatively low. Kilonzo (2020) laments that a large percentage of students score poor grades between D+ and E while pointing out that the quantity of quality grades between C+ and A has been declining. Declining performance is worrying for it means that many young people will continue to miss opportunities for further education and training. The cause of poor performance is still unknown. This research was timely for it was expected to provide much-needed knowledge on how parental education could be impacting academic performance on students' academic performance.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Epstein (1995) Framework of six types of parental involvement model developed from Epstein's theory of Overlapping Spears of Influence. Epstein developed a model that conceptualizes six major types of parental involvement that are common in school – home (parent) partnerships across home, school and community settings (Epstein, 1995; Epstein, 2011; Epstein et al., 2019). Epstein opines that schools should partner with parents to create family-like schools where each child feels special and included She also points out that parents should partner with schools to be helped to create school-like families where the importance of school, homework and other activities is reinforced. Epstein identifies six types of parental involvement which include: Parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with community. The framework has been revised to give specific practices that schools can do to help parents to increase each of the six types of involvement (Epstein, 1995; Epstein, 2011; Epstein et al., 2019).

According to Epstein (1995), parenting addresses the responsibilities that parents have to create a supportive home learning environment. Under this obligation, parents are supposed to provide a safe and healthy home environment, adopt positive parenting practices, and establish conditions that support learning at home. Epstein stipulates that schools should offer parents support on how they can create a supportive home leaning environment. Applying this model, principals in Kenya public schools can, for instance, discharge this important duty by holding parents' meetings and seminars to train and educate parents on how can create a positive home learning environment. By doing that, schools will help parents to create family like schools where the importance of education is reinforced (Epstein et al., 2019).

Communicating is a fundamental duty of the school of informing parents on their children's progress and school programs. It is emphasized that a two-way communication, for instance, between the school and the parent and between the parent and the school, is important to strengthen home – school partnerships. Schools can communicate with parents through report cards, newsletters, phone calls, parents' meetings (Epstein, 2011). Schools should enhance opportunities for communicating with parents through exploiting different channels of communication. Other than using the traditional channels of communication, principals in Kenya can go ahead and make use of social media where they can create school facebook pages and open parents' WhatsApp groups. This can enhance the communication between school and parents. Volunteering can be done by anyone who supports school goals, student learning activities, and school development. Epstein opines that schools can seek parent support. To Epstein, volunteering does not have to occur during school hours or within school's physical boundaries. She avers

that, for instance, a school can establish a family resource centre that can be useful for volunteer work, resources related to volunteer work, meetings, and coordination of volunteers (Epstein, 2011). In this way, schools can establish schools like families (Epstein et al., 2019). Principals can set up an office dedicated to coordinate school – parent initiatives.

According to Epstein (2011), learning at home highlights the obligations schools have of sharing information and ideas with parents (families) to be able to support students' home based learning activities such as homework, other curriculum activities, decisions, and planning. Through training, schools can educate parents on homework policies and how to monitor learning activities. School can therefore help parents to create family like schools where the importance of homework is emphasized (Epstein et al., 2019). Learning at home enhances parent-school as well as parent child communication. Parents want to help their children in their home learning activities but in most cases, they do not know how to do it. In application of this theory, principals can hold frequent meeting to train parents on how they can help their children at home.

Decision making can be seen as the obligation placed on school authorities to include parents in school decisions and governance. Epstein (2011), for instance, maintains that schools can involve parents in school decisions through establishing parent – teacher associations, and school governing councils. The essence of involving parents in school decisions is to ensure parents' voices are heard in key decisions that affect their children education.

Collaborating with community is when schools solicit community support to strengthen school programs, family practices, student learning, and school development (Epstein, 2011). To achieve this, schools should provide information on recreational and social support programs that support students' learning at home and school. In this way, schools can integrate community services, resources and partners into the educational processes (Epstein et al., 2019). Principals can: organize fundraiser to raise funds for school programs or development projects; provide information on availability of various government bursary programs; and can provide information on availability of community library services that students can access during holidays.

Like any theory, this model has its share of strengths and weakness. The strengths of the framework include: it shows in a concrete way what schools can do to facilitate various types of family involvement; it is fairly easy to understand and operationalize; and it is widely researched and validated. Indeed, this model is effective in enhancing the quality of parental involvement and increase students' academic achievement (Sheldon, 2005; Griffin & Steen, 2010). The model has been endorsed by John Hopkins University in Maryland, USA to develop the National Network of Partnership for Schools (NNPS), a program that assists schools to develop school-parent-community partnerships (Epping, 2018). This suggests that the model has received wide acceptability.

However, the model has been criticized for continuing to position the school as the one that sets the agenda thus limiting the goals of beneficial partnerships (Stitt & Brooks, 2014). Critics claim that the model does not emphasize issues of power and status. Relating to the present study, this framework explains how parents with good level of education and regardless of their family setups can be assisted by schools to involve themselves more in their children's learning activities to improve academic performance. Despite its weaknesses the study found the model appropriate because it addressed the study objective.

Literature Review

Parents' level of education can influence the academic performance of children in many positive ways. It has been claimed that educated parents provide intellectual, economical, psychological and emotional support to their children (Bakar, Mamat & Mudassir, 2017). On psychological and emotional support, Suresh (2012) held that well-educated parents create positive learning attitudes and behaviors in their children. Students with positive attitudes toward learning are more likely to put in some extra academic effort leading to improved performance. In addition, Suleman, Hussain, Khan and Nisa (2012) revealed that educated parents show interest and care for their children's academic performance. Furthermore, Khan, Iqbal and Tasneem (2015) averred that parents with a high level of education teach their children. Thus, it can be seen from the foregoing that educated parents not only give their children intellectual support but also supervise and give moral support. More importantly, Karunakaran, Jusoh and Chinna (2019) stated that educated parents provide a supportive psycho-social environment, a suitable physical

environment and better involvement. The authors added that educated parents serve as role models for learning and provide needed educational resources because they are more likely to be employed and appreciate the value of education. Hence, educated parents provide a conducive learning environment that facilitates learning.

Dubow, Boxer and Huesmann (2009) study showed that a mother's level of education when the child is 8 years can predict educational outcomes at age 19. Arising from these findings, a parent ought to be well educated if they are to offer adequate academic support. This study was however implemented through reviewing foreign studies while this current study was local in context and collected primary data.

Using a descriptive survey research design and involving 200 respondents drawn from 4 secondary schools, Bakar, Mamat and Mudassir (2017) studied how parental education influenced the academic performance of secondary school students in Malaysia. Their study findings showed that there was a statistically positive relationship between parental education and students' academic performance. Further, their study established that educated parents made a study timetable for their children to follow while at home, assisted their children to do their homework, and provided their children with learning materials. It is clear from these findings that educated parents supervise learning at home, offer intellectual support and provide adequate learning materials. All this kind of support is expected to improve their children's learning outcomes. This study was however done in a foreign context and it included one class of respondents while the current study was done in Kenya and included several participants.

A descriptive study was conducted in Mardan District of Pakistan, Idris, Hussain and Nasir (2020) to explore the relationship between parents' education and their children's academic achievement. The study results reported a positive correlation between parents' level of education and children's academic performance. This study found that the father's and mother's high level of education contributed to the good academic performance of their children. This study employed a systematic random sampling technique to sample schools and a simple random sampling technique to include 510 students. This study only sought opinions from students while the current study gathered data from school heads, teachers and parents' representatives giving the results more validity.

Odikpo and Ejide (2021) in a study done in Nigeria investigated the influence of parental occupation and educational level on academic achievement. Their study employed an ex post facto research design and simple random sampling technique to select 10 schools. By employing a multistage sampling technique, the study selected a sample of 800 students. Data for this research was mainly collected through document analysis where academic achievement, as well as parents' data, was mined from school records. Results showed that parental level of education had a significant influence on students' academic performance in mathematics. Building on other studies, the results of this study confirm that educated parents motivate their children to achieve more academically. This study differs from the current study in that it employed an ex post facto research design as opposed to a descriptive research design. Whereas the current study sought opinions from students, teachers, school heads, and parent representatives, the reviewed study depended on secondary data from school records. This could have denied other perspectives from these key informants on how parental education influenced students' performance.

Baliyan (2012) employed a descriptive survey research design to investigate the influence of parental education and income level on students' academic performance in Botswana. A simple random sampling technique was used to select three private senior secondary schools. The study included 168 students. The results of the study showed that the education level of both the mother and the father were good predictors of students' academic performance. The study noted that educated parents aspire to see their children exceed their educational levels. As a consequence, the study observed, such parents, motivate their children by providing adequate learning resources. Thus, it can be seen from the results of this study that educated parents are not only role models to their children but they also motivate their children by providing adequate resources.
Gilman (2019) adopted a cross-sectional research design and simple random sampling technique to select 350 students drawn from 16 schools to explore how socioeconomic status influences students' academic performance in Tanzania. The results of the study showed that there was a positive correlation between parents' education level and students' academic performance which was significant. Also, analysis of regression coefficients indicated that a unit in the father's education would increase the academic performance of students by 0.543 points. Similarly, the results also showed that a unit increase in the mother's education level would increase students' academic

performance by 0.602 points. Thus, the results confirm that mothers' education level has more impact on the academic performance of students than the father's level of education. This study is foreign in context and it employed a cross-sectional research design while the current was done in Kenya and adopted a descriptive survey research design.

In Kenya, the influence of parent level of education on academic performance has also attracted research attention. For instance, by employing an ex-post facto research design, Koskei and Ngeno (2015) explored the influence of parental educational attainment on students' academic performance in public day secondary schools in the Kuresoi Sub-county of Nakuru County. The researchers used a simple random sampling technique to identify 6 participating schools and a stratified random sampling technique to select 180 students. Chi-square results established that parental educational attainment did not have a significant influence on students' academic performance. Perhaps, parental level of education may have no significant influence on students' academic performance at the secondary school level. While citing other studies done in Kenya at the primary school level, the researchers concluded that parental level of education has only a significant influence at lower levels of schooling. This study employed an ex post facto research design while the current study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Also, the reviewed study involved a smaller sample of schools (6) and students as opposed to the present study which includes a larger sample of schools (24) and students (348). Further, the study used internal school examinations whose quality and supervision may be put into question as the dependent variable while the current study used the KCSE exam.

Similarly, a study done in the Kipkelion Sub-county by Korir and Wambugu (2018) that investigated the influence of parental education and income on students' academic performance still established that parental level of education had no significant influence on students' academic performance. Like the Koskei and Ngeno (2015) study, this study was implemented at the secondary school level. The researchers used a simple random sampling technique to include 210 students and a casual-comparative research design. This study used an unstandardized mock examination as the dependent variable while the dependent variable for the present study was a standardized KCSE examination. In most cases, the mock examination is done when some schools have not completed their syllabus. Whereas the reviewed study employed a casual-comparative research design, the current study adopted a descriptive survey research design.

Goro, Simatwa, and Baraza (2019) through employing descriptive and correlational research designs investigated the influence of parental level of education on pupils' academic achievement in public primary schools in Kisumu West Sub-county. Their study employed Yamane Formula and a simple random sampling technique to include 44 head teachers, 46 class 8 teachers, and 40 parents. The study results showed that parental level of education had a positive influence on pupils' academic achievement. However, this study was conducted at a primary school setup while the current study was implemented at the secondary school level.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. To Cooper and Schindler (2013), this design involves collecting data to answer questions on current status of subjects of the study. The independent variable of this study was parents' level of education while the independent variable of the study was students' academic performance. Therefore, this research design helped the researcher to collect data on the parental education (the independent variables) to describe how it influenced the academic performance of students in Kagundo Sub-couty public secondary schools.

Participants

According to the Kangundo Education Office (2020), there are 27 public secondary schools, 2,663 form three students, 339 teachers and 27 Parent Association Chairpersons (PAC) in Kangundo Sub-county. This study targeted all 27 school heads, all 339 teachers, all 2,663 form three students and all the 27 PAC in Kangundo Sub-county. It included form threes only because they were considered to have considerable experience regarding their school life. It was also anticipated that they would be free compared to their seniors in form four who were expected to be busy preparing for their KCSE examination.

A census technique was employed to include all the 27 schools although 3 were used to pilot the study instruments. The entire population of schools was 27, and therefore below 30. Thus, a census method was justified. With the exclusion of 3 pilot schools, the main study involved 24 schools where all the 24 school heads as well as all the 24 PAC of the participating schools were included in the study. Out of the 339 teachers, the study included a sample of 102 teachers representing 30% of teachers' population recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003). Stratified random sampling technique was employed to identify the 102 teachers. Because teachers' population was not the same in each school, the 24 participating schools formed the strata from where weighted random samples were drawn. Thereafter, the desired sample of 102 teachers was drawn from each school using proportional allocation method as follows:

$$\text{Sample per school (S)} = \frac{\mathbf{n}}{\mathbf{N}} \text{ X } 102$$

Where S is sample per school, n is teachers' population in a school, and N Sub-county teachers' population.

After establishing the required sample per school (S), simple random sampling technique was employed to select the participating teachers. Names of all the teachers in each school were written on pieces of paper, folded and shuffled in a cup. Then, the required number of folded pieces was selected to give the names of the participating teachers. As for students, the study employed Yamene (1967) formula to determine the appropriate sample for students as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \qquad n = \frac{2{,}663}{1 + 2{,}663\,(0.05)^2}$$

$= 347.7 \approx 348$ students

Where n is sub-county sample size, N is sub-county population and **e** is sample error at 95% confidence level.

Because students' population was not the same in all the 24 participating schools, the study used stratified random sampling technique to select the 348 students proportionally according to their school's populations relative to the overall Sub-county population. Thus, proportional allocation method was used to allocate the 348 students per school as shown as shown:

$$\text{Sample per school} = \frac{m}{2{,}663} \text{ X } 348$$

Where m is the form three students' population in each school

After determining the sample per school, simple random sampling technique was used to select the participants in each school. Like it was done with teachers, all the names of form three students were written on pieces of paper and folded. The folded pieces were put in a bowel and shuffled. The required number of pieces was drawn from the bowel to give the actual names of the students.

In mixed gender schools, an equal number of boys and girls were chosen. To achieve this, the population was first stratified into boys' strata and girls' strata. Then, all the names of boys were written on pieces of paper, folded, put in a cup and shuffled. The required number of pieces was chosen to give the actual names of the boys. Similarly, all the names of the girls were written on pieces of paper, folded and then shuffled in a cup. The required number was drawn to give the names of the participating students.

Table 1: Sample Size

Description	Population(N)	Sample Size (n)
School Heads	27	24
Parents' Association Chairpersons	27	24
Teachers	339	102
Students	2,663	348
Total	**3,056**	**498**

Source: Kangundo Sub-County Education Office, 2022

Measures

The study used 3 sets of questionnaires and an interview guide to collect data. Creswell (2014) opines that a questionnaire can be designed to have both closed ended and open ended questions. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), questionnaires are preferred because they save time and uphold respondents' confidentiality. Due to the advantages questionnaires have, they were preferred in this study.

Data Analysis

Data was coded and captured through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) computer program (version 26.0) for analysis. Data that were to be correlated were transformed to create new variables, academic performance (A), parental education (E). The intention was run Pearson's Correlation and also generate a regression model. Regression analysis Spearman rank order correlation was performed at a 0.05 level of significance. Correlation coefficients range from -1, 0, and +1. The correlation coefficients were interpreted as follows: a 0 coefficient imputed that there was no association between the two variables; values ranging above 0 and below 0.5/-0.5 indicated a weak positive/negative correlation; values lying anywhere between 0.5/-0.5 to 7/-7 revealed a moderate positive/negative correlation; and values above 0.7/-0.7 to 1/-1 indicated a strong positive/negative relationship. In addition, the correlation/relationship was assumed to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$ *or* 0.01) if the model p value was lower than 0.05/0.01 and was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05/0.01$) if the p values was larger than 0.05/0.01.The hypothesis was accepted or rejected at a 0.01 level of significance.

Ethical Considerations

Before the study, the researcher wrote a letter to the Board of Postgraduate Studies (BPS) to have the proposal reviewed. The researcher was issued with an introduction letter that was used to apply for research license at the National Commission for Science and Technology Innovation (NACOSTI) online portal. After a few days, the researcher was issued with a research license to proceed with the study. While attaching the license, the researcher wrote letters to Kangundo Deputy County Commissioner and Kangundo Sub-county Director of Education seeking permission to collect data in Kangundo public secondary schools. At the beginning, the purpose of the study was disclosed to the study participants verbally and it was also printed at the introduction part of the instruments. Voluntary participation was sought from the study participants. Respondents were informed that they had a right to choose to participate or not to participate. They were also informed that their participation or non-participation would not affect them in any way. Respondents were not required to indicate their names, the names of their schools, their phone numbers or anything that could identify.

Research Results

The objective of the study sought to establish the influence of parental level of education on students' academic performance. To achieve this objective, a null hypothesis was formulated as follows:

"H01: There is no statistically significant influence between the parental level of education and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kangundo Sub-county."

To establish whether the parental level of education had any influence on students' academic performance, a Spearman's Correlation was run at a 0.05 level of significance. The results are presented in Table 4.13.

Table 2: The Correlation between Level of Education and Academic Performance.

			Academic Performance	Parents' Education
Spearman's Rho	Academic Performance	Coefficient	1.000	.602**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.003
		N	22	22
	Parents' Education	Coefficient	.602**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.
		N	22	22

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results obtained in Table 4.13 show that there was a moderate positive correlation between parents' level of education and students' academic performance which was statistically significant (R=.602; *p=0.003)*. The correlation coefficient of 0.602 suggests that 60.2% of students' academic performance variability could be explained by parents' level of education. To accept or reject the null hypothesis, the critical significance level was 0.01. Levels of significance greater than 0.01 meant that there was no significant relationship between the independent and the dependent variable and hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. On the other hand, levels significantly smaller than 0.01 meant that there was indeed a significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Results depicted in Table 13 reveal that there was a statistical relationship (*p = 0.003 < 0.01)* between parents' level of education and students' academic performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that "*there is no statistically significant influence between the parental level of education and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kangundo Sub-county"* was rejected at a 0.01 level of significance. Based on the findings, it was concluded that parents' level of education had a statistically significant influence on students' academic performance.

Discussion

The objective of the study was to establish the influence of parental level of education on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in the Kangundo sub-county. Inferential results established a moderate positive correlation between the parental level of education and students' academic performance which was statistically significant (R=.602; *p=0.003)*. Thus, the results suggest that 60.2% of students' academic performance variability could be explained by parents' level of education. The results suggest that parents' level of education is a good predictor of students' academic performance. This position is held by many scholars in the literature review section.

Empirically, the results support Bakar, Mamat, and Mudassir's (2017) study done in Malaysia that established a statistically positive relationship between parental education and students' academic performance. The findings are consistent with Idris, Hussain, and Nasir's (2020) study done in Pakistan which reported a positive correlation between parents' level of education and children's academic performance. The findings are consistent with Odikpo and Ejide's (2021) study done in Nigeria which showed that parental level of education had a significant influence on students' academic performance in mathematics. The results agree with Baliyan's (2012) study done in Botswana which established that the education level of both the mother and the father were good predictors of students' academic performance. The results are also consistent with Gilman's (2019) study that found a positive correlation

between parents' education level and students' academic performance which was significant. The study findings are further consistent with Goro, Simatwa, and Baraza's (2019) study that showed that parental level of education had a positive influence on pupils' academic achievement. Educated parents are more willing to take their daughters back to school even after teenage pregnancy (Musili, Mwania & Mulwa, 2020).

However, the results are inconsistent with Koskei and Ngeno's (2015) study done in the Kuresoi Sub-county of Nakuru County, Kenya which established that parental educational attainment did not have a significant influence on students' academic performance. The results are further inconsistent with a study done in the Kipkelion Sub-county by Korir and Wambugu (2018) that established that parental level of education had no significant influence on students' academic performance.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the Ministry of Education establishes more adult education centers across the educational zones of Kangundo to enable parents to enrol and improve their education level. The Ministry can also create awareness of how parents can assist their school-going children. Schools should also hold parents' meetings and train them on the roles they are required to play to facilitate their children's learning.

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