

Original Paper

The Effect of Home Environmental Factors on Students' Academic Achievement: A Case of Community Secondary Schools in Monduli District, Tanzania

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Abstract

This study investigated on the effect of home environmental factors on students' academic achievement among secondary schools in Monduli District, Tanzania using a descriptive design. A sample of 318 students from seven schools participated by filling the questionnaire. Validity of the instrument was ensured through expert judgment and the Cronbach's Alpha in all three variables was above 0.6. Analysis of data employed descriptive and inferential statistics. The study established existence of parental involvement in pupils' academic affairs. This was indicated by the facts that parents were committed to monitor students' learning activities and give all kind of supports needed. Parents' social economic status afforded to facilitate school needs of their children. Lastly, the study established a direct correlation between parental involvement and academic achievement, between social economic status and academic achievement and between social economic status and parental involvement. Based on these conclusions the researchers recommend that there is need to encourage parents to continue their parental involvement in their children's academic affairs as this is a way of improving academic achievement. Furthermore, parents should be encouraged to come up with strategies that will help to improve their income, as this will enable sustainable provision of basic and school needs.

Keywords

home, environment, parent, involvement, academic, achievement, Tanzania

1. Introduction

Academic achievement is the ultimate goal expected by learners, teachers and other educational stakeholders. According to Collins (2007), academic achievement is the extent to which students attain

their short or long-term educational goals commonly measured through examinations or continuous assessments. While there are numerous factors on which the learners' academic achievement depends, home environment is one of most important factors. Collins further considers home as a place where children live with their parents or guardians. On the other hand, environment is defined as an aggregate of all internal and external conditions affecting the existence, growth and welfare of a person. It is an influence an individual comes in contact with after heredity (Anene, 2005). According to Osunloye (2008), children's homes can either accelerate or hinder academic achievement. Particularly, a home influences children at the most vital time of life because the children often see the parents, siblings and things in their immediate environment as the most significant. Therefore, home environment becomes a significant factor for learning and development of children.

Studies from different countries have indicated the place of parents and home environmental factors on pupils' achievement. In Canada, for instance, parents' involvement in their children's educational life has been linked with children's academic outcomes in a variety of ways, including higher academic achievements (Bogenschneider, 1997). This suggests that parents as significant actors in a home environment can positively or negatively influence their children's academic outcome through participation or non-participation in learning at the home. The participation involves such activities as engaging in cognitively stimulating tasks like reading together, managing children's school-related behaviors and organizing and monitoring children's time (Finn, 1998). According to Johnson (2002), a family is related to educational attainment. It can help children adjust to environment by providing encouragement, love, and acceptance. It can also help children practice skills learned at school.

Apart from parental involvement, social economic status of a family is linked to students' academic achievement. This is revealed by the findings of Malley (2001) who conducted a study at Meru District in Tanzania and discovered that parental economic background determined students' academic achievement. Particularly, the results revealed that children whose parents or guardians were farmers, keeping livestock or worked in mines were more likely to perform poorly. In the same manner, Jeyne (2005) examined such variables as parents' education occupation and family income and discovered that children whose parents or guardians had a better economic background were likely to perform better than their counterparts. Business persons and employees with better salaries had better financial position that enabled them to pay school fees on time than farmers and livestock keepers who did not receive much from their production.

Based on this background, the present study investigated on the influence of social economic status and parental involvement as home environmental factors on students' academic achievement in order to recommend what should be done to increase academic achievement of students in Monduli District. Majority of people who dwell in Monduli District are Maasai. Emeke (1984) describes the Maasai as Nilotic ethnic groups inhabiting in Central and Southern Kenya and Northern Tanzania. The Maasai society is patriarchal in nature with the elders and family heads deciding most matters for each Maasai group. The Tanzanian and Kenyan governments have instituted programs to encourage the Maasai to

abandon their traditional semi-nomadic lifestyle, but still the people have continued their age-old customs.

Attempts made to increase educational achievement amongst pastoralists in Tanzania include the setting up of boarding schools as well as establishment of mobile schools and non-formal programs (Carr-Hill *et al.* & Oxfam, 2005). The Tanzanian government has instituted specific plans to encourage the Maasai to abandon their traditional lifestyles that prevent their children's academic achievement. One of the strategies used was to increase number of secondary schools in every ward or administrative unit to increase access and equity in education (Summra, Rajan, & Olouch, 2006) in Mbanzibwa (2013) but still there seems to be academic under achievement by students from Maasai Community where Monduli District belongs. Data from 2017 Form Four National Examination Results as appears in Table One shows that performance of students in Monduli District Secondary Schools is not promising. A total of 1050 students in the District's Community secondary schools sat for National examinations. Of these, only 8.57% scored Division one and two while 76.8% scored Division three and four and a significant number of 153 students, which makes 14.6% failed.

Table 1. Performance in Monduli District Community Schools

Division 1-2		Division 3-4		Division Zero		TOTAL	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
90	8.57	747	76.8	153	14.6	1050	100

1.1 Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Achievement

Parental involvement has significant role toward children's academic achievement. According to Meece (2002), parents who provide a well responsive, supportive home environment, encourage exploration, stimulate questions and provide play and learning materials which accelerate their children's intellectual development. Parental involvement can be in many forms including provision of secure and stable environment, intellectual stimulations, good models of constructive social and educational values and high aspirations related to personal fulfillment (Abouchaar, 2003). Parents who are isolated from their children, find it difficult to keep a careful watch on what needs to be done to help them succeed in schools (Jeynes, 2007). Parents who discuss school-related topics with their children convey the importance of schooling, thereby improving the student's attitudes and expectations. In other words, talking with one's child about school conveys the message that school is important (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005).

On the other hand, parental over protectiveness, authoritarianism, disapproval and punishment often have a negative correlation with student learning. With this respect Bloom (2001) argues that, it is what parents do in the home that accounts for learning development of children. He goes on saying that lack of encouragement, low quality of parents' language and lack of stimulation activity in the home reduce

home's effectiveness as a learning environment and in that way affects negatively children's academic achievement.

Studies from different countries have indicated the place of parental involvement on children's academic achievement. Hafiz and Waqas (2013), for instance, carried out a research in Pakistan and found that parental involvement has significance effect in better academic performance of children. Study findings of Gustaffsson, Hansen and Rosen (2011) in East, Central and Southern African countries, reported parental expectations a function as an important mediating mechanisms to account for pupil's achievement. In Nigeria, results of studies concerning family background and parental involvement in academic activities revealed that family background and parental involvement in academic activities affect positively children's academic achievement (Muhammad, Waqas, & Rafiq, 2013). Therefore, parental involvement plays significant role toward children's academic achievement.

1.2 Socio-Economic Factor and Students' Academic Achievement

Parents' socio-economic class has great influence on learners' academic achievement in all levels of education. According to Sirin (2005), socio-economic position generally refers to the various components of economic and social wellbeing that differentiate persons of different social classes. The socio-economic class has been categorized into three categories namely: high socio-economic class, middle socio-economic class and lower socio-economic class. With this respect, studies have established that parents whose socio-economic status is high, their children seem to perform better as compared to the students whose parents have lower socio-economic class. For example, Malley (2011) conducted a study at Meru District in Tanzania and discovered that poor parental economic background negatively affected student academic achievement. Particularly, the results revealed that children whose parents or guardians were farmers, keeping livestock or worked in mines were more likely to perform poorly as compared to children whose parents were in a higher economic status. This might be the case in Monduli District where most of children belong to pastoralist parents.

Zhang (2012) examined students and their families' income in China. The study measured students reading skills, verbal interaction and phonological awareness in relation to their families' level of income. The results showed that low income children exhibited lower levels of cognitive-linguistic skills, lower verbal interactions and lower phonological awareness and generally lower academic performance than their counterparts from high and middle income families. Lareau (2002) in her studies in East African countries on first grade classrooms in a working class community and a middle class community found that parents in the middle class community tend to help their children more due to the better skills, the occupation status, income and time compared to the working class parents.

Rothman (2003) reported the critical factors associated with student's achievement as socio-economic factors which include parental educational qualification, neighborhood poverty, parental occupational status, and family income. Considine et al. (2002) in their study in Australia on the influence of education disadvantages in the academic performance of a schools found that families whose parents had higher level of education fostered the academic achievement of their children because of providing

psychological support to their children. Sharma (2011) also conducted a similar study of parental education, parental occupation and family size on science achievement of the secondary school students in Western Uttar Pradesh in India. The results indicated that family variables including parental education had significant relationship with the achievement of children.

Mudassir and Abubakar (2015) conducted a study on the impact of parents' occupation on academic performance of secondary school students in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia". The result showed that students from parents with formal education perform better than those from parents with informal education. Ogoye (2007) discovered that socio-economic status is a critical issue in many African communities where illiteracy and poverty levels are high, something which limits parental involvement in homework and school related tasks for their children. In some cases learning and reference materials have to be shared among pupils from low income background and parents are unable to support their children financially. Furthermore, parents from lower income background expect the children to help them do some duties at home after school while at the same time children are supposed to complete their home works. Chukwudi (2013) investigated on academic performance of secondary school students in Nigeria and found that parents with high educational background tend to motivate their children to have interest in their academic work; as a result, this enhances the performance of students in school.

Mwirichia (2013) conducted a study on the influence of parental involvement on academic performance of preschool children in Kenya and established various forms of parents' participation in educational activities at school, including education activities at home; and parent-school communication. The home environment had direct and indirect influence on the academic performance of preschool learners. Parental involvement in educational activities at school was found to have indirect influence on academic performance while involvement in educational activities at home had direct influence. With these results, the study recommended that parents should set study rooms which provide a conducive home environment for home study, parents should set home rules to govern their children's home study behavior, and teachers should establish partnerships with parents to support learning experiences.

Farooq (2011) conducted a study concerning factors affecting students' quality of academic performance in Tanzania, and the results revealed that socio-economic status and parents' education have a significant effect on students' overall academic achievement. Therefore, in this study the researchers attempt to examine the influence of parents' socio-economic status as independent variables on learners' academic achievement as dependent variable.

2. Method

This section indicates the methodology under which the study was conducted. It explains about the research design used, population and sampling technique as well as the validity and reliability of the research instrument.

2.1 Research Design

Research design refers as a chosen and planned ways of investigating the social reality or the planned arrangement of how to address the research problem and is organized in such a manner as to optimize on research outcomes (Omari, 2011). The present study used Descriptive research design. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) descriptive design entails a systematic and empirical inquiry in which the researcher studies how the independent variable affects the dependent variable. With this aspect, the present study described parental involvement, social-economic status of parents and thereafter established possible relationship among variables under investigation.

2.2 Population and Sampling Procedures

Monduli District comprises of 12 Community secondary schools from which a sample was drawn. The sample was selected by writing the names of schools in a piece of paper, folding and mixing them and then picked only seven piece of paper with names of schools written on them. As a result, seven secondary schools were chooses to participate in the study and 318 students from such schools participated by filling the questionnaire. These respondents were categorized according to their demographic factors as seen in Table 1.

2.3 Validity and Reliability

As seen in Table 2, male students who responded to the questionnaire were 172 (54.1%) while female counterparts were 146 (45.9%). This means male students were slightly more than their female counterparts. Those students who lived with both of their parents were 230 (72.3%), those who lived with a single parent were 76 (23.9%) while those who lived with relatives were 120 (3.8%). This means majority of students lived with both of their parents. Finally, students were categorized according to the highest level of their parents. As the table indicates, parents of 22 (6.9%) students had no formal schooling. Those with parents who completed primary education were 12 (37.7%), those with secondary education were 124 (39.0%) and those with college or university education were 52 (16%). Therefore, students had parents of varied educational backgrounds.

Table 2. Demographics of Respondents

SN	Category	Frequency	Percent
1.	Gender of respondents		
	Male	172	54.1
	Female	146	45.9
	TOTAL	318	100
2.	Parents/Guardians		
	Both parents	230	72.3
	Single parents	76	23.9
	Relatives	12	3.8

TOTAL	318	100
3. Parents' Education		
No Schooling	22	6.9
Primary	120	37.7
Secondary	124	39.0
College/University	52	16.4
TOTAL	318	100

Creswell (2003) described that a study is said to be valid if one can draw meaningful and useful inference from scores on the instruments. Also validity is the degree to which result obtained from analysis of data accurately represents the aims and objective of the study. It is the extent to which a measuring instrument provides adequate coverage of the topic under study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The present study employed content validity which is the type of validity that shows the extent to which elements of research questions and objectives are represented in the study. Experts went through the questionnaire against research questions and gave recommendations for improvement before the actual data collection took place.

Table 3. Reliability Analysis Results

SN	Variable in Question	Cronbach's Alpha	Status
1.	Parental Involvement	.684	Reliability
2.	Social Economic Conditions	.815	Reliability
3.	Academic Achievement	.833	Reliability

Reliability, on the other hand, refers to whether an assessment instrument gives similar results each time it is used in the same setting with the same type of subjects. The researcher through pilot study is expects to find a small sample of individuals that is similar to those who involved in actual study and administer the instrument to them prior to actual data collection. The pilot study involved 30 students from one secondary school in Arusha city, having the similar background as well as social economic status with the actual respondents. Reliability test was run through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences and the cut off point for acceptable reliability was 0.6 Cronbach's Alpha. As reflected in Table 3, the Cronbach's Alpha in all variables was above 0.6 meaning the questionnaire instrument was reliable for data collection.

3. Result

Analysis of data was led by four major research questions that guided the study. The first three research questions were analyzed through Descriptive statistics in terms of mean scores.

The mean scores were interpreted under the following criteria of five-point scale: 4.50-5.00 = strongly agree, 3.50-4.49 = agree, 2.50-3.49 = not sure, 1.50-2.49 = disagree and 1.00-1.49 = strongly disagree. The fourth research question called for hypothesis testing and therefore was analyzed by inferential statistics namely Pearson product Moment Correlation Coefficient. Nature of existing correlation would be either positive or negative and was interpreted under the following criteria: $\geq .70$ = strong relationship, $\geq .50$ = moderate relationship and $\leq .50$ = weak relationship.

Research Question 1: What is the level of parental involvement in supporting education of their children?

This research question sought to establish the level of parental involvement in supporting their children's education. As observed in Table 4, responses to all seven items ranged between the mean score of 3.50 and 4.49 suggesting agreement. Particularly, students agreed that their parents are committed to monitor their learning activities, they guide them fairly with time tables at homes, they cooperate with teachers to monitor school progress and they feel happy to discuss about their academic progress.

Furthermore, they agreed that their parents encourage, love and monitor their learning, they regularly attend parents' meetings at schools and they go through class notes and examinations results. These findings suggest that parents are highly committed to support the academic affairs of their children.

Table 4. Perceived Level of Parental Involvement

SN	Items in the Questionnaire	Mean	Interpretation
1.	My parents are committed to monitor my learning activities	4.26	Agree
2.	My parents guide me fairly with a timetable at home	4.10	Agree
3.	My parents cooperate with teachers to monitor my school progress	4.03	Agree
4.	My parents feel happy to discuss about my academic progress.	4.41	Agree
5.	My parents encourage, love and monitor my learning	4.37	Agree
6.	My parents regularly attend parents' meetings at school	4.00	Agree
7.	My parents go through my class notes, tests and examinations	3.97	Agree

According to Bogenschneider (1997), parents' involvement in their children's educational life has been linked with children's academic outcomes in a variety of ways, including higher academic achievements. Therefore, parents should be encouraged to continue supporting their children, monitor what takes place in their schools and give appropriate advice.

Research Question 2: What is the attitude of students toward social-economic status of their parents?

This research question sought to establish the attitude of students toward their parents' social economic status in connection to their academic life. As observed in Table 5, responses to all seven items ranged between the mean score of 3.50 and 4.49 suggesting agreement. Particularly, students agreed that their

parents' income affords to facilitate school needs, they have access to basic needs at home, their parents' income affords to purchase school requirements, their parents' income can meet their personal goals and the parents actually support them academically.

Table 5. Social Economic Status of Parents

SN	Items in the Questionnaire	Mean	Interpretation
1.	My parents' income affords to facilitate school needs	4.16	Agree
2.	I have access to basic needs at home (clothes, food & shelter)	4.47	Agree
3.	My parents' income affords to buy school requirements	4.28	Agree
4.	My parents' income can meet my personal goals	4.08	Agree
5.	My parents supports my academic needs	4.38	Agree

These findings suggest that parents are perceived by their children to be able to afford provision of basic needs that support students' welfare and academic requirements. According to Meece (2002), parents who provide a well responsive, supportive home environment, encourage exploration, stimulate questions and provide play and learning materials, accelerate their children's intellectual development. Therefore, this is a conducive atmosphere for learners in Monduli District to improve their academic achievement.

Research Question 3: What is the perception of students on their academic achievement among secondary schools in Monduli District?

This research question sought to establish the attitude of students toward their of academic achievement. As observed in Table 6, responses to all six items ranged between the mean score of 3.50 and 4.49 suggesting agreement with all the seven statements.

Table 6. Attitude of Students toward Their Academic Achievement

SN	Items in the Questionnaire	Mean	Interpretation
1.	I am satisfied with my academic performance	3.92	Agree
2.	My academic achievement is satisfactory	3.89	Agree
3.	My performance is better as compared to other students in my class	3.92	Agree
4.	My academic performance reaches my expectations	3.82	Agree
5.	My academic ability is better than of students from other schools	3.77	Agree
6.	My academic competence increases from day to day	4.20	Agree

Particularly, students agreed they are satisfied with their academic achievement; their academic achievement is satisfactory, their performance is better as compared to other students in their classes, their academic performance reaches their expectations, their academic abilities are better than students

from other schools and their academic competences increase from day to day. Therefore, students have positive attitude toward their academic achievement. This suggests that teachers are doing their teaching very well and suggests a possibility for parental involvement in guiding the children toward the peak of academic achievement.

Research Question 4: Is there significant correlation between home environmental factors and perceived academic achievement in Monduli District?

The forth research question sought to establish correlations between home environmental factors and students academic achievement. It called for testing of a null hypothesis which states: *there is no significant relationship between home environmental factors and students' academic achievement.*

Table 7. Correlation between Home Environmental Factors and Academic Achievement

		Parental Involvement	Social Factor	EconomicAcademic Achievement
Parental Involvement	Pearson Correlation	1	.549**	.240**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	318	318	316
Social Economic Factor	Pearson Correlation	.549**	1	.276**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	318	318	316
Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.240**	.276**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	316	316	316

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

As seen in Table 7, there is a direct yet weak correlation between parental involvement and academic achievement ($r = .240$, $p = .000$). This is in harmony with the findings of Hafiz and Waqas (2013) in Pakistan that parental involvement has significance effect in better academic performance of children. The study also established a direct yet moderate correlation between parental involvement and social economic factor ($r = .549$, $p = .000$). This suggests that social economic power influences parental involvement. This could be because those parents who are able financially can give all kind of financial support needed by their children for school easy going. According to Sirin (2005), parents whose socio-economic status is high, their students seem to perform better as compared to the students whose parents have lower socio-economic class. Finally, the study established a direct yet weak correlation between social economic factor and academic achievement ($r = .276$, $p = .000$). This means that social economic power has an influence toward students' academic performance.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and we maintain that the more the parental involvement, the

better the academic achievement. The better the social economic power of parents, the more the parental involvement, and the better the social economic status of parents, the better the academic achievement of pupils. Therefore, parental involvement and social economic status of parents significantly predict academic children's academic achievements.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study came up with the following conclusions regarding parental involvement, social economic status and academic achievement: First, there is parental involvement in pupils' academic affairs among secondary schools in Monduli District. This is reflected by the facts that parents are committed to monitor students' learning activities, they guide their children fairly with time tables at homes, they cooperate with teachers to monitor school progress and they feel happy to discuss about their children's academic progress.

Secondly, social economic power of parents for students who study in Monduli Secondary Schools affords to facilitate school needs of the children. This is reflected by the fact that the students have access to basic needs at home and their parents afford to purchase school requirements.

Lastly, there is a direct correlation between parental involvement and academic achievement, between social economic factor and academic achievement and between social economic status and parental involvement. This means that both parental involvement and social economic status of parents positively influences academic achievement of the students.

Based on above conclusions the researchers came up with the following two recommendations with regard to parental involvement, social economic status and academic achievement: First, there is need to encourage parents to continue their parental involvement in monitoring their children's academic affairs as this is a way of improving academic achievement. Secondly, parents should be encouraged to come up with strategies that will help to improve their income as this will enable sustainable provision of basic and school needs. When students are provided with these needs, their academic achievement will be enhanced.

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