

Influence of Parents Economic Status on Girls' Academic Performance in Mixed Day Secondary Schools

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Abstract The study sought to investigate the influence of parents' economic status on academic performance of girls in mixed day secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County Nakuru County, Kenya. Survey research design was used. Data was collected from 176 form four girls who were randomly selected from 10 mixed day secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County. In addition, 18 form four parents and 10 form four class teachers were purposively selected and involved in the study. Parents' questionnaire (PQ), form four girls questionnaire (GQ) and class teachers' questionnaire (TQ) were used to collect data. Data was analyzed using percentages, frequencies, means, standard deviation and inferential statistics namely, Pearson product moment correlation. The findings of the study showed that parents' economic status influenced girls' academic performance in mixed day secondary schools. The findings of the study are significant to stakeholders in education on issues of economic status that influence academic performance of girls in mixed day secondary schools. It is hoped that this study will equip the education stakeholders with information on how to enhance the academic performance of girls not only in mixed day secondary schools but throughout the education system.

Keywords: girls' academic performance, parents' economic status, mixed day secondary school

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1. Introduction

A combination of factors has been associated with poor academic performance of girls in mixed day secondary schools. Some of the factors include; Socio-Cultural factors, school related factors, personal factors and socio-economic factors among others. Socio-economic factors have sub-factors for example; students' attendance in class, family size, parental involvement, parents level of education, parents' economic status and occupation among others. A close analysis of these factors reveals that parents' economic status may be influencing girls' academic performance greatly in mixed day secondary schools compared to the other factors.

Besides other factors, socio-economic status is one of the most researched and debated factors among educational professionals that contribute towards the academic performance of students. Most of the experts argue that low socio-economic status has negative effects on the academic performance of students since their needs are not adequately met [2]. A research done in Pakistan revealed that family stress due to low income influences students' academic performance negatively [8]. Sifuna and Fatuma [14] argues that a girls' chance of attending secondary school compared to that of boys' depend largely upon the income of the family. In rural areas socio-cultural patterns combined with relatively poor

quality of schooling places girls, their education and development in a disadvantaged and vulnerable position. Large families at times face problems in educating their children. When faced with economic hardship, a great number of parents, even those aware of the importance of girls' education, are forced to educate boys at the expense of girls. In such cases those parents prefer taking their girls to day schools that are cheaper than boarding schools. The level of poverty is another reason why there is low enrolment of girls in rural and semi-urban areas. Most families are unable to cover the cost of their children's education. Due to financial constraints, the families give priority to boy's education [6,13].

Okoko [9] and Owamo [10] concluded that the parent's level of education as well as their occupation influence students' perceptions and aspirations. The children of educated parents aspire for higher levels of education with a view to get good jobs. Those from poor parents lack motivation and role models from their family and hence end up not achieving much academically especially the girls. According to Malenya [5], residing long distances from school was a challenge to many girls since they were seen to perform poorly in exams. The performance of students at Kenya Certificate Secondary Education (KCSE) in Njoro Sub-County has been low especially for girls. Table 1 shows that in the year 2010 for example only 8.74% of the 309 girls attained the minimum university entry grade of C+.

Keeping in view these discussions, it is worth noting that socio-economic factors affect both boys and girls but the researchers took interest on the girl-child and conducted this research to establish the influence of parents' economic status on girls' academic performance in mixed day secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County.

Table 1. Percentage of Students who Scored C+ and above in KCSE (2010) in Njoro Sub- County.

	Candidate Population	No. With C+ and above	% with C+ and above	% Below C+
Boys	482	98	20.33	79.67
Girls	309	27	8.74	91.26
Total	791	125	15.80	84.20

Source: Njoro Sub-County Education Office.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

One of the greatest challenges of maintaining a child in a secondary school in Kenya is affordability. Despite the introduction of free day secondary education in 2008, parents are required to meet some costs such as food, uniforms, development projects and special equipment. Consequently, children from poor households whose parents cannot meet these costs are likely to attend school randomly and participate poorly, which ultimately affects their academic performance. This mostly affects the girl-child especially in day secondary schools. Such parents who are challenged economically are not able to take their girls to boarding schools due to financial constraints hence they prefer the nearest day school. This poses a challenge of accessibility to the school by the girls promoting lateness and truancy since most girls prefer going back home when late than being punished. Long distances from school also encourage misbehavior for some girls when going back home after school. This is particularly so in rural areas where the population density is relatively low and households are widely scattered. In addition there is the challenge of insecurity in the evening and early morning hours as they travel to and from school. Njoro Sub County has continued to perform poorly in KCSE and especially girls. This poor performance may be influenced by many factors among them the girls' parents economic status. Therefore this study sought to establish the influence of parents' economic status on girls' academic performance in mixed day secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County.

1.2. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to establish the influence of parents' economic status on academic performance of girls in mixed day secondary schools.

1.3. Research Question

Does the parents' economic status influence academic performance of girls in mixed day secondary schools?

2. Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. This design describes the phenomenon and examines actions as they are or as they happen rather than

manipulation of variables. The design is appropriate in studying the prevalence of a phenomenon, situation, problem or attitude by obtaining the opinion or attitude of respondents regarding a situation at a particular time [4,7,10].

2.1. Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

200 form four girls were randomly sampled from 10 mixed day secondary schools. These schools were purposively selected out of the 30 mixed day secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County. In addition 20 form four parents and 10 form four class teachers were purposively selected to be involved in the study. The parents were believed to have a wealth of information from their experiences of having daughters in mixed day schools for a period of three years on influence of economic status of parents on academic performance of girls in mixed day secondary schools. Only 176 girls, 18 parents and 10 class teachers returned the questionnaires giving a sample size of 204 respondents.

The researchers used Parents' questionnaire (PQ), form four girls questionnaire (GQ) and class teachers' questionnaire (TQ) questionnaires. The questionnaires were validated by experts from Egerton University and also pilot tested to establish their reliability coefficient. The reliability coefficient was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha which was considered appropriate since it can both be administered once as well as assess multiple response items [3]. The reliability coefficient for the Girls Questionnaire was 0.700, 0.907 for Teachers Questionnaire and 0.722 for Parents Questionnaire which was suitable for this study. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents in each of the sampled schools.

2.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Data collected from the field was cleaned for any inconsistencies and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to explain results of the findings. These included means, frequencies and percentages. In addition, the researchers used Pearson correlation analysis to establish whether parents' economic status influenced academic performance of girls in mixed day secondary schools.

3. Results and Discussions

Parents' economic status refers to resources a parent has to meet the needs of the family. The needs include basic needs like food, clothing, shelter and education for their children. Experts argue that low economic status has negative effects on the academic performance of students since their needs are not adequately met [1,2]. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to analyze parents' economic status as factors which influence Girls' Academic Performance. In reference scaling (Likert scale) used in the study design, 1 represented strongly disagree, 2 represented disagree, 3 represented neutral, 4 represented agree and 5 represented strongly agree, therefore strongly disagree (1) was minimum, strongly agree (5) was maximum. The mean was analyzed based on the respondents choices scaled between strongly agree and

strongly disagree. Table 2 represents the results from responses given by form four girls.

Table 2. Parents Economic Status Factors- Form Four Girls

Elements of Parents economic status	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
My academic performance is influenced by low income of my parents/guardians.	176	1	5	4	1.6
My academic performance is influenced by lack of basic needs.	176	1	5	4	1.5
My academic performance is influenced by poor study environment at home.	176	1	5	4	1.5
My academic performance is influenced by lack of proper diet at home.	176	1	5	2	1.4
My academic performance is influenced by poor accommodation at home.	176	1	5	3	1.5
My academic performance is influenced by long distance from home to school.	176	1	5	4	1.6
Valid N (list wise)	176				

Source: Field Data (2015).

The respondents (form four girls) in the study agreed that their academic performance was influenced by low income of their parents/guardians, lack of basic needs, long distance from home to school and poor study environment at home (response of a mean of 4). The respondents were not sure whether their academic performance was influenced by poor accommodation at home (response of a mean of 3). The respondents on the other hand disagreed that their academic performance is influenced by lack of proper diet at home (response of a mean of 2). These findings are in agreement with Ayodo et al [1], who stated that students with well able parents

have certain physical and sociological needs which when met contribute to their positive academic performance. These needs may include conducive reading atmosphere, good food playing ground and provision of supplementary learning materials. Lack of basic needs, poor study environment and long distance from home to school could as well explain the poor academic performance among girls in mixed day secondary schools. Similarly the form four class teachers gave responses on the influence of parents' economic status on girls academic performance as shown is Table 3.

Table 3. Parents Economic Status Factors-Class Teachers

Elements of Parents economic status	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.Dev.
Girls' academic performance is affected by low income of parents/guardians.	10	1	5	4	1.1
Girls' academic performance is influenced by lack of basic needs.	10	1	5	4	1.4
Girls' academic performance is affected by the poor study environment at home.	10	1	2	4	0.5
Girls' academic performance is influenced by poor diet at home	10	1	5	3	1.4
Girls' academic performance is affected by lack of proper accommodation at home.	10	1	4	4	0.8
Girls' academic performance is influenced by long distances from home to school.	10	1	4	4	0.7
Girls' academic performance is influenced by lack of support from parents/guardians.	10	1	4	4	1.0
Valid N (list wise)	10				

Source: Field Data (2015).

The respondents (class teachers) in the study agreed that girls' academic performance was affected by low income of parents/guardians, lack of basic needs, poor study environment at home, lack of proper accommodation at home, long distances from home to school and lack of support from parents/guardians (response of a mean of 4). The respondents on the other hand were not sure whether girls' academic performance was influenced by poor diet at home (response of a mean of 3). Table 3 reveals that girls' academic performance is influenced by parents' economic status. This is evidenced by the mean values of low income of parents(4), poor study environment at home(4), lack of proper accommodation at home(4), long

distances from home to school(4) and lack of support by parents/guardians(4). These findings support those by Ayodo et al [1], who found out that girls from high income families performed better than those from low income families. Students from parents with low income faced many challenges like lack of basic needs, fare to and from school, lack of uniform and personal effects and this was found to influence the academic performance negatively. The researcher sought to get the view of the parents' representatives on influence of economic status of parents on academic performance of girls. The findings are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Parents Economic Status Factors-Parents Representatives

Elements of Parents economic status	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Girls' academic performance is affected by low income of parents/guardians.	18	1	5	4	1.3
Girls' academic performance is influenced by lack of basic needs.	18	1	5	4	1.1
Girls' academic performance is affected by the poor study environment at home.	18	1	3	4	0.7
Girls' academic performance is influenced by poor diet at home	18	1	5	3	1.4
Girls' academic performance is affected by lack of proper accommodation at home.	18	1	5	3	1.2
Girls' academic performance is influenced by long distances from home to school.	18	1	5	4	0.9
Girls' academic performance is influenced by lack of support from parents/guardians.	18	1	5	3	1.3
Valid N (listwise)	18				

Source: Field Data (2015).

The respondents (parents representatives) in the study agreed that girls' academic performance was influenced by low income of parents/guardians, lack of basic needs, poor study environment at home and long distances from home to school (response of a mean of 4). The respondents were not sure whether girls' academic performance was influenced by poor diet at home, lack of proper accommodation at home and lack of support from parents/guardians (response of a mean of 3).

4. Correlation between Parents Economic Status and Girls Academic Performance

The objective of the study was to investigate the influence of parents' economic status on academic performance of girls in mixed day secondary schools. The key elements for parents economic status analyzed were; low income of parents/guardians, lack of basic needs, poor study environment for girls at home, poor diet at home, lack of proper accommodation at home, long distances from home to school and lack of support from parents/guardians. All these elements were correlated to establish whether parents' economic status influenced girls' academic performance.

Table 5. Correlation between Parents Economic Status and Girls Academic Performance

Correlations		Academic performance KCSE scores
Parents economic status	Pearson Correlation	0.847**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0.000
	N	165

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

From the Table 5 above, the results revealed that there was a strong significant positive relationship of ($r = 0.847$, $p < 0.05$) between parents economic status and girls academic performance. This is because the P-value of 0.000 was less than the set significant level of 0.05 for the analysis. Based on the data, the study concluded that there is a positive influence of parents' economic status on girls' academic performance. This suggests that girls' academic performance will be high in schools that parents' income is high. Ayodo *et al* [1] claim is consistent with this finding that girls from parents of high economic status performed better than those from low income parents. This is because girls from high income families are well catered for and hence have a higher concentration in learning compared with those from low income families who are not catered for well and instead are involved in domestic chores leading to less concentration in learning which results to poor academic performance.

5. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to investigate the influence of parents' economic status on girls' academic performance in mixed day secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County Nakuru County, Kenya and some implications can be drawn from this study.

First, the study established that academic performance of girls in mixed day secondary schools was influenced the following socio-economic sub-factors, namely; income

of their parents/guardians, lack of basic needs, long distance from home to school and poor study environment at home. Second, the study established that parents economic status had a strong influence on academic performance of girls in mixed day secondary school represented by strong positive correlation ($r = 0.847$, $p < 0.05$). The study therefore concluded that, parents' economic status statistically and significantly correlated with the girls' academic performance, suggesting that girls whose parents have higher economic status tend to perform better academically.

6. Recommendations

Based on the study objective and the results, the researchers herein recommend the following for implementation in order to enhance girls' academic performance in mixed day secondary schools in Njoro Sub-County and other schools that have similar challenges in other Sub-Counties.

1. The National and County governments may need to set aside funds to build Sub-County boarding schools for girls since the current Sub-County schools are mixed day schools. This may solve the problem of girls travelling long distances from home to school. The study established that long distance was a challenge to the girls and contributed to poor academic performance.

2. There is need for the head teachers to advice the parents to spare some of their resources in supporting their daughters academic performance by supplying basic requirements like fare to and from school to avoid walking long distances , sanitary pads and proper uniforms.

3. Sensitization of parents to improve accommodation in their homes is required to ensure conducive environment for study and completion of class assignments.

4. Sensitization of parents on the children's' rights and to be gender sensitive in allocation of resources towards educating their children.

5. There is need for the government to review the system of awarding bursaries to avoid exclusion of the poor who have children in day schools and have difficulties sustaining them in school due to financial constraints.

6. Communities to start income generating activities which would provide more disposable income to families to enable them acquire education for their children comfortably.

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