IMPACT OF PARENTS' SOCIAL ECONOMIC STATUS ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KIENI EAST SUB-COUNTY, NYERI COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

There are several impediments to students' academic performance, among them the parents' social economic status (SES), which is thought to influence students' academic achievement. The purpose of this study was to find out the impact of social economic status on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kieni East Sub County, Nyeri County, Kenya. The study established that the number of family members in formal employment, coupled with employment and business/self-employment income, led to higher academic performance among students. The findings also revealed that in homes lacking academic support facilities; the academic performance of learners was poor, while homes with adequate facilities boosted the academic performance of the students.

Key Words: Socio-Economic Status (SES), Students, Parents, Academic Performance,

1.1 Background to the Study

Poor academic performance has remained a challenge to education despite the adoption of free and subsidized education policies in both developed and developing countries. According to Muhamed & Muhamed (2010), education not only provides knowledge and skills but also inculcates values, training of instincts, fostering right attitude and habits. Academic achievement assumes a crucial and important role in human resources development especially in the context of today's' highly competitive economies. The importance of academic achievement cannot, therefore, be overemphasized; a person's education is closely linked to their life chances, income, and well-being (Battle & Lewis, 2002). Therefore, it is important to have a clear understanding of what promotes or impedes one's educational attainment. Consequently, the significance of academic achievement has raised important questions for educational researchers, namely, what factors promote academic achievement in students.

In a report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2014) it is noted that some of the factors leading to dismal academic performance among secondary school students include "poor mental ability, poor study habits, low achievement motivation, lack of vocational goals, low self-confidence, low socio-economic status of the family, institutional and cultural factors, among others". In recent research, a positive correlation has been identified between parents' social economic status (SES) and students' academic achievement. Rothestein (2004) argues that parental SES background is one of the variables in the academic achievement of children in school because guardians of different occupational classes exhibit differentiated methods towards the upbringing of their children, different ways of disciplining, guiding, motivating, role modeling and reacting to their children.

These differences do not express themselves consistently as expected in the case of every family; rather their impact on families is different for different SES classes. According to Marmot & Michael (2004), SES status refers to the combined economic and sociological measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's' economic and social position relative to others, based on income, education, and occupation. Additionally, Lareau (2003) adds that SES status is typically broken into three broad categories, high, middle, and low to describe the three areas a family or an individual may fall into. A study by Barry (2005) in the United States examined the different factors that influence test scores of tenth-grade students. The factors examined included student role performance, school, family, and peer factors. Analysis indicated that the strongest predictor of student test scores was socioeconomic status, resulting in a statistically significant increase in the standardized coefficient of .224 points.

Similarly, in a study by Abdu-Raheem (2015) conducted in Ekiti State, Nigeria, it was indicated that a relationship exists between the academic performance of secondary school students' and their parents' socio-economic status. It was therefore recommended that parents without or with low education levels should endeavor to send their children to home lessons after school hours, during weekends, and during holidays to improve their academic performance. The government should embark on programs or formulate policies that can bridge the gaps between children of the rich and the poor academically. A division in education attainment is thus born out of these two differences in child rearing. Lower-income families can have children who do not succeed to the levels of the middle-income children who have a greater sense of entitlement, more argumentative, or better prepared for adult life. The Government of Kenya has shown willingness towards the implementation of Free Secondary Education beginning the year 2018 with the explicit purpose of giving all citizens access to secondary education regardless of their

background socially or economically (GoK, 2011). The government assumed that the abolition of secondary school fees would enable the poor to gain access to secondary education, as captured in the Constitution of Kenya (2010) under articles 43.1f, 53.1b and 55a and Kenya Vision 2030 (MoEST, 2005). The Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005 highlights the fact that the financial implications facing secondary education contributes to reduced rates of transition to secondary schools by students who have completed primary education, and recommends that the Governments needs to strive to improve the transition rates of learners. According to the Nyeri County Education Office statistics, secondary schools in Kieni East Sub County have registered the lowest mean grades compared to the county average for five consecutive years as shown in the table below (Table, 1.1).

Table 1.1: Performance of Public Secondary Schools in Kieni East Sub County

Year	Performance Mean Scores in KCSE		
	Kieni East Sub County	**Nyeri County**	**National**
2010	3.17	3.61	3.54
2011	3.01	3.56	3.47
2012	3.25	3.87	3.65
2013	3.61	3.91	3.82
2014	3.91	4.22	4.02

This situation thus calls for a need to investigate on the encounters that could be mitigating for learners poor academic performance in the sub-county. It is therefore important to find out if the parents' SES could be impacting on the academic performance of the learners of the schools in

the locality. This is prudent because initiatives can be put in place to combat the problem and ensure that students are not disadvantaged by their parents' social economic status, level of education, income, and availability of appropriate learning resources in their homes.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Kieni East Sub County, public secondary schools have consistently posted poor academic results compared to other public secondary schools in other regions in the county. However, despite this dismal performance, there is limited empirical data that can inform policy on the contributing factors to this dismal performance. This is despite the fact that the area receives support from the government in terms of staffing and funding just like any other Sub-County in Nyeri County. The low academic achievement may be attributed by the parent's SES. Kieni East Sub-County is among the regions in Nyeri County whose majority of inhabitants belong to low SES. In particular, the apparent low SES of the populace has not been investigated as a possible causal factor to the poor academic performance. This study sought to address this gap in knowledge and assess the extent to which SES affects students' academic performance in public secondary schools.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

i.   Determine the impact of parents' income on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kieni East Sub County.

ii. Establish the impact of parents' level of education on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kieni East Sub County.

iii. Determine the impact of the type of family on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kieni East Sub County.

iv.   Establish the impact of academic support facilities in the homes on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Kieni East Sub County.

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Academic Performance and Parents' SES

Krieger, Williams, and Moss (1998) used terms like "poverty" and "deprivation" to describe inadequate resources. The linkage of occupation, income and education is the one that results in variations in academic achievement whereby children from well-off families tend to achieve highly because they have most of the facilities required in the teaching and learning process. Weber (2000) considers high social status to be prestige and honor in the community. To him status implies "access to life chances" based on social and cultural factors such as family background, lifestyle and social networks. All this affects the pupil's academic achievement. The family background and the lifestyle of the members of any given family do determine what a child will attain in his or her academic endeavor which is the concern of this study. From the above literature, there is evidence that the quality of parents and home background of a student goes a long way to predict the quality and regularity of the satisfaction and provision of a child's functional academic needs. The Ministry of Devolution and Planning (MoDP) and the Vision 2030 Secretariat in 2005 revealed that more than 56% of Kenyans are living below the poverty. This, therefore, means that they are unable to access even the most basic requirements for their children. In addition, the gap between the rich and the poor is rapidly expanding (Olotu, 1994). Most of the pupils dropping out of school are from poor background and the efficiency of educational system has been declining at an alarming rate yet the Government is committed towards the provision of equity and quality education. Increased levels of illiteracy, chronic poverty and diminished levels of socio-economic standing have left parents and guardians in

financial distress due to the exorbitant pricing of textbooks and related school material (Olotu, 1994). These situations may have contributed to the poor academic performance among the student's public secondary schools in Kieni East Sub County.

2.1.2 Impact of Parental Income on Learners Academic Performance

In developing countries, high unemployment rates have led to an excess of 50% of the populace living below the poverty line, and thus they cannot adequately provide or sustain the academics progression of their children (World Bank, 2012). A study by Escarce (2003) found parental income has a significant impact on the available educational opportunities on students their opportunities for success in life. The researcher further concluded stratification and segregation of residential areas has led to students from low-income families attend ill-funded schools, which reduced motivation for achievement and low parental/guardian support of educational programmes which results in a much increased risk of failure in education. Compared to students from high-income households, the students' from low-income homes generally score lower marks in tests and are much more likely to drop out of school. Another study by Amutabi (2003) in Nigeria found out that the family wealth gap is due in part to income disparities. These different starting points also factor into housing, education, and employment discrimination. The reviewed studies have identified that the level of family income has a positive relationship with educational attainment among learners. However, there are limited studies to identify the effects of family income on academic performance among learners in public secondary schools. Despite the introduction of subsidized secondary school education in Kenya, parents and guardians are confronted by a myriad of additional charges and levies that the government does not cater for (Fall & Roberts, 2012). The parents are unable to meet these costs, therefore, their children may miss tuition time as they are sent home to go and collect the

levies during the school days and eventually end up performing poorly in their academics (Huggins, Randel & Shirley, 2007). A study by Mukudi (2004) carried out in Kenya revealed that learners from poor families tend to have lower test grades compared to their well-off counterparts. This was attributed to the fact that low-income families spent all their income to purchase food and other basic necessities and made little investment in their children's education. In contrast, students from high-income households are likely to excel in their education due to the fact that their parents or guardians can comfortably afford to pay for their education (Osagi, 2010).

2.1.3 Impact of Parents' Level of Education on Students' Academic Performance

Generally, traditional research has revealed that more highly educated parents and especially mothers have greater success in providing their children with cognitive and language skills that contribute to success in school (Shittu, Brooks-Gunn & Klebanor, 2004). Parents with post-secondary education are inclined to expect similar or better academic performance from their children, and this confidence that the parents/ guardians have to their children (Mallan, 2009). However, parents' high expectations can easily cause stress among their children, translating to poor educational achievement. Eccles (2005) pointed out that children learn by example often through observations at home. If a child's parents are reading books, attending ongoing educational classes and motivates the children to post improved academic results through visitation to the museums, and libraries which is aimed assisting the child to attain the best results in their education.

2.1.4 Educational Support Facilities at Home

Research by Rouse & Barrow (2006) indicates that depressed wealth among parents and guardians has led to students from poor backgrounds having limited exposure and variety in the

course of their learning experience. Poor homes lack the necessary or appropriate infrastructure to promote academic excellence. According to a Government of Kenya (2000) report, parents fail to enroll their children in schools due to the associated costs of education. Poverty levels among the populace has made many parents unable to feed and also educate their children, and for those who try can end up not affording instructional resources, uniforms, tuition and activity fees, causing the children to attend school in a haphazard manner. The reviewed literature shows that children from high socio-economic status are better exposed to a learning environment at home due to provision and availability of extra learning facilities (Mallan, 2009).

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This method is effective when data is being collected from many respondents cheaply and within limited time. Since the study sought to obtain descriptive and self-reported data from students, the descriptive survey research design was the most appropriate. This design can obtain information that can be analysed to extract patterns and to make comparisons.

3.2 Location of the Study

The study was conducted in Kieni East Sub-County, Nyeri County, Kenya. Kieni East is situated on the southern slopes of Mt. Kenya, between Nyeri and Nanyuki towns. The main economic activities within the Sub-County include livestock rearing on a small scale, horticulture, and wheat farming. The Sub-County borders Mathira West, Nyeri Central, and Kieni West Sub Counties in Nyeri County, Kenya.

3.3 Target Population

The target population was 9,184 secondary school students in Kieni East Sub County. There were 28 public secondary schools in the Sub County distributed in three educational zones as

follows; Naromoru Zone - 12 schools with 3,936 students, Kabaru Zone - 9 schools with 2,296 students and Gakawa Zone - 7 schools with 2,952 schools.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Procedures

From each of the three education zones, schools were categorized into three; single-sex boarding schools, mixed boarding schools and mixed day schools. One school from each category was picked from each zone at random from schools lists at the County Education Officer's office. From each school selected, proportionate number of Form three students was picked at random from the attendance registers to participate in the study. This is because the Form One and Two students have been in the schools for a short time to feel the full impact of the academic instruction while the Form Four students are assumed to be too busy preparing for their examination.

Table 3.2 Sample of the Study

Educational Zone	Number of student from sampled each type of school			Total Number of Students Sampled
	Single-sex boarding	Mixed boarding	Mixed Day schools	
Naromoru	14	14	14	42
Gakawa	8	8	8	24
Kabaru	11	11	11	33
Total	**33**	**33**	**33**	**99**

3.5 Research Instruments

Data were collected using questionnaires, with the questionnaire for students divided into five sections; section one gathered information on parents socioeconomic status, section 2 had items on parents level of education, section 3 covered the type of family the students came from section 4 had items on the academic-related facilities at home while section 5 covered items on the academic performance of the students.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher visited the proceeded to the sampled schools, and during this visit, the researcher informed the teachers and the students of the intended study and booked appointments for data collection. The sampled respondents were given the questionnaires to fill and the completed questionnaires were collected after 30 minutes.

3.7 Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data was cleaned, coded and analyzed to extract the results pertaining to each objective. Quantitative research data was first coded, and descriptive statistical methods such as mean, frequencies and percentages used to tabulate the data. The combined relationship between the independent variables (family income, parents' level of education and educational support facilities) and academic performance was computed using multiple regression analysis.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

After securing an introductory letter from the University the researcher applied for a research permit from the National Commission of Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The research permit was used to inform the principals of the sampled schools of the intended study. The researcher proceeded and sampled respondents to be included in the study and sought their

consent for participating in the research, and they were informed that any information provided was confidential.

4.1 Research Findings

4.1.1 Parents Level of Income

4.1.2 Number of People in Employment per Household and Academic Performance

Table 4.3 No. of People in Employment per Household

No. of your Household Working	Academic Performance Mean (($\overline{x}$))
One	2.48
Two	2.58
Three	2.59
Four	2.77
More than four	2.80

Table 4.3 indicates that the students with more than four family members in formal employment had a mean score of 2.80, this was followed by those with three working family members at 2.77, those with three working family members had a mean score of 2.59, two working members a mean score of 2.58. Lastly, those with one working family member had a mean score of 2.48. In a study by Nyakundi (2012), he states that occupational status among members of a family measures the social position by describing job characteristics, decision-making ability and control and role models.

4.1.3 Main Family Income Sources and Students' Academic Performance

The study assessed the main source of family income and compared with the learner's academic performance. This was important because the study area is in a rural setup that relies largely on

subsistence means of agricultural production which is affected by the fluctuation of commodity prices, high costs of inputs, unreliable weather pattern and poor infrastructure (Mwaura, 2013). As a result, families relying on agriculture are likely to belong to lower social economic status.

Table 4.4 Main Sources of Family income and Student's Academic Performance

Main Family Income Sources	Academic Performance Mean
Employment	2.71
Business/self-employment	2.71
Farming	2.60
Others	2.45

Table 4.4 shows that learners, whose family's main source of income was employment and business/self-employment, each had an academic mean score of 2.71. Those whose family's source of income was farming had a mean score of 2.60 while all the other categories had a mean score of 2.45. These findings suggest that learners from low social economic status backgrounds performed poorly relative to those from high SES in academic achievement. The sources of main sources of family income in the Sub-County are constricted; as a result, the families may be having deficiencies in economic security and may be vulnerable. According to Mwaura (2013), the major source of income in Kieni Sub County is agriculture since the area is largely rural with an agricultural based economy. Bearing the unreliable rainfall, fluctuation of commodity prices and the high cost of agricultural inputs, it is plausible that most residents are economically deprived. As a result, most of the students can be said to come from poor families.

4.1.4 Sources of Family income and Students Academic Performance

Results showed that learners who rated salary as important had an academic performance mean score of 2.78, farming (2.65), husbandry (2.63), Wood & wood products (2.74), tourism (2.58), trading/business (2.75), rental income (2.67), assistance of relatives (2.42), pensions (2.47) and aid from NGOs (2.38). These results indicate that the highest academic mean score was from those students who rated salary as the most important source of income; this was followed by trading/business and wood & wood products. The lowest mean score was posted by the respondents who indicated that the important source of income was assistance of relatives, pensions, and aid from NGOs (2.38). These findings indicate that majority of the sources of income for students' family are weak.

4.1.5 Estimate of Family Income per Month

Table 4.5 Estimate of Monthly Household Income and Students Academic Performance

Estimate of Monthly Household Income	Academic Performance Mean
Below 10000	2.67
10001-20000	2.68
20001-30000	2.70
30001- 40000	2.74
Above 40000	2.64

As indicated in Table 4.5 learners academic achievement increased with increase in estimated family income but seemed to decrease with high levels of family's monthly income. Several studies have indicated that low family income positively correlates with students' academic

performance. The above results concur with a study by Gough (1946), who found a correlation of .30 between a families' SES and student's academic achievement.

4.1.5 Respondents Opinion of Family Social Economic Status

Table 4.6 Respondents Opinion of Family SES and Academic performance

Opinion of family's SES	Academic performance Mean ($\bar{x}$)
1. Very poor	2.59
2. Poor	2.67
3. Middle-income level	3.10
4. Rich	3.20
5. Very rich	2.95

The study compared the opinions of the respondents about their social economic status and their academic performance. The student respondents were provided with 10 items in a 4 point Likert scale and asked to indicate their opinion on their academic performance in school. The mean score of their responses was computed on a scale of 1-4 and cross-tabulated with their opinion on SES. Data analysis presented in Table 4.6 revealed that learners from the rich families posted the best performance ($\bar{x} = 3.20$), this was followed by middle-income families ($\bar{x} = 3.10$), very rich ($\bar{x} = 2.95$), poor ($\bar{x} = 2.67$) and very poor ($\bar{x} = 2.59$). The findings suggest that opinions on family's' SES were a contributing factor in students' academic performance.

4.1.6 Impact of Parents' Level of Education on Students' Academic Performance

Table 4.7: Parents Level of Education and Students Academic Performance

Parents level of education	Academic performance Mean
High (degree & above)	3.00
Medium (diploma)	2.67
Low (certificate)	2.55
None	2.10

Table 4.7 shows that students' academic performance was related to their parents' level of education. Students whose parents had degree level and above posted a mean score of 3.00, diploma (2.67), certificate 2.55 and those whose parents had no education at all scored 2.10. The parents' level of education was therefore established as a determinant of the students' academic performance. Educated parents can better understand the educational needs and their children's aptitude. They can help their children in their education which affects their proficiency in their relative area of knowledge. Okantey (2008) observed that parental education leads to good income which in turn empowers the parents to give their children the benefit of a home that provides quality life, an enabling environment, and facilities which lay a solid foundation for success in school.

4.1.7 Academic Support Facilities in the Homes of the Respondents

Table 4.8 Education Resources at Home and the Students' Academic Performance

Facility	Response	Academic Performance Mean
1. Books	Available	2.66
	Not available	2.63
2. Educational Videos	Available	2.71

	Not available	2.64
3. Reading Tables	Available	2.69
	Not available	2.53
4. Reading Chairs	Available	2.69
	Not available	2.54
5. Book Shelves	Available	2.56
	Not available	2.81
6. Tuition Services	Available	2.78
	Not available	2.71
7. Games	Available	2.58
	Not available	2.73
8. Lighting Appliances	Available	2.74
	Not available	2.73

Table 4.8 shows higher academic performance was indicated by learners who came from homes where academic support facilities were available. The study indicated that academic support facilities were a significant determinant of academic performance.

4.1.8 Regression Analysis between Independent and Dependent Variables

Model		Un-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
1	(Constant)	3.015	.585		5.151	.000
	Family income	.081	.107	.160	.757	.040

Parents level of education	.188	.092	.267	2.043	.046
Educational support facilities	.214	.301	.198	.711	.031

a. Dependent Variable: academic performance

Table 4.14 on coefficients showed that the regression coefficient on family income data (0.018) and in relation to performance in academics is significant statistically (p= 0.040) indicating that the higher the family income the higher the academic performance. The regression coefficient on Parents level of education is positive (0.188) and the relationship with academic performance is statistically significant (p= 0.046). Educational support facilities show a positive regression coefficient (0.214) and the relationship with academic performance is statistically significant (p= 0.031). This model suggests that academic performance has a lot to do with educational support facilities, family income and parents' level of education. Thus the regression equation when re-modeled looks as follows:

$Y=3.015+0.081X_1+0.188X_2+0.214X_3$

$=0.387$

$R^2=0.387$

Adjusted $R^2=0.387$

Y = Academic performance

X_1 = Family income

X_2 = Parents level of education

X_3 = Educational support facilities

This shows that academic performance among the learners in the study population can be accounted for by 8.1% variations in family income, 18.8% of variations in parents' level of education and 21.4% of variations in educational support facilities in the homes of the

respondents. A report by UNESCO (2014) shows that there are several factors that contribute to students' academic performance; markedly, research has shown a positive correlation between parents' SES and students' achievement academically. A study by Graetz (1995) concurs with this view and adds that parents' SES is a major influence on students' academic motivation which in turn impacts on educational performance.

5.1 Conclusions

The researcher, based on the above results, has concluded that parent's income was related to the students' academic performance. The students' academic performance increased with the parent's level of income, while the education levels of the parents impacted positively on learners' academic performance. The learners' academic performance increased with increase in the parents' level of education. The researcher also concludes that academic support facilities in the learners' home were related to academic performance; learners from deprived homes performed poorly.

5.2 Recommendations

The researcher recommends that there is a need for the county and central governments to put in place measures that can help alleviate the poverty evident in the Sub-County. This would include enhancing bursary programs as well as increasing the capitation from Free Day Secondary (FDS) school programs. It is also recommended that measures can be put in place to encourage parents in the Sub-County to enroll for adult education classes. Finally, it is recommended that parents need to be sensitized on the need to maintain an academically supportive environment in the homes. These would include the provision of basic requirements in their homes such as a separate room for the students to carry out their studies, chairs, tables, and shelves.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

The researcher suggests that further research should be carried out on the following;

i.   The impact of bursary and capitation of FSD on students academic performance

ii. Factors affecting the participation of illiterate parents in adult education classes and how this affects the academic performance of their children.

iii. Which parenting skills promote high academic performance among students in secondary schools?

iv. How can the home environment improved in order to make it more conducive to promote improved academic performance of students

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