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Effects of Student Economic Adjustment on Academic Achievement among Secondary School Students in Western Kenya

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Abstract:

Most students perform poorly at the end of the four years in secondary school due to factors that may not be necessarily personal. This study sought to establish the effect that economic adjustment patterns have on academic performance in secondary Schools in Kenya. The study adopted descriptive survey design which focused on determining the status of the defined population within the sub-county. The specific objective of the study was to examine the effect of student's economic adjustment to academic achievement among form three students in schools in Sabatia sub-county, Vihiga County. The study population comprised of 2500 form three students, 90 guiding and counseling teachers, 90 directors of studies from the respective schools and one sub county education officer. A total of 250 form three students, 9 guiding and counseling teachers, 9 directors of studies, 9 deputy principals and 1 sub county director of Education constituted the study sample. Stratified random sampling and purposeful sampling technique were used to select the respondents. Three schools were used during the pilot study to ascertain the validity and reliability of the instruments. The reliability coefficient of 7.424 was found using test retest method. Questionnaire, interview schedule and a document analysis guide were used in data collection and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data was prescribed, recorded and reported in themes and sub-themes. The quantitative data was recorded using frequency tables and pie charts. Findings revealed that student's economic adjustment has a significant effect on academic achievement in secondary schools in Sabatia sub-county Vihiga County. It was recommended that teachers and parents need to be create a conducive economic environment in learning institutions and at home to enhance high level of student adjustment and academic achievement.

Keywords: Academic achievement, economic adjustment student adjustment, student

1. Introduction

Student's performance in secondary school has been shown to be a function of many factors that may not wholesomely be related to personal attributes. Most learners in our schools join secondary school with the prerequisite entry marks but their academic achievement has been observed to be variable. Osarenren (2002), in his studies conducted on factors affecting student adjustment to school and academic achievement. Predictors include experiences in primary school, family dynamics, self-esteem, commitment to goal and social support systems. The family unit is considered one of the most influential components of a child's academic achievement due to the fact that the family is the first source of informal education for a child (Kitjaroonchai, N., 2016). More specifically, parenting styles, discipline techniques, involvement with their children, and the home and school environment have been shown to affect a child's ability to academically achieve (Sumari et al.2010).

There are many cases of adolescent drop out in schools due to early pregnancies, drug and substance abuse, absenteeism and cases of indiscipline. Most of such cases are prevalent among form three students in most secondary schools in Kenya. Due to this perception gap, the current study sought to examine the contribution that student's economic adjustment have on their academic achievement. Children's adjustment in learning institutions (schools) depends not only on their abilities and desire to learn but also on their mood at school, experiences with significant family members and more importantly, the parents' attitudes towards school children.

The current study attempted to establish the contribution that student's economic adjustment has on academic achievement of students in secondary schools in Western Kenya as a sample. In case of adjustment to school during adolescence, the relevant earlier adaptations were to do with the quality of problem solving experience and home variables that prepare the child for school and the consequences of these experiences on adjustment at school and beyond achievement for example competent with peers. Using prospective cross-sectional data, the present research extended the examination of antecedent variables of high school student adjustment to include experience in primary school and high school and direct assessments of social economic factors and their adaptations prior to and during adolescence.

The study addressed three principal questions concerning the influence of early social, economic factors on high school student adjustment: Is poor high school adjustment predictable from early parent-child relationship variables? How early can high school adjustment be predicted from relationship and individual socio- economic variables? How strongly can social economic variables from childhood predict high school adjustment, controlling for achievement and social and economic adjustment during secondary schooling?

The current study tried to establish the contribution that economic adjustment or maladjustment among form three students may consequently raise or lower academic performance at school. The study also focused on the intervening measures adopted by the different schools so as to create students who adjust to the school accordingly and be able to have exemplary academic achievement despite being affected by the school environment. This research made a detailed assessment with a view of getting to the root of the matter.

2. Research Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted in conducting the current study as it focused on determining the status of the defined population within the sub-county. This means students, teachers education officers participated in the study in their respective schools or offices (Kothari, 2004). The study targeted 130 public secondary schools in Sabatia Subcounty, Vihiga county Kenya. Simple random sampling was used to select 13 schools so that each type of school is fairly represented.

2.1. Target Population

The target population consisted of 2500 students selected from the different schools ranging from sub-county schools, county schools, extra county schools, National schools and private schools in Sabatia sub county, Vihiga County. Other respondents included 90 deputy principals, 90 guiding and counseling teachers and one education officer. A sample of 10% of the target population was used. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 250 form three students.

2.2. Sampling Procedure

Simple random sampling was used to select 9 guiding and counseling teachers, 9 directors of studies and 9 deputy principals while saturated sampling was used to select 1 Education officer. The research design used included surveys and fact finding inquiries of different kinds. These was aimed at collecting information from respondents on their opinions in relation to the various adjustment patterns and how they affect' school adjustment and academic achievement of form three students in secondary schools in Sabatia Sub-county of Vihiga County. These method presented facts as they existed at the time of the study as well as the trends that are emerging.

Purposive sampling method was used to select thirteen secondary schools in the sub-county. Using this method of sampling two schools per division were selected using an administrative map of Kenya. The schools were categorized into four geographical zones with their towns as point of accessibility. Stratified random sampling technique was involved in identifying groups in the population. The population was form three students in the different schools including two girls' boarding schools, two boy's boarding schools, two mixed day and boarding schools, two mixed day schools and two mixed boarding schools, one private school.

The samples from each school were randomly selected. The sample was proportionally selected on the basis of equal number from each group. Stratification ensured that different groups of students subjected to simple random sampling were used to pick on students. Interview schedule was used to select, guiding and counseling teachers, and deputy principals. The researcher collected students' academic performance from the offices of the directors of studies from the sampled schools. This provided an equal chance to every member in the population to be included in the study.

The respondents were sampled from form three classes in order to establish the contribution that economic adjustment has on academic achievement of Secondary School Students in Sabatia Sub-county Vihiga County. Towards enhancement of comparative dimension, boys in similar classes as girls were included in the study. Using simple random sampling 30 students per school were selected from ten schools, in cases of mixed schools 15 girls and 15 boys were picked from form three classes were used in the study.

3.1. Data Collection

Data collection instruments included the following: questionnaires, interview schedule and document analysis guide. Primary data was collected on the key variables in the study. Thus the data collection process involved gathering of both qualitative and quantitative information related to the contribution of economic adjustment on academic achievement of form three secondary school students of Sabatia Sub-county Vihiga County.

3.2. Data Presentation and Analysis

The completed questionnaires were edited for completeness and consistency. The data was coded and checked for any errors and omissions. Descriptive statistics were utilized to present an overall picture of the responses provided by the students. Secondly, correlation analyses were used to test for linear relationships among the variables. The presentation of the results involved use of tables and graphs. Besides, any appropriate statistical procedures found viable was used.

The data collected from the survey was sorted, edited, coded, classified and tabulated for analysis. The analysis was by use of diverse statistical methods. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, percentages and frequency counts and inferential statistics such as spearman's coefficient and test retest methods were used to compare between any two groups. ANOVA was also used. The qualitative data was then transcribed, put into categories and reported in an ongoing process as themes and sub themes emerged.

4. Results and Discussion

The parameter used in determining the student's economic adjustment includes the academic level of the male and female parents / guardians, the type of residence, whether the parents/ guardians are single or married and the type of school a student attended

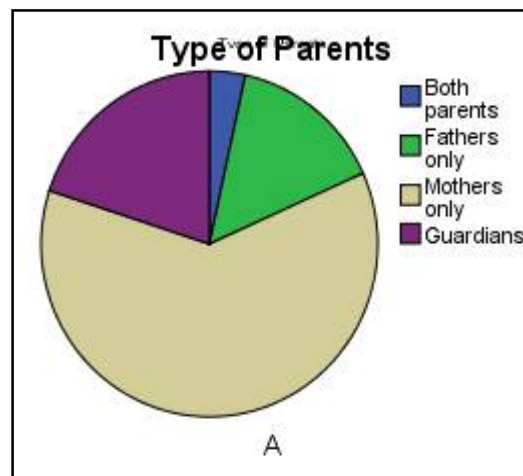


Figure 1: Showing whether students are brought up by both parents, single parents or guardians

The results on parentage were obtained using a questionnaire where the learners responded to the questions about their family structure. Most learners were found to belong to single parenthood where the mother was the only parent. Another category that had most learners was the one for orphans and vulnerable who were being fended for by guardians who mostly were grandparents and uncles. Furthermore, it was interesting to note that a small proportion of respondents came from a single parenthood where the father was the sole parent. A minority of the population arose from a nuclear family.

From the study findings represented above it is clear that most of the learners are brought up by single mothers. This is followed by students who are brought up by guardians. When these students were interviewed they confirmed that they are mainly taken care of by their grandparents who are old and may have very few resources to support them economically which has significant effect on their academic performance. Some of them stay with their grandparents to help them with the chores in the home as their parents go away from their homes to cities to work as house helps to help raise their fees. One of them said and I quote: " My mother asked me to stay with my grandmother because there is no body to take care of her since she is busy hustling to provide for my fees so I have no other wise but to stay with her and assist her". This makes them have very few contact hours with their books and school work thus negatively contributes to their academic achievement. The academic performance of these students were analysed versus those who were brought up by both parents with high academic performance.

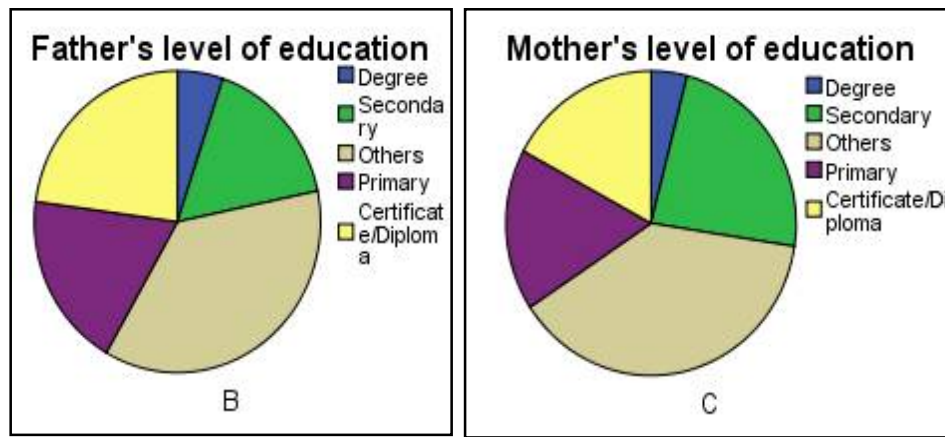


Figure 2: Pie charts showing learners Parents Level of Education

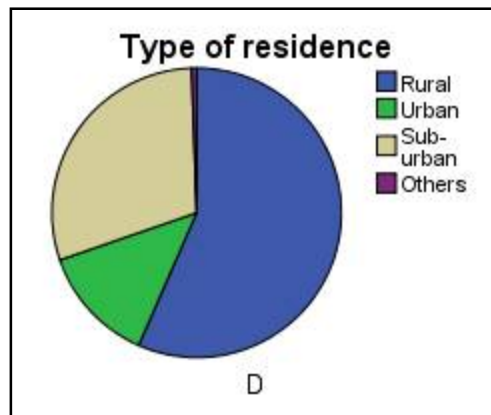


Figure 3: Pie Charts Showing Type of Residence for the Learners

Parameter	Rho	p-value
Parenting	0.0059	0.9375
Residence	0.3387	0.00001
Type of school	0.1524	0.04406
Mothers	0.4054	0.00001

Table 1: Showing correlation between Type of parents, type of residence, type of school, and education of parents and academic achievement

The level of education of the parents was also examined to establish the background of the supporting family. Most of them were of low academic background as show in Figure 2 Results from this study show that being brought up by either parent is not closely associated with academic achievement. From the results of these findings students who have parenting problems and are in boarding schools still scored higher grades than those who were in day schools but had neglectful parenting.

This could be attributed to the fact that in school there are mechanisms that have been put in place to cushion children who are brought up from such homes where parenting is a problem. This include programs like, guiding and counseling programs, feeding programs, academic programs, scholarships for the needy students and even pastoral guidance programs. However the learner’s residence, type of school and parents level of education highly impact on a student’s academic achievement. Spearman’s Rank correlation show significant differences based on their p-values (0.0001, 0.0441 and 0.0001 respectively).The four graphs represent responses on learners for grades A, B, C and D.

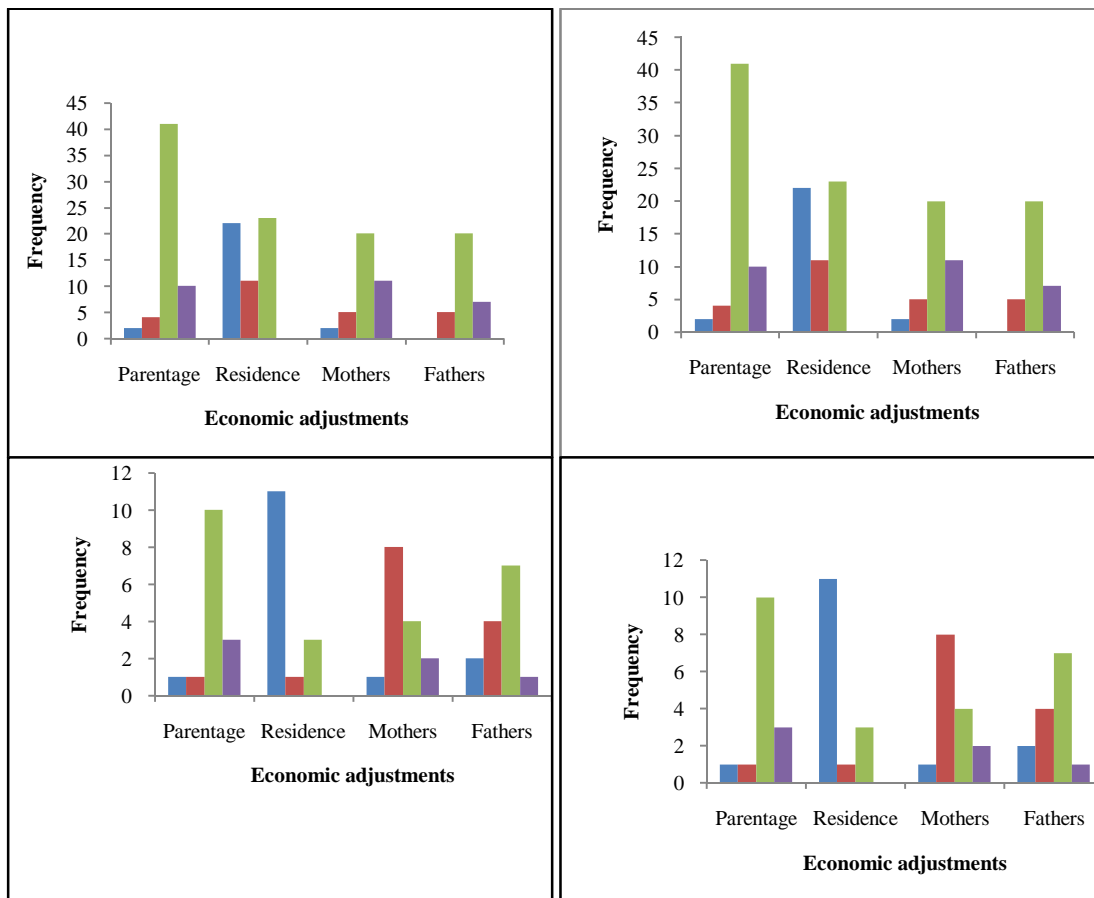


Figure 4

Economic adjustment was based on parameters that are associated with economic adjustment. From the results of this study it has been established that economic adjustment affects academic achievement. However the economic status of the parents does not have a big impact on the performance of the learner, this may be due to the fact that economic background is leveled out when the student gets into the school set up. From this study, it was observed that, though a learner may have come from a poor background, if supported economically is able to perform well in school. Students in boarding schools who come from poor backgrounds were shown to compete at the same level with those from affluent background. This however does not agree with previous studies on American adolescents which showed that economic factors had very little contribution to academic achievement (Sirin, 2005).

This study however shows no correlation between the two. This may be due to the fact that in school there are so many interventions, like bursaries scholarships, education grants, individual sponsors. Most studies have shown that parental socioeconomic status is what may have an impact on academic achievement especially in the USA (Hill, N. E., Castellino, and D. R., Lansford, et al., 2004). This has however may have been assuaged by the various interventions by both the national; and county government. This study therefore is a pointer to the positive results in the efforts by the government to try and bring equity in our education system.

This then leaves us with the challenge of ensuring that all students when in school are as much as possible put on the same economic level to further boost academic achievement of all learners. Economic adjustment was based on parameters such as parenting types, type of school, mothers and fathers level of education and type of residence. From the results of this study it has been established that economic adjustment has a significant effect on academic achievement. However the economic status of the parents does not have a big impact on the performance of the learner especially the learners who are in boarding schools.

This may be due to the fact that economic background is leveled out when the student gets adapted to school environment as well as being exposed to the same conditions as the rest in the boarding schools. In a study in Canada, it was also observed that students who are well supplied with the necessary resources for their studies tend to perform better than those who are neglected (Brouzos, 2014) From the results of this study, it has been shown that the parameters used to ascertain the effect of economic adjustment were type of parenting, mothers and father’s academic background and residence type.

All the parameters showed a close association with academic achievement except parenting. A spearman’s rank correlation statistic on all the parameters showed significant differences among all the parameters except the type of parenting.

Students with both parents seem to perform better that those with single parents or guardians. The students who have low academic achievement seem to belong to the guardians and single parents. There also seems to be a relationship between academic achievement and residence background with the students who come from sub-urban showing higher grades than those from both urban and rural areas as shown in figure 4

From this study, it was observed that though a learner may have come from a poor background, if supported economically is able to perform well in school. Students in boarding schools who come from poor backgrounds were shown to compete at the same level with those from affluent background. This however does not agree with previous studies on American adolescents which showed that economic factors had very little contribution to academic achievement (Sirin, 2005).

It can be hence deduced from this study and others that balancing of the conditions at boarding school level has positive effect on adjustment of the learner for academic achievement. Furthermore, other studies on parentage have shown a close correlation between academic achievements and economic adjustment among adolescents (Cohen, 1997). This study however shows no correlation between the two. This may be due to the fact that in school there are so many interventions, like bursaries, scholarships, education grants, individual sponsors among others.

Most studies have shown that parental socioeconomic status is what may have an impact on academic achievement especially in the USA (Jeynes, W. H. (2007). This has however been assuaged by the various interventions by both the national and county government. This study therefore is a pointer to the positive results in the efforts by the government to try and bring equity in our education system. This then leaves us with the challenge of ensuring that all students, once in school, are as much as possible put on the same economic level.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the results of this study, it has been shown that the parameters used to ascertain the effect of economic adjustment were type of parenting, mother's and father's academic background and residence type. From the results of this study it has been established that economic adjustment has a significant effect on academic achievement. However the economic status of the parents may have a significant effect on students in day schools. This is because they cannot easily detach themselves from the home environment and the challenges at home.

Economic background does not however how ever do not have a significant contribution on the performance of the learners in boarding schools. This is because there are sound programs like feeding programs, sound guiding and counseling programs, academic programs, and uniform facilities like libraries, laboratories, play grounds. Therefore a learner who enrolls in boarding schools may not be affected by economic factors. On the other hand if such a learner's basic needs are not met, then this may make them loose the morale to learn, lower their self-esteem, and may be tempted to steal and thus may become indiscipline or truant.

This may affect their participation in class discussions, making them not easily consult with peers and teachers thus may lead to poor academic achievement. This may be due to the fact that economic background is leveled out when the student gets adapted to school environment as well as being exposed to the same conditions as the rest in the boarding schools. All the parameters showed a close association with academic achievement except parenting. It may be fair to conclude that for a student to perform well in school, he/she needs a functional school that embraces all the faculties in the environment related to economic needs of the learner.

It is not important that the student come from a well-endowed economic family background for him/her to achieve in school. Students with both parents seem to perform better than those with single parents or guardians. The students who have low academic achievement seem to belong to the guardians and single parents. There also seems to be a relationship between academic achievement and residence background with the students who come from sub-urban showing higher grades than those from both urban and rural areas.

From this study, it was observed that though a learner may have come from a poor background, if supported economically is able to perform well in school. Students in boarding schools who come from poor backgrounds were shown to compete at the same level with those from affluent background. It can be hence deduced from the study finding that balancing of the conditions at boarding school level has positive effect on economic adjustment of the learner for academic achievement.

This may be due to the fact that in school there are so many interventions, like bursaries, scholarships, education grants, individual sponsors among others. This study therefore is a pointer to the positive results in the efforts by the government to try and bring equity in our education system. This then leaves us with the challenge of ensuring that all students, once in school, are as much as possible put on the same economic level to further boost academic achievement of all the learners. Economic adjustment has also been found to determine persistence in the education institutions as well as influence dropout and transition rates.

From the above conclusion it may be recommended that the Ministry of Education should take a keen interest in the findings of this research. Using the findings of this study, the ministry of Education should come up with laid down policies in all schools to level out conducive environment in all school irrespective of the economic status in the different environments. For instance the National education funds should be directed to funding of projects like construction of standard resource centers, laboratories, and play grounds conducive learning rooms. The educationists should also put mechanisms like free secondary education in all secondary schools, learning materials like books, geometrical sets should be provided for in all schools. There should be a policy in place to guide parents on provision of standards of what parents should provide for their children while at school to ensure basic requirements for all students are catered for and provision of sanitary towels for all girl.

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