

Parental Involvement, Facilitation, Expectations and Their Relationship to Academic Performance

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Abstract

Among other factors, academic performance is affected by teacher and student motivation, individual student ability, school climate and parental participation in their students' activities. The purpose of this study was to find out if there was any significant relationship between academic performance and parents' expectation, family relationship, family socialization and parenting styles of secondary school students in Nandi Central District. Descriptive-correlational design was employed with three hundred and seventy eight (378) respondents participating. A self constructed questionnaire was used to collect data. To test the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliability test was carried out giving an alpha coefficient of 0.820. This study reveals that there is a significant inverse relationship between parental involvement and students' academic performance. It is also realized that parental facilitation has a significant inverse relationship with students' academic performance. The relationship between academic performance and parental expectation was significant. Finally, there was inverse significant relationship between academic performance and students' relationship with their father.

1.0. INTRODUCTION

Academic performance is a notable indicator of one's success in life. Thus, excelling in academics has become the most dominant feature of education system around the world; it features in all levels (primary, secondary and higher education). The need to pass examinations and obtain certificate is perhaps the principle drive for schooling of any kind.

A healthy home environment offers emotional security to children during their study but schools cannot simply provide a continuation of the home environment, though they can play an inestimably important role in laying the foundation for children to learn to read. Rasisnski and Fredericks (1988) state that in the literacy development of children, parents play a crucial role. *In Becoming a Nation of Readers*, the Commission on Reading concluded that parents play an invaluable role in laying the foundation for their children learning to study, and that parents cannot shirk the responsibility of supporting their children's continued growth as readers. They further recognized the importance of parental involvement and guidance in the development of their children's reading behavior. The value of daily activities, such as reading aloud, is significant; bedtime stories are another good example (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1988).

Fan (2001) found that parents' expectations were positively associated with growth in student achievement in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies from grade 8 through grade 12, even after statistically controlling for socioeconomic status. He further concluded that parental expectations are greater among parents with higher income and higher levels of educational attainment

The need for strong family involvement starts by the time children are in preschool and continues through high school. A number of studies have shown that, as children grow older, the methods and expectations for family involvement must change and continue to evolve until graduation. Patterns of communication between families and the school as children enter middle school must be altered to accommodate multiple teachers and increased independence; nonetheless, parents remain valuable allies in increasing student achievement. Schools have shown success by enlisting the support of parents in areas ranging from developing homework routines, providing after-school supervision, limiting television viewing, and helping children prepare for college and other post-secondary education (Funkhouser, et al., 1997; Shields, 1995).

Studies conducted in relation to children, school and family interaction show that what the family does with the children is more important to student success than family income or the education level of the parents. Parental participation improves student learning whether the child is in preschool or in the upper grades, whether

or not the family is struggling economically or is affluent, or whether the parents finished high school or graduated from college (Zellman, & Waterman, 1998). The need for strong family involvement starts by the time children are in preschool and continues through high school. Schools have shown success by enlisting the support of parents in areas ranging from developing homework routines, providing after-school supervision, limiting television viewing, and helping children prepare for college and other post-secondary education (Goodman, et al., 1995).

Chepcheng (1995) states that, although different explanations have been put forth to explain good or poor students' academic performance, scholars are yet to come to an agreement regarding variables that contribute either singly or jointly to poor academic performance among students. He further mentions that variables that have been mentioned as contributors include class size, teachers' qualifications, learning resources and the role of school administration. These are school variables which are believed to play a critical role in educational achievement than other variables. Educators, researchers and parents in Kenya have expressed serious concern about students' academic performance in secondary schools country wide.

1.1. *Family Relationship*

Parents play a very important role in the lives of their children. Not only do they provide guidance and support, but they also greatly influence the outcomes of their children. Parents differ in a number of aspects. In particular, parents' relationship plays an important role in the development of their children.

Because of the link between parent-child relationships and child outcomes, it is important to further investigate the importance and different aspects of these relationships. With today's societal shift from traditional parenting roles, it has become especially important to understand how the parental-child relationships are changing, and how these changes are affecting our children and future generations to come. Research has shown evidence that divorce rates and single mother families have been on the rise. One study in particular found that since 1960, births to unmarried mothers have increased six times (Howard, Lefever, Borkowski, & Whitman, 2006). It has therefore become important to understand the significance and involvement of the father in both intact (the biological father resides with the biological mother) as well as not intact families (the biological father being either never existent in the child's life, divorced from the biological mother, or the biological father does not reside with the biological mother). While many people believe that the importance and levels of father-child contact only pertains to those whose families are not intact, research has shown that even in intact families, the level of father-child engagement decreases with age (Yeung, Sandberg, & Davis-Kean, 2001). Yeung et al.'s 2001 study also found that within intact families, a father's earnings have a negative effect on their level of involvement with their children during the week and on weekends this effect is positive because they spend most of the time during the week trying to improve on their earning by spending much of the time at work.

Mothers and fathers play very different roles in the lives of their children. While mothers usually take on more custodial/routine care giving roles, fathers tend to engage in more social stimulation and interactive activities, for example, play activities, and helping with homework (Jain, Belsky, & Crnic, 1996; Yeung et al., 2001). It is clear that the father plays a very important role in the lives of their children regardless of marital status. One study demonstrated the important influence of the father when they found that a child's father may act as a buffer against negative influences in a child's life, especially among high-risk homes. Children who lacked father contact and had high-risk mothers displayed more externalizing problems (acting out) than those who had father contact and high-risk mothers (Howard et al., 2006).

It is also important to realize that the amount of time spent with the child, the quality of the experience, and emotional aspects of the father-child relationship benefit children. Research has shown that father availability and involvement is associated with academic success, as well as socio-emotional and cognitive well-being/gains in school age children (Ibid). Another study conducted by Dunn, Cheng, O'Connor, and Bridges (2004), found that a more frequent and regular contact with the father is associated with more intense relationships and fewer adjustment problems in children.

Prior research has indicated that father-child relationships have an important influence on child outcomes and well-being. Therefore, one of the purposes of this study was to determine if there was a difference between the types of father-child relationships in intact versus not intact families, and child outcomes. For the purposes of this study, intact families are defined as those in which the biological father and biological mother are either married or living together. Note that intact families are those in which the biological father and biological mother are either divorced, separated, or the biological father/other male influence is nonexistent. The father-child relationship is measured by child reported father involvement, autonomy support, and warmth.

Finally, child outcomes are measured along dimensions of academic performance, conduct, and self-esteem. It is hypothesized that individuals of intact families will have more positive outcomes than those of not intact families in regards to academic performance, conduct, and self-esteem. Secondly it is hypothesized that individuals, whose fathers' are less involved, regardless of whether they come from intact or not intact families,

will report more negative outcomes in academic performance, conduct, and self-esteem.

1.2. Parental Involvement

Parental involvement refers to direct assistance or involvement in the child's activity. This could include family walks, playing catch, or practicing physical skills. While the activity itself has important benefits for physical development, the involvement of the parents also demonstrates to their children that they feel physical activity is important.

A study conducted by Epstein (1990) conceptualizes parents' involvement in school and family-school connections from a social organizational perspective developed a concept based on a theory of overlapping spheres of influence which focuses on the complex interrelationships of family, community, school, and peer groups as they affect student's well being and academic performance. School, family, and community partnerships include practices initiated by parents, educators, or other community members. These practices may occur at school, at home, or in the community and they reflect six different types of family involvement (Epstein, 1990, 1992; Epstein & Lee, 1995). The types are illustrated below:

Type I: Refers to basic parenting obligations for the child's health, safety, and preparedness for school and for providing positive home conditions that support educational progress.

Type II: Refers to the basic obligations of schools to communicate with families regarding school programs and student's progress (such as communications through memos, notices, report cards, and conferences with parents).

Type III: Refers to parents' participation in volunteering at school (such as assisting teachers, administrators, or students in classrooms) and in participating in school activities and events (such as student performances, sports, and other events).

Type IV: Refers to parental involvement in student's learning at home, to parent-child-initiated requests for help, and to teachers' ideas about parents' involvement in home learning activities.

Type V: Refers to parental involvement in decision-making activities at school (such as participation in Advisory Councils, parent-teacher organizations, parent advocacy groups, and other school, district, or state level educational committees).

Type VI: Refers to school and parent collaborations with communities and other community agencies that enhance the learning opportunities of children (such as programs for after-school care or health care, cultural events, and community services).

A study by Lee (1995) uses data from the first follow-up surveys of National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS) to compare parental involvement between the eighth and tenth grades. The study produced valuable information concerning the extent of continuity in parental involvement between middle grades and high school. Family involvement in students' education declines as students move from the middle grades to the early years of high school. However, some parents continue their high level of involvement. Despite changes in school environments and policies that come with transferring to a high school, those parents who were highly involved in the middle grades tended to continue their involvement in high school as well. In fact, the effects of social background characteristics (such as SES, race/ethnicity, and gender) on levels of parental involvement in the tenth grade are minimal in comparison to the effects of prior parental involvement. Race/ethnic differences in types of parental involvement continue to exist in the tenth grade. African American parents are most likely to conduct family discussions, attend school meetings and contact teachers. Asian American parents are least likely to participate in school visits and volunteering, but are similar to White and Latino parents on other types of involvement (Lee, 1995).

Parental encouragement refers to obvious verbal or nonverbal forms of encouragement for a child to be active. There could be direct efforts to get a child to play outside or to reduce TV viewing, or indirect efforts to promote interest and involvement. Numerous studies have confirmed that young children rely heavily on adults (especially parents) as sources of information regarding their physical abilities. A child's perception of physical competency has consistently been found to correlate with physical activity involvement (Welk, 1999). Adult encouragement indirectly influences a child's level of vigorous activity by enhancing his/her perception of competence (Biddle & Goudas, 1996). Thus, parental efforts to build competence and a sense of mastery are likely to promote physical activity involvement.

The student narratives present clear evidence that parental encouragement and support affected their children's achievements, attitudes, and aspirations. Contrary to perceptions, Black parents can indeed support and encourage their children to succeed in school. As Henry (1994) has shown with respect to West Indian immigrants, education may be the most important, if not the only mobility channel for success in Canadian society. But as pointed out by James and Brathwaite (1996), "the social construction of Black students as academically incompetent operated as a barrier to the realization of their educational goals" (p. 16). For Black students in a racialized society like Canada, parental encouragement, support, and expectations are particularly critical because, as Reynolds (1993) points out, in the absence of a supporting school climate, "Black parents

must fill the void and counteract the schools' potentially negative influence". Research has also shown that, for Black students, despite highly unfavorable life circumstances, "parental expectations ... are found to be positively related to ... children's self - expectations and school achievement" and "parental involvement was found to have consistent and directive positive effects on the children's reading and mathematics achievement and social maturity" (Taylor, 1991. p.17).

1.3 Parental Facilitation

Parental facilitation refers to efforts by parents to make it easier for children to be physically active. Examples of ways that parents facilitate physical activity in children are by providing access to facilities and programs (Trost et al., 1997) and by helping children obtain equipment. Providing access to physical activity is an increasingly important responsibility because many aspects of society make it harder for children to be physically active. Parental concerns (real or perceived) about the safety of parks and playgrounds and an increasing reliance on after-school programs are two factors that contribute to physical inactivity in children. Because these factors are out of a child's control, parents need to accept responsibility for finding opportunities for children to be physically active on a daily basis.

Role modeling refers to a parent's efforts to model an active lifestyle for their child. According to social cognition theory (a major theory of human behavior), modeling promotes self-efficacy (confidence in one's ability to perform a behavior) and also informs the child of what is important or valued as mentioned by Bandura, (1997). While involvement in structured exercise or sport programs may spark a child's interest, it is equally important for parents to model healthy activity patterns in their day to day life. Examples would be walking to the store, doing yard work, or otherwise seeking opportunities to be physically active.

2.0. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive-correlational design was employed in the study to establish the relationship between family related factors and students' academic performance in secondary schools student in Nandi Central District. From the total population of 25 day secondary schools in Nandi Central District among which the researchers used 9 day secondary schools, Proportionate sampling technique was used to distribute the research across the district. Three schools were randomly sampled from each of the three divisions in Nandi Central District. The schools were grouped depending on their government administrative divisions forming three different clusters. From each cluster, names of the schools were listed in small pieces of paper and folded uniformly. The pieces were placed in different containers and shaken well before conducting a random sampling from each container. From the total population of schools distributed in three different divisions, a paper was picked from each container to give the schools equal chance of participating in the study. After calculating the ratio of schools in each division, Kapsabet Division, which had the highest number of day schools was given four chances, followed by Kilibwoni with three chances and Kosirai with two chances. This gave a total of 9 schools out of the 24 day schools in the District. Therefore the total number of schools involved in the study was 37.5% of target population. A total population of 466 students were selected to take part in the study and by the time of the actual study 379 students were present in their school and took part in the study giving 81.1% percentage return. One student did not complete the questionnaire dully hence 378 respondents were considered for the study.

2.1 Research Instruments

A questionnaire constructed by the researchers consisted of both open and closed-ended questions to tap information from secondary school students on their perception of the relationship of family related factors and student's academic performance. The instrument consisted of three sections, section A dealt with respondents background highlighting the age of the respondents, gender, family level of income, parents level of education and their academic performance record. Section B was in six sub-sections. Part one had 12 questions on parenting styles with each style having three items, part 2 dealt with parenting involvement with 5 items, parents facilitation, expectation, relation with father and mother each had 4 items.

To test the reliability of the questionnaire to be used in the study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliability test was carried out. The questionnaire was administered to forty respondents from one day secondary school in Kapsabet Division that was not included in the actual study and thirty nine students took part in the study. Upon analysis of the reliability an alpha coefficient of 0.820 was realized and necessary adjustments were made on ten statements which were formulated as compounding statements.

Research permit was acquired from the Ministry of Education science and Technology before collecting data. With the research permit from the ministry, the researchers got permission from the District and Division department of education to conduct a survey among the selected schools. Once consent was given by the administration of the schools, through the head teachers, the researchers collected data by visiting the schools to administer the questionnaires. We met the teachers and students of the selected secondary schools seeking their co-operation. Upon visiting the school, the researchers were given chance by the school administration to

introduce the study to the students in their classroom at games time, explain the purpose of the study and to elaborate on the ethical consideration in place to protect the rights of the respondents. With the help of the class teachers, the researchers distributed copies of the questionnaire to the respondents and were given time to complete filling in the instrument in one sitting and collected back by the researchers.

Pearson's correlation product moment was used to check the relationship between the academic performance and different parental related factors.

3.0. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, we tested the relationship between each of the following variables: Parenting style, parental involvement, parental facilitation, parental expectation, relationship with father and relationship with mother. Table 1 shows the correlation coefficients between academic performance and the parental factors.

Table 1

Correlation between the Dependent Variable and the Independent Variables

Items	Pre-mock Mean Grade		
	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Parenting Style	-.069	.192	358
Parental Involvement	-.107*	.044	358
Parental Facilitation	-.157**	.003	358
Parental Expectation	.108*	.042	357
Relationship with Father	-.137*	.011	343
Relationship with Mother	-.101	.058	355

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

The results reveal that there is a significant inverse relationship between parental involvement and students' academic performance with a correlation coefficient of -0.107 and a p-value of 0.044 suggesting that parents tend to get involved in the education of their children who are not performing very well in school. This finding is contrary to the findings of the study of Herderson and Mapp (2002), which found out that children whose parents support learning tend toward positive outcomes such as higher achievement, higher attendance, and better student attitudes. The potential benefits of parent involvement in children's education are significant but there are formidable barriers.

This finding is in agreement with Jens H. H. et al. (2005), study which illustrates that there is no clear relation, neither positive nor negative, between the level of home-school involvement and achievements in reading in the 4th grade. Apparently, good opportunities for home-school involvement and a high degree of parental attendance at school sponsored meetings have no effect on students' achievements in reading. According to the study this may have important policy implications. It could thus be assumed that the more the schools let the learning process depend on the involvement and support of the parents, the bigger the risk that students from disadvantaged homes with a low level of educational resources will be affected negatively.

It was also realized that parental facilitation has a significant inverse relationship ($r = -0.157$) with students' academic performance, since the p value was exhibited at 0.003. Parents tend to facilitate most of their children activities even when they are not performing well in school. The finding of this study is in contrast with the findings of Steinberg et al. (1992) who mentioned that parents also influenced children's achievement through their direct involvement with school activities, such as helping with homework or course selection or attending parent-teacher conferences, and through the specific encouragement of school success, both explicitly and implicitly, by setting and maintaining high performance standards.

The relationship between academic performance and parental expectation was significant at p-value of 0.042. This is in line with study by Reynolds and Walberg (1992) indicating that parents with higher expectations for their children are more likely to set higher standards for their children's schooling and social functioning than parents with lower expectations. They are also more likely to transmit the values of doing well in school and of getting along well with teachers and peers. Consequently, parent expectations may be viewed as a dimension of the home environment that directly as well as indirectly influences children's behaviors and achievement (Reynolds & Walberg, 1992). Generally, parental expectations have been found to play a critical role in children's academic success. It is evident that students, whose parents hold high expectations receive higher grades, achieve higher scores on standardized tests, and persists longer in school than do those whose parents hold relatively low expectations (Vartanian et al., 2007).

Finally, there was inverse significant relationship between academic performance and students' relationship with their father at a p-value of -0.011. Fathers tend to interact more with the children who are not performing well. The way fathers interact with their children affects their academic performance. If their association is negative the performance will be poor and if their interaction is constructive then the students' performance will improve.

4.0. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study revealed that most students perceive their parents to be involved in their school activities, even though their parents do not support them in class work. It was also evident that most parents are perceived by their children to be facilitating their academic activities fully though they do not hire other personnel to tutor their students after school. It is evident from the study that parents do have high expectation for their students. Finally, majority of the students indicated that their fathers do have enough time to relate with them but students are not free to share with them when they have social challenges. On the contrary most students do have time with their mothers but their mothers do not take them out.

There is need for parents to be involved in students' learning activities. They need to continue playing a role in home support and taking active role in activities organized by school administration. It is recommended for the school administration to promote a mutual relationship between the parents, student and the school. This will enable them to be willing to facilitate their students learning activities both at school and at home. Parents need to raise their expectation on their children's achievement. This will motivate them leading to better academic performance since they may not wish to disappoint their parents. Parents need to need encourage free interaction with their children. This will help the children to share life challenges with their parents, thereafter improving their academic performance.

It is our belief, based on the success of this endeavor, the time, effort, and commitment required from all stakeholders to build a strong parental involvement program is indeed offset by the improvement in students' academic performance and attitude toward learning. It is essential that the model selected be adapted to the needs of the particular school, parents, and community. Further study of the relationship and importance assigned to parent involvement programs (i.e., the impact of those parents participating versus those declining to become involved) should be conducted. Ongoing staff development is very important as teachers engage parents and community leaders.

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