

Influence of Parents Education Level on Academic Achievement of Unity Preschool Children in Embakasi, Nairobi County

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Abstract: The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of parental educational level on the academic achievement of Unity preschool children in Embakasi district Nairobi County. The study utilized a descriptive survey research design. The target population of the study involved children, teachers and parents of Unity preschool in Embakasi district. The sample size comprised of 27 parents, 27 children and 5 teachers in Unity preschool. The finding of the study indicate that a majority of the parents had a low academic level since most of them were KCSE certificate holders and hence are not capable enough to guide their children on academic matters leading to poor academic achievement .

Keywords: Academic achievement, children, parental, educational level, involvement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education has an essential role in nation building as well as development of an individual's character. It is a life line for any society and county. Education of a child needs great efforts. The learners, teachers, schools and parents all play a role in the process of learning. The academic background of the parent's is such a motivating factor for a child and influences his/her future. According to Davis-Kean, (2005) Parental educational level is an important predictor of children's educational and behavioral outcomes. In fact, research suggests that parental education is indeed an important and significant unique predictor of child achievement. According to Young & Smith (1997), children of well-educated parents perform, on average, perform better on academic assessment tests than children of high school-educated parents. They add that the educational attainment of the parents' is independent of income because the level of education may influence the value that parents place on education, which could, in turn, influence their children's educational goals. Thompson et al (1988) says mother's level of education influences adolescent's educational outcome. Parental involvement in pre-school activities includes a wide range of behaviors but generally refers to parents' and family members' use and investment of resources in their children's schooling. These investments can take place in or outside of school, with the intention of improving children's learning. Parental involvement at home can include activities such as discussions about school, helping with homework, and reading with children. Involvement at school may include parents volunteering in the classroom, attending workshops, or attending school plays and sporting events (Rain and William, 2011).

Jacquelyn, (2005) points out that there is a relationship between the parents level of education to their children's academic achievements. A mother's education has a higher influence than the fathers, so mother's education is more important. Karshen (2003) says that students whose parents are well educated get higher positions than those whose parents are not educated. Educated parents help their children in school work activities. Dave and Dave (1971) found that high achievers belong to homes with parent's higher education level. The failed students belong to those who have lower parent's education level. In Kenya a study in Mombasa in (2007) shows that illiterate parents were unable to assist their children with homework. The importance of parental involvement for children's academic success is an unquestionable

assumption. Independent of the parents' type of involvement in education or schooling, in general, hundreds of studies have demonstrate a predominance of positive correlations between this variable and students' academic achievement (Muola, 2010). Children of educated parents are provided with better learning environment at home. Parents teach their children themselves. To achieve their objectives facilities are provided to the children at home. The parents who do not go beyond elementary or secondary schools are not able to give proper help to their children in the educational problems. Some researcher have however not agreed with this. They argue that children's academic achievements in most case do not necessarily depend on parent's education level. For example Hawkes (1995) in his research study of parents educational attainments concluded that it does not effect on students' academic achievements. Thus, it is possible that low socioeconomic status (including low parental educational levels) could affect negative family interaction patterns, which can influence child behavior problems (measured in our study by aggression), and in turn affect lowered academic and achievement-oriented attitudes over time (Dubow, E. F., Boxer, P., & Huesmann, L. R. 2009).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study was guided by the family deficit model by Marsh 1990 and the risk and protective theory by Seifer (1992). According to the theories, the family deficit model views the nuclear family or a two parent family's structure. According to this model, single-parents families have a negative impact on children simply because they do not have a nuclear family Marsh (1990). The risk protective factor theory was developed I the early 1990s, and does not regard single parents as irregular (Seifer 1992) because the foundation for the model is that all families have both strengths and weakness. Rather than view single parenting as the cause of negative outcomes for children in these families, the risk protective factor theory describes families as one of many risk factors. Risk factors are either background characteristics or life events that may have negative impact on child development. Protective factors are characteristics and events that positively influence children and help limit the impact of risk factors (Seifer, 1992). Essentially, risk factors are the weaknesses and protective factors are the strengths of any given family. According to this model, single parenting cab be both a risk factor and a protective factor for children in this type of family. The study examines parental level of education.

Studies suggest that parental involvement in education are dependent on parental level of education. The level of parent's education is part of a larger constellation of psychological and sociological variables influencing children's school outcomes. This stems from the fact that parents higher levels of education may be access to resources, such as income, time, energy, and community contacts, that allow for greater parental involvement in a child's education. In addition, parental level of education influences parents' knowledge, beliefs, values, and goals about childrearing, so that a variety of parental behaviors are directly related to children's school achievement. For example, higher education, a enhance parents' facility at becoming involved in their children's education , and also enable parents to acquire and model social skills and problem-solving strategies conducive to children's school success.

The evidence about the belief s of parents being involved in their children's education in general and their literacy in activities in particular is over whelming. Research shows that parental involvement in their children's learning positively affects the child's academic achievement in both basic and higher education (Fan and Chen 2001). This leads to higher academic achievement, greater cognitive competence, greater cognitive competence, greater school enjoyment better school attendance and fewer behavioral problems at school (Feinstein and Symons 1999). Similar impacts have also been identified with regards to literacy practices. For instance, early reading experiences with parents prepare children for the benefit of formal literacy instruction. Indeed parental involvement in their children's reading has been found to be the most important determinant in language and emergent literacy. Although parental involvement has the greatest effect in the early years, its importance to children's educational and literacy outcomes continues into the teenage and even adult years (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). For example Feinstein and Symons (1999) found that parental interest in their child's education was the single most powerful predictor of achievement at age sixteen.

Not surprisingly, there are positive relations between parents' levels of education and parents' expectations for their children's success (Davis-Kean, 2005), suggesting that more highly educated parents actively encourage their children to develop high expectations of their own.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research designs adopted for this study was a descriptive survey design. This is because the design guided the research in collecting data of varied magnitude from the stakeholders at Unity Primary school. This research sought to collect information concerning the influence of parental education level on academic achievement of Unity preschool. The study used Unity primary in Embakasi east district. The target population consists of Children, teachers and parents from Unity primary school. The target population comprised of 90 preschool pupils, 90 parents and 5 preschool teachers. The study utilized random sampling procedure to carry out a study.

The instrument used to collect data for this study was a researcher designed questionnaire and a documentary analysis. The questionnaire was used to extract in-depth information on the parental education level in relation to the pupil's achievement at unity primary school. On the other hand a documentary analysis was used to gather information concerning the academic achievement of preschool pupils. The documentary analysis form allowed the researcher to obtain the children's progress records, in Science Activities, Number Works, Language, Creative Arts, Physical Education, Social Studies and Music.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study result showed that the parental level of education in relation to the academic achievement of their preschool children academic achievement.

The result of the analysis is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Parents level of education

Level of education	Frequency	Percentage	Academic Achievement
Degree	5	19%	420
Diploma	2	7%	398
Certificate	8	29%	348
K.C.S.E and below	12	45%	320
Total	27	100%	374

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents 45% (n=12) of the parents were KCSE certificate holders and below as their highest level of education. They were followed by 29% (n=8) who attained education up to certificate level while 19% (n=5) had degrees as their highest education and the last group belonged to parents with diploma's who were only 7% (n=2). From the findings the preschool children whose parents attained degree level education are the best performers while children from parents who attend KCSE certificate level and below are the poorest performers. This stems from the fact that parents level of education may be an access to resources such as income and were more involved in school activities, this allows fir better parental involvement in child's education. In addition, parental level of education influences parental knowledge, beliefs, values and goals about child rearing. When all these are put into account, the children's attitude towards education is enhanced positively hence better achievement.

Poole (2007) identifies that the parent's attitude towards their children's schooling expectations are expressed to the child. These include the careers the parents expect their children to take. Bukodi and Goldthorpe (2013) found that parental education was the strongest predictor of children's education, although parental class and social status mattered as well.

It was also noted that the specific genders of the parents played a role in the academic achievement of the learners. According to Buis (2013), using eleven Dutch surveys covering birth cohorts born between 1931 and 1991, found that the mother's education mattered more in children's attainment than that of the father, especially when the mother was not employed. Likewise Conley (2008) found that the influence of the family background (sibling similarities) increased over the life course for children with highly educated mothers, while a different pattern surfaced for the children of mothers with less education.

Kassim, Kehinde and Abisola (2011) investigated the effect of parental education, profession and mother's age on children's attainments. The results showed that parents' education has the vital influence on the academic achievement of

children. Vellymalay (2010) studied the relationship between parents' education level and their immersion in their children's education. Findings of the study suggested that there were no significant differences between parents' education level and parents' involvement plans for their children's education.

It is widely shown that children brought up in less favorable conditions obtain less education, despite the large financial returns to schooling (Heckman and Masterov (2005). Indeed there is a large correlation between the education level of parents and their children (Björklund and Salvanes (2011). However the transmission mechanism behind such intergenerational correlations has never been made clear.

From the result of the findings, parents who have attained a higher level of education are more involved in their children's academic progress and this enables their preschool children to acquire and model social skills and problem solving strategies conducive to children's school success. The evidence about parents being involved in their children's school success. The evidence about parents being involved in their children's education in general a there literacy in school activities s reflected in their children's academic performance. The findings are displayed on table 2

Table 2

Parents Involvement	Frequency	Percent
Always	7	27%
Sometimes	12	46%
Not At All	7	27%
Total	27	100

When asked whether it was necessary for he parents to be involved in school activities for children to perform effectively. The parents had different opinions concerning the matter. The findings are displayed on table 3.

Table 3

Parents Involvement	Frequency	Percent
Always	7	19%
Sometimes	12	57%
Not At All	7	24%
Total	27	100

Table 3 shows that majority of the parent do not believe that their involvement is a necessary factor. This is shown by 57% (n=15) of the respondents saying that they should be involved sometimes, while 24% (n=6) said not at all. Only 19% (n=5) of the total believe that they should always involve themselves. This may be due to the lack positive attitude towards education since most of the parents have attained low level of education to appreciate the importance of visiting their children's school, or rather lack of commitment. This affects the performance of the children since their progress in school is not well followed.

The evidence concerning the benefits of parents being involved in their children's education in general ant their literacy in activities in particular, is overwhelming. Research shows that parental involvement in their children's learning positively affects the child's academic performance in both basic and higher achievement, greater cognition competence, greater school enjoyment, better school attendance an fewer behavioral problems at school. Kraft, Mathew & Shaun (2011) points out that effective parents –teacher leads to increased academic performance of preschool children.

5. CONCLUSION

Parent's level of education is a factor affecting the academic performance of the preschool children. Majority of the parents are KCSE holders and below. This is a relatively low qualification and hence they are not capable enough to guide their children on academic matters. The parents said they sometimes assist their children with their homework. This is an indication that the parents find it difficult to assist their preschool children with their homework since they themselves are not well conversant with academic matters. Majority of the parents do not get involved in with school activities because they do not see the importance of taking a keen interest on their children's academic achievement since their level of education is low.

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