

The Impact of School's Socioeconomic Status on the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Dar es Salam, Tanzania

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Abstract

The socioeconomic status of students has previously been studied as a factor that affects their academic performance. The present study gives focus to how the socioeconomic status of the school impacts the academic performance of secondary school students in Dar es Salam, Tanzania. The study adopted a descriptive study design. The study targets secondary school students and teachers within Dar es Salam. It involved administering questionnaires to 210 teachers and students who were selected randomly from 15 schools within Dar es Salam City, Tanzania. Two hypotheses were tested in the study, and data obtained were analyzed using the chi-square statistical method. For the first hypothesis, the researcher concluded that students' academic performance is directly related to the school's socioeconomic status. The second hypothesis found that the teacher-student relationship is an intervening factor between the school's socioeconomic status and the student's academic achievement.

Keywords: *schools' socioeconomic status, academic achievement, secondary school, high school, teacher-student relationship.*

1. Introduction

In education, the students' ability to understand whatever they are taught is measured by their academic performance. Several factors are often associated with students' academic achievement, among them being the socioeconomic status. The socioeconomic status of a school can be described as the average socioeconomic status of the student body. The Coleman report has widely been attributed to being the foundational study of how the socioeconomic status of a school can contribute to a student's academic achievement (Downey & Condrón, 2016). This report concluded that the social makeup of the student population is more directly linked to success than any school factor, irrespective of the student's specific social background. It set out the pace for the body of research that is now present on this topic. Several researchers have conducted studies on the role of the socioeconomic status of students while controlling various other factors (Chiu & Chow, 2015; Benner, Boyle & Sadler, 2016; Kalaycioglu, 2015). Most of these studies often come up with more or less the same result. However, in the available literature, there has been no study conducted on this topic anywhere on the African continent. It is therefore prudent that such a review should be done to determine whether this phenomenon also plays a significant role in the performance of learners in schools. For this reason, the present study intends to ascertain the impact of the school's socioeconomic status on the academic performance of secondary school students in Tanzania.

The current study bases its theoretical background on the school's socioeconomic status and the relationship between teachers and students. For the school's socioeconomic status, the

contingency theory comes in handy in explaining how the economic situation of the school affects its performance. For the teacher-student relationship, the expectancy-value theory forms the basis for its exploration.

Although the influence of social class structure on academic achievements in study literature has received substantial focus, very little has been established about differential effects centered on this critical contextual element or why school effects may vary in this domain. The contingency theory by Scheerens and Bosker offers a plausible interpretation, which suggests that an organization's situational dynamics determine the efficacy of multiple organizational variables (Scheerens, 2016). In other terms, there is not a standard selection of suitable systems, tools, or procedures for corporate success. However, optimum considerations rely on the environmental aspects of the organization. In light of research on school effectiveness, contingency theory implies that the significance of performance of specific school systems, amenities, and activities would rely on the school environmental conditions.

As children grow up, they spend more time in school than anywhere else. Here, they look up to their teachers for not only for fulfilling the education curriculum but also as role models and as pillars of security within the school environment. How a student develops cognitively, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally can be linked to the relationship they have with their teachers. This relationship also determines how the student will perform academically. The teacher-student relationship should, therefore, be tested to ascertain whether it is influenced by the socioeconomic status of the learning institution and whether it can further impact the students' academic achievement.

For this study, the teacher-learner relationship will be the intervening variable. The theoretical base for this relationship and academic performance of students can best be put into perspective by the expectancy-value theory (Lauermann, Tsai & Eccles, 2017). Expectation points to the assumptions of people on how they will accomplish a role and the possible consequences of various outcomes. Value means the standards or structures of people to be evaluated against the existing knowledge. In the school environment, students who believe they will master their schoolwork usually have high perceptions of performance. Their aspirations and appreciation of the learning challenges are related to their achievement.

The expectations and values of the students are affected by the socializers with whom they have meaningful relationships. In other terms, as essential socializers in school, teachers may have a direct effect on the expectations and values of students (Lauermann et al., 2017). Students with good relations with teachers are more likely to have high aspirations and performance standards, thus increasing student participation in learning and academic achievement. Therefore, the principle of expectancy-value means that the interaction between instructor and student, a significant element affecting the intention and importance of the school assignment of the students, may have a substantial effect on the academic attainment of the students.

The current study tested two hypotheses on the relationship between a school's socioeconomic status and the academic performance of students. The first hypothesis was that the socioeconomic standing of a school is directly correlated to students' academic achievement. The second hypothesis was that the student-teacher relationship is an intervening factor between the school's socioeconomic status and student's academic performance.

2. Methodology

The research used the descriptive survey design, which was adequate for both its qualitative and quantitative nature. The objectivity and neutrality that this research design provided was the primary reason as to why it was picked on by the researcher. The study population consisted of all the secondary schools within Dar es Salam city, Tanzania. Clustered sampling technique was used to pick out five secondary schools within upper-class estates, five secondary schools from middle-class areas, and five secondary schools from low-class estates. Each cluster contained two boys-only secondary schools, two girls-only secondary schools, and one mixed secondary school. Random sampling was used to select 30 teachers and 180 students. This brought the number of respondents to 210.

The data collection instruments used for this study were questionnaires. This instrument collected both qualitative and quantitative data from the participants. Quantitative data was organized and analyzed using the Chi-square statistical method. On the other hand, qualitative data was systematically coded and organized to come up with themes based on the research hypotheses. The findings were then presented in a narrative form describing the various variables under study. The expected and observed values of the Chisquare statistic were also presented in a clustered column chart.

3. Results

3.1 Demographic Data

The researcher sought the demographic data to ascertain that they selected a sample that was representative of the entire population based on gender, socioeconomic standing, and type of learning institution for the students and teaching experience for the teachers. 53% of the students were male, while females were 47%. Based on the socioeconomic demographics, all the social classes were equally represented, with each being 33.33% of the sample.

For the teachers, 33.3% of them were females, while 66.7% who took part in the study were male. On the grounds of education qualifications, 60% had Bachelor Degrees in Education (B.ED), 26.66% had Diplomas in Education, while 13.34% of the teachers had Master of Education Degrees. 26.67% had between 11 to 15 years of teaching experience, a bulk of the educators (40%) had been teaching for five to ten years, while 33.33% had between one to five years of teaching experience.

3.2 Relationship between School's Socioeconomic Status and Students' Academic achievement

The following are responses from the students on whether the SES of the school they attend has an effect on their academic performance.

Table 1

Relationship between School's Socioeconomic Status and Academic achievement

Response	Number of students	Percentage
Yes	108	60
No	72	40

Hypothesis one: Students' Academic performance is directly related to the school's socioeconomic status.

Table 2

Academic performance is directly related socioeconomic status

Chi-Square Value of Participants on the Academic Performance of Students and the Socioeconomic Status of the School					
Value		Df	X ² Cal	X ² Tab	Remarks
Observed	34.8	4	56.43	9.49	Reject H0
Expected	25.2				

The table above shows the chi-square value for the distribution of responses to the relationship between learners' academic achievement and their schools' socioeconomic status. With 4 degrees of freedom and a 0.05 level of significance, the calculated chi-square statistic was 56.43. This was a more significant value than the tabulated value of 9.49, an indication that the null hypothesis should be rejected.

Teacher-Student Relationship and Students' Academic Achievement

Hypothesis two: Teacher-student relationship is an intervening factor between the school's socioeconomic status and student's academic achievement.

Table 3

Teacher-Student Relationship and Students' Academic Achievement

Chi-Square Value Of Participants on the Academic Performance Of Students and the Teacher-Student Relationship					
Value		Df	X ² Cal	X ² Tab	Remarks
Observed	26.2	4	24.31	9.49	Reject H0

Expected	33.8				
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The table above shows the chi-square value for the distribution of responses on how teacher-student relationship affects the academic performance of the students across the different socioeconomic classes. The calculated chi-square value was 24.31 at 0.05 level of significance and 4 degrees of freedom. The critical value, 9.49, was less than the calibrated chi-square value. This indicated that the null hypothesis needed to be overruled. This means that the teacher-student relationship was an essential factor in the performance of students in the schools of different socioeconomic status.

4. Discussion

The study found out that an institution's socioeconomic status significantly impacts the educational attainment of students. This finding was in agreement with a 2019 study done by Xuan et al. In the study, the researchers discovered that there was a positive correlation between the socioeconomic status of the school and the performance of the students in Math and Chinese. This simply means that those students in high socioeconomic status schools tended to perform better in Math and Chinese than their counterparts in lower socioeconomic status schools. In another study, the researchers concluded that the schools' socioeconomic status affected the teachers' collective efficacy, a significant explanation for the disparities in student's academic performance (Belfi, Gielen, De Fraine, Verschueren & Meredith, 2015). Teachers in low socioeconomic schools were found to have lower collective teacher efficacy compared with their colleagues in higher socioeconomic status schools.

Based on the peer effect, students in high socioeconomic status schools who are in close contact with their colleagues from high social class families are encouraged by these peers to involve themselves in schoolwork and elevate their academic performance. Hence students in high socioeconomic status schools are more prone to attain more exceptional academic performance irrespective of high or low socioeconomic status backgrounds (Palardy, Rumberger & Butler, 2015). On the contrary, students surrounded by low socioeconomic status peers may be affected by their deleterious learning attitude and behavior to attain lower academic achievement (Dietrichson, Bøg, Filges & KlintJørgensen, 2017).

Also, the mean expenditure on education for students in high socioeconomic status schools is higher than those of middle and low socioeconomic status schools. In fact, the state of teaching resources in low socioeconomic schools is comparatively detrimental. In the current study, the low socioeconomic status schools were located in far-to-reach areas with inferior road networks. These schools have lower chances of being funded and often get substandard teachers (Dietrichson et al., 2017). The poor performance these schools often reflect can, therefore, be pegged to insufficient support from the relevant education bodies.

The current study realized that the association between educators and learners was a vital process variable between the socioeconomic status of a school and the academic attainment of students. The researcher found out that there was a substantial correlation between the socioeconomic status of schools and both the students' and teachers' perceptions of how they relate with one

another. It was found that students in the high socioeconomic status schools perceived to have better relationships with their teachers compared to their colleagues in lower socioeconomic status schools (Krane, Karlsson, Ness, & Kim, 2016).

The collective teacher efficacy, as pointed out in the study by Belfi et al. (2015), also plays a significant role in how teachers may relate to their students. The low collective teacher efficacy in low socioeconomic schools can be associated with the perception that teachers are not efficiently supported to teach their students effectively. The research by Roorda et al. (2017) points out that students are more likely to be engaged in the classroom if they feel like their teacher cares. Those that do not have a bond with their teacher are more likely to distance themselves from school and the specific subject that the teacher in question teaches. In essence, supportive teachers will cultivate a positive attitude towards school among their students. This then translates to the positive performance of the students.

The population of students in low socioeconomic schools is also often higher compared to those in middle and high socioeconomic schools. There is, therefore, a high student-teacher ratio, which makes it difficult for the teachers to give personalized attention to all the students (Reardon, 2016). Unless a student or parent personally initiates a relationship with a teacher, it is often difficult for the teacher to even get to know the student. Therefore, the relationship between students and teachers in low socioeconomic status schools is considered to be of low quality and negatively affects the academic performance of students.

5. Conclusion

Education attainment has since been proven to be a critical aspect in the development of individuals in the current society. The socioeconomic status disparity is also a phenomenon that has been in existence since the inception of the capitalist society. It is a phenomenon that comes to play in almost all aspects of people's life, including in education. The disparities in society have brought about the existence of schools of different socioeconomic classes. The current study has looked at how these different schools contribute to the academic performance of the student.

The contingency theory by Scheerens and Bosker formed the theoretical background on which the researcher based the study on the school's socioeconomic status on the academic performance of the students. The theory suggests that an organization's success, in this case, a school's, success is pegged on its prevailing environmental conditions. The expectancy-value approach was used to form the base for the study of the teacher-student relationship and how it affects the student's academic performance. This theory points out that a student's relationship with their teachers affects their standard of performance and expectation.

The study adopted a descriptive study design. It involved administering questionnaires to 210 teachers and students who were selected randomly from 15 schools within Dar es Salam City, Tanzania. Two hypotheses were tested in the study. For the first hypothesis, the researcher concluded that students' academic performance is directly related to the school's socioeconomic

status. The second hypothesis concluded that the teacher-student relationship is an intervening factor between the school's socioeconomic status and student's academic achievement.

The researcher acknowledges that this was not a conclusive study and that further research should be done to ascertain the effect of socioeconomic status on students' psychosocial development. There is also very little literature available on the elaborate study of teachers' teaching methods and how they affect the performance of students. This also avails an avenue that needs to be researched on.

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