

The Contribution of Students' Personal Effort in their Academic Performance in Vihiga County, Kenya

Daniel K. Korir and Felix Kipkemboi

Department of Educational Psychology,
Moi University, P.O. Box 3900 – 30100, Eldoret, Kenya,

Corresponding Author: Daniel K. Korir

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between students' role performance (SRP) and their academic performance based on a study conducted in secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya. In the study, students' role performance was considered one of the major psychosocial factors that influence students' academic performance. The study used a correlation research design and subjects were randomly selected from twenty-one public secondary schools. Questionnaires of the five point Likert type were used to collect data pertaining to students' role performance and students' academic performance were obtained from school records. Multiple regression analysis was the main technique of data analysis. The findings of the study showed that student' role performance made significant contribution to the students' academic performance. However, student role performance had a negative effect on students' academic performance. Students with positive attitude towards their academic work and their teachers and who attend school regularly perceive themselves as high achievers and tend to perform better academically than those without such attributes. Student role performance contributes more significantly to students' academic performance jointly with intelligence. Thus, students should be encouraged to seek advice from their teachers and fellow students in a bid to improve their academic performance. Further, teachers should employ teaching-learning strategies that encourages creativity at the expense of rote learning and parents should provide a home environment that promotes children intellectual development. The findings of the study enables teachers, principals, parents and other stakeholders to have a deep understanding of the effects of psychosocial factors on students' academic performance.

Keywords: effect, students role performance, academic performance, vihiga county, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between students' role performance (SRP) and students' academic performance. Student Role Performance is a set of behavioural and personal characteristics that affect how well an individual fulfils the role of a student in an educational setting (Barry, 2005). SRP involves factors such as sex, deviant behaviour, school effort, extracurricular activities and student disabilities. The effect of sex on a student's academic performance has been debated and researched over the past several decades (Perry, 1996). It indicates that there is an academic achievement gap between sexes, with boys ahead of girls. However, research that is more recent has shown that the achievement gap has been narrowing and in some instances, the girls had higher academic achievement than boys did (Chambers, 2004). Toyokawa (2004) observes that girls have been found to exert more pressure at school, leading to better performance in schools. Additionally, Eitle (2005) shows that males want to outperform females in mathematics and sciences.

According to Carbonaro (2005), school effort is the amount of time and energy that students expend in the formal academic requirements established by

their teachers and or their schools. He identifies three different types of school effort. These are: rule oriented effort (showing up to and behaving in class), procedural effort (meeting specific class demands such as assignments on time), and intellectual effort (critically thinking about and understanding the curriculum).

Studies have shown that school effort is an indicator of academic performance. Typically, effort has been positively linked with test scores and academic performance in both direct and indirect ways. Some studies have shown that high student effort leads to greater educational values, which in turn indirectly affects students' performance. The effort has also been linked to student's grade point averages. This effort has been measured in a variety of ways ranging from time spent on homework to attentiveness in class and all have linked with school performance (Ceballo, 2004). A consensus on whether or not a student participating in extracurricular activities, such as sports or clubs, will have a positive effect on academic performance has not been reached. From a theoretical point of view, extracurricular activities are viewed as boosting academic performance (Hunt, 2005). James Coleman's Multiple Role Theory posits that extracurricular activities provide additional

complimentary roles for a student to benefit academically. This is because the role of an athlete, for example, increases student's self-esteem and overall participation/in school and this can boost the student's grades (Hunt, 2005). The Leading Crowd Theory hypothesizes that participating in activities outside of class raises one's status and creates bonds with teachers and eventually enhances student's academic performance (Hunt, 2005). Sports participation in particular has been linked to higher students GPA's, higher attendance records and fewer disciplinary actions (Miller, 2005).

Students' motivation to learn is generally regarded as one of the most critical determinants of students' academic success and quality of any learning outcome. Students' perceptions of academic competency decline as they advance in school (Schunk, 2002). Students' effort is another major indicator of motivation to learn. The acquisition of complex knowledge and skills demands the investment of considerable learner energy, strategic effort and persistence over time. Students have different strategies, approaches, and capabilities for learning that are related to prior experiences. Individuals are born with and develop their own capabilities, skills and talents. In addition, through learning and social upbringing, they have acquired their own preferences on how they want to learn and the pace at which they wish to learn. However, these preferences are not always useful in helping learners reach their learning goals. Successful students are active, goal-directed, self-regulating, and assume personal responsibility for contributing to their own learning. They participate actively in class, do their tasks diligently and submit them on time. They also undertake tasks with some objectives or goals in mind. They are self-disciplined and very responsible in whatever they endeavour to do. The study also explored the effort the students put into their studies, including consulting their teachers, having a time table and attitude towards schooling and learning.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study can be only generalized to public secondary schools; but cannot be generalized to private secondary schools because private schools have better infrastructure and learning and teaching resources. Consequently, the findings are generalizable to only rural schools because Sabatia District is found in rural setup of the country. It is recommended that a similar study using the same methods be conducted in other parts of the country in order to authenticate the results of this study. It is also recommended that a replication of the study be conducted with private urban secondary schools.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was done in public secondary schools in Sabatia District, Vihiga County, Western Province of

the Republic of Kenya. Sabatia District neighbours Hamisi District to the East, Vihiga District to the South and Emuhaya District to the North. A correlation research design was used in the study. Gay (1996) points out that correlation research attempts to determine whether, and to what degree a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables. Waters (2009) adds that correlation research is a quantitative method of inquiry in which you measure two or more variables from the same group of subjects in order to determine the relationship between the stated variables. In correlation research, each variable must be expressed in numerical form, that is, must be quantifiable.

Sabatia District has 28 public secondary schools. Twenty-one of them are district day schools while seven are provincial boarding secondary schools (District Education Office [D.E.O] Report, 2011). The target population were form four students in selected Sabatia District public day secondary schools. Since it is practically impossible to access all the schools in the District, seven district public secondary school students were used.

The research employed both simple random and purposive sampling techniques to select the participants of the study. Purposive sampling plan was used to select twenty-one district public day secondary schools. This group was most suitable for the research study at hand because students from such schools have direct and daily contact with their parents/guardian. They also get contacts with home factors on a daily basis compared to those from boarding schools. The sample was suitable for the independent variable examined in this study.

Simple random sampling technique was used to select seven district public day secondary schools out of the twenty-one. These represent thirty per cent of the twenty-one district public day secondary schools. Kombo and Delno (2006) say that a sample of 30% of the population is a representative sample of the population to be studied. Simple random sampling plan produces research data that can be used to make valid generalization to other populations. In particular, table of random numbers was used to select schools that were used in the study. In order to get the required sample of schools, the names of the schools were listed and a number assigned to each name. Using a table of random numbers, the authors then picked seven numbers representing the different schools for the study. Purposive sampling was used to select the form four students from the sampled schools. The Form Four students were selected because they are directly involved in preparation for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) and their concern about academic performance is very important. They are also the final consumers of the learning process at the secondary

level in Kenya (Mulleyi, 2008). Furthermore, it is because of their maturity level and the experience they have both at school and home. A total of thirty form four students were randomly selected from each school giving a total of 210 subjects.

A five point Likert scale questionnaire was used to collect data pertaining to Student Role Performance. Questionnaires were used because student role performance can not be directly observed or manipulated. Questionnaires were also preferred because they take care of confidentiality. Student Role Performance is how well an individual fulfils the role of a student in an educational setting. The study focused on the individual characteristics of the learners that either promote or hamper learning. These characteristics are learner's disabilities (hearing, speech and seeing), attitude towards learning and their teachers and how effectively they use their prep time (if they have a personal timetable and follow it promptly). Data on students' level of school and class attendance were also collected. It is expected that students with high scores on these variables will have higher test scores than those with low scores.

Data analysis refers to examining what has been collected and making deductions and inferences from them. It involves uncovering underlying structures, obtaining important information, detecting anomalies and testing any underlying assumptions (Kombo and Delno, (2006). The Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 12.0 was used to calculate correlation coefficient. Data was also subjected to regressions to explore the magnitude and direction of relationship between independent and dependent variables. For descriptive analysis, percentages and means were used and the results were presented in tables and in words.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Relationship between Students' Role Performance and Students' Academic Performance

Table 1 presents results on the relationship between students' role performance and students' academic

performance. As shown in table I forty-eight and forty-two per cent of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that they perceive themselves as high academic achievers. Further, the research revealed that seventeen per cent of the students did not have a personal timetable. This comprised nine per cent who strongly agreed and eight per cent who agreed on the same item. Seven per cent of the respondents strongly disagreed that they had positive attitude towards their teachers. Another nine per cent disagreed too on the same item. Eleven and seventeen per cent of the students strongly disagreed and agreed respectively that they adequately prepare for their examinations.

Sixteen per cent strongly disagreed that they sought advice from their teachers and colleagues to improve in their weak areas whereas ten per cent disagreed too on the same item. This constituted twenty-six per cent of the total number of students under study who did not seek advice from their teachers and colleagues to improve in their weak areas. Fourteen per cent did not enjoy being in school whereas nine per cent did not attend school and lessons regularly comprising five and four per cent who strongly agreed and agreed respectively.

Furthermore, the research revealed that thirty-eight per cent of the students did not easily understand new concepts when they were taught by their teachers. It comprised eighteen per cent who agreed and twenty per cent who strongly agreed. Another nine per cent agreed that they had negative attitudes towards learning with two per cent strongly agreeing on the same issue. This constituted eleven per cent of the students under study who had negative attitudes towards learning. Twenty-one per cent indicated that they had learning disabilities that affected their academic performance negatively. This constituted six per cent for language disability, fifteen per cent for eyesight and two per cent for hearing related disabilities.

Table 1: Students' Response to the Relationship between Students' Role Performance and Students' Academic Performance

	SA(5)	A(4)	U(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total
I perceive myself as a high achiever in education	100(48%)	89(42%)	21(1%)	14(7%)	3(2%)	210(100%)
I have a personal study timetable and I follow it promptly	68(32%)	100(51%)	7(3%)	17(8%)	19(9%)	210(100%)
I have positive attitude towards my teachers	103(49%)	53(25%)	21(10%)	19(9%)	14(7%)	210(100%)
I prepare and revise adequately for my examination	54(26%)	96(46%)	23(11%)	52(17%)	3(11%)	210(100%)
I seek advice from teachers and classmate to improve in my weak subjects	63(30%)	77(36%)	16(8%)	21(10%)	33(16%)	210(100%)
I enjoy being in school and working hard	121(58%)	56(27%)	2(1%)	23(11%)	7(3%)	210(100%)
I understand new concepts in a subject easily	26(12%)	96(46%)	9(4%)	37(18%)	42(20%)	210(100%)
I have positive attitude towards learning	12(58%)	63(30%)	2(1%)	19(9%)	5(2%)	210(100%)
I attend school and lessons regularly	130(61%)	56(28%)	9(4%)	9(4%)	11(5%)	210(100%)
I have language/eyesight/hearing related problem which interferes with my learning	19(9%)	25(12%)	14(7%)	47(22%)	105(50%)	210(100%)

The data obtained was subjected to regression analysis to identify the relationship between SRP and the students' academic performance and the results were as shown in Table 2. Table 2 reveals a magnitude of -.034, which is significant at .673. The

relationship that exists between these two variables has a negative coefficient; meaning that student role performance as a factor, indirectly had a negative effect on students' academic performance.

Table 2: Regression Analysis on Students' Role Performance and Students' Academic Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	sig	
(Constant)	49.120	5.921		8.296	.000	
S.R.P.	-.058	.138		-.034	.422	.673

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Students with positive attitude towards their academic work and their teachers perceive themselves as high achievers and those who attend schools regularly are at an advantage of performing better academically than those without such attributes. Student Role Performance (SRP) may contribute more significantly to students' academic performance jointly with intelligence. Therefore teachers and parents should device activities that foster positive intellectual development.

Students should also be encouraged to seek advice from their teachers and fellow students to improve on their academic performance. Considering the findings of the study, it is recommended that all the stakeholders in education should play their role adequately in creating conducive learning environments at school and at home in order for the students to improve their academic performance. Further, there is need to recognize students' individual differences and to deal with them accordingly. Counsellors should also provide the necessary assistance and psychological support for students from single parent families or those who stay with guardians in order to enable them overcome their socio-emotional and economic problems.

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