

Correlation between Poor Socio-economic Background and Poor Academic Performance among Students at Tertiary Education in Tanzania

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Abstract

The core goal and expectation of student at any given learning environment is to achieve the required level of academic performance. This is also true for both educators and parents/guardians. However, sometime this ambition comes in contrary to their former expectation due to different factors that affects students' performance. Among the long list of factors for poor academic performance, social economic factor is reported to highly contribute. This factor is reported responsible for majority of students' failure to pay their school fees in time.

The major source (90%) of income for Private and Faith Based training institutions is from school fees. Often, there has been delay or failure in payment of school fee among students. The payment failure rate among many institutions is <50%; thus resulted to inconveniences on students study patterns. In the recent years, there has been an increased rate (11%) of academic failure among students in their tests, semester and final examinations. Institutional management and academicians have been putting great efforts to uplift level of students' academic performance. Despite all these efforts, students' academic performances are still not satisfactory. This article is particularly going to discuss the components of student's economic backgrounds in relation with academic performance. The article looks on how the element of in time failure payment of school fee affects performance of the students. From this discussion, a constructive suggestion would be delivered accordingly to the respective stakeholders as a contributive solution to the problem under discussion.

Keywords: *Poor Socio-economic Background, in time failure payment of fee and Poor Academic Performance.*

Introduction

The link between education and economic development has extensively been documented in the economic development literature. The two elements have been viewed in two points; one; education as a product of the economic development process, and two; education as an essential resource in the economic development process (Gyimah-Brempong, 2010 in Muhdin, 2016). In the view of this author, education is a pivotal device in structuring human capabilities and it accelerates economic growth through knowledge, skills and attitude change. Furthermore, Muhdin, (2016) urged that, a successful education is an input to economic growth, poverty and inequality reduction, health improvement, good governance, institutional development, and policy framework.

In poor economy and poor academic performance point of view, these two components have interchangeably been used as a predictor (independent) variable to each other because everyone can lead to a negative effect on another. This means, poor economy may cause student to perform poorly, and in the other hand, poor academic performance in the long run may lead to poor economy of this particular student (Muhdin, 2016).

The core goal and expectation of student at any given learning environment is to achieve the required level of academic performance. This is also true for both educators and parents/guardians belonging to their particular students. However, sometime this ambition comes unrealistic to their former expectation due to different factors that affect students' performance. Among the long list of other factors for poor academic performance, socio-economic factor is reported to highly contribute. This factor is reported to be responsible with majority of students' failure to pay their school fees in time. Delay or nonpayment in school fee has been related with an increased number of absenteeism in

many schools. This has consequently closely appended with result in academic poor performance of the students (Kamau, 2015).

Dieltiens and Meny, (2008) urged that, poverty is an important reason for why learners drop-out of academic performance. Inability to pay school fees, the costs of uniform, shoes, transport, stationary, added to the opportunity costs of what children might be contributing to household labour, eat away at meager resources and push children from school are the outcome of poverty within the society. Fleisch and Woolman (2004), arguing that fees do not cause only a drop-out of performance, but is absolutely associated with poor attendance at the schools.

Purpose of this article

Among other critical issues to consider in learning and teaching environment is student's performance as it determines whether learner goes on or off track towards qualification of what he/she learns. This article particularly is going to discuss the components of students' economic backgrounds in relation with academic performance. Wherever you go now in the world, there is no free lunch; means no education without payment. The article looks on how element of payment affects performance of the students. From this discussion, a constructive suggestion would be delivered accordingly to the respective stakeholders as a contributive solution to the problem under discussion. However, this article writing for an author is a partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Healthcare Administration.

Education system in tanzania

The educational system in Tanzania is principally formal academic and is organized in hierarchical three orders; primary, secondary and tertiary. The existing structure of the formal education system is 7-4-2-3+, meaning that 7 is years of primary education, 4 years of secondary education at the Ordinary level, 2 years of secondary education at the Advanced level and 3+ means tertiary level, years of college and university education (Tilya, 2003). However, there is other informal level (preschool or kindergarten) that accords with those children below 7 years.

Despite the fact that, the primary education is free and compulsory for all children under 15 years of age, the secondary and tertiary or higher education require payment of tuition fees. The amounts of fees vary from categories of schools, colleges or Universities belonging to government or private. Usually, the government school fees are subsidized while private schools are paid in full costs (Tilya, 2003).

Financing and affordability of education

The funding of public schools and other higher learning institutions mostly depends on government financial support with the cost-sharing from parents or guardians. However, Prof. Peter Msolla, the Tanzania former minister of finance in his speech said, "With this government support, it has evidently noted that, because of the poverty among many parents, they could not bear this cost. The situation is even worse in private training institutions which charge full costs. This has caused debate and complaints from the public on grounds that; it is only the children from the well-off families who can have access to university and higher education thereby leaving behind the best brains from poor families". From this speech, in 2004 the government enacted a law to establish the Higher Education Students Loan Board (HESLB) to manage a students' loan scheme, primarily to facilitate access to higher education by students whose parents cannot afford to pay for their children in both government and private universities. However, this loan does not include the students who study in middle levels of certificates and diplomas. The remaining questions that this article is going to answer are that:

'Is there any correlation between students' poor academic performances and poor socio-economic status of the parents'?

'Is poor socio-economic status of the parents responsible for students' poor performance'?

Socio-economic situation towards academic performance

The major source of income (90%) for private training institutions to sustain their main activities and being self-sufficient in their potential prospective depends on the school fees that are paid by

students. In many times, there has been a delay or failure to pay the school fees in time among some students. For instance, in one of the health training institute in Rural Mbulu district, the school fee payment failure rate in time was <50%; thus resulted to inconveniences on students study pattern. These inconveniences subjected them in chasing out of the classroom during ongoing sessions, forbidden students to attempt tests/examinations and prohibiting them from accessing some other relevant services. As a consequence of this, there has been much absenteeism of students in classroom sessions and clinical sessions (Ombay, 2018).

However, in this mini survey of Ombay, (2018), there has been an increased rate (18%) of academic failure among students in their tests, semester and final examinations. This survey had evoked curiousness to the author’s mind to further look on literature about correlation between socioeconomic background of parents that leads to failure in paying school fees in time and poor academic performance among students. Figure 1 below shows this finding.

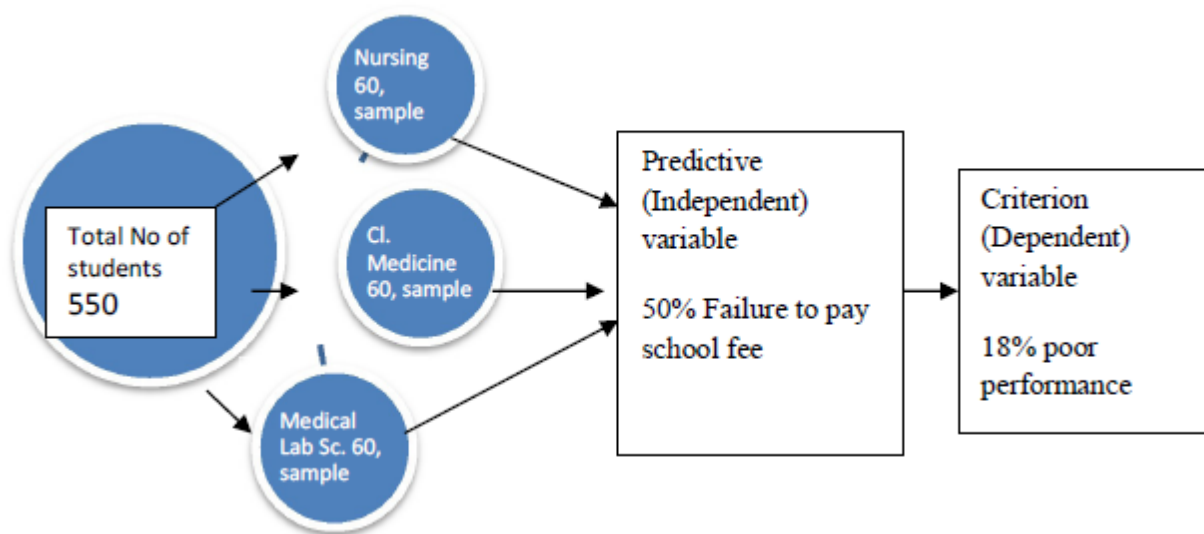


Figure 1. Finding from local survey; failure to pay school fee vs. poor performance

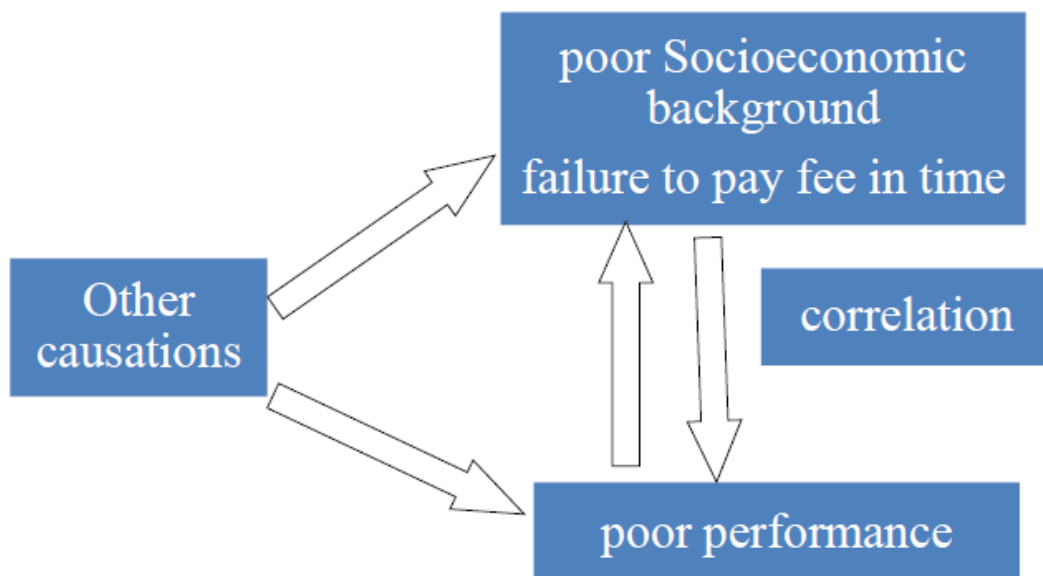


Figure 2. Correlation between poor socioeconomic background and poor academic performance

In the literature, the role of parents’ economic background is an important factor to consider in academic performance. The results from study of Okioga, (2013), discovered that the social economic

background of parents influence student academic performance as it plays a key role in skill sets for gaining jobs in both higher and lower social economic status. However, he says, the middle class parents are lively taking roles in their children's education and development by using controlled organized activities and encouraging a sense of entitlement through positive discussion. Families with lower income do not actively take part in this movement, making their children to have a sense of losing control. Lower incomes families can have children who do not succeed to the levels of performance and having more argumentative or more poor prepared for adult life (Okioga, 2013).

Poor academic performance according to Ogunjinmi and Oyedare (2015) in Aremu and Sokan (2003) has been explained as a performance that is adjudged by the examinee/testee and some other significant that shows as falling below an expected standard. He explains poor academic performance as any performance that falls below a desired standard. Likewise, he further says, poor academic performance of the individual or candidate in a learning situation as one in which a candidate fails to attain a set standard of performance in a given evaluation exercise such as a test, an examination or series of continuous assessments. A candidate who scores below the standard is regarded as showing poor academic performance in school. Some people blame students and others blame the government while, others blame the teachers on this matter, but socio-economic backgrounds of the parents or society should not be forgotten behind. The author of this article stresses that academic failure is not only frustrating the students and the parents, its effect are equally grave to the teachers, society and country at large in terms of dearth of manpower in all spheres of the economy, social welfare and politics. As conclusion to this, success in education is an investment and an instrument that can be used to achieve a more rapid economic, social, political, technological, scientific and cultural development in the country (Ogunjinmi and Oyedare 2015, in Aremu and Sokan, 2003, Nyandwi, 2014).

School fees are usually that is charged by education institutions for instruction or other services. Apart from governments and other public institutions, many private institutions in Tanzania contexts are largely depending on the fees paid by the students for its self-sufficient. This in one way may be the reason for little tolerance among institutions for those students who delay or fail to pay in time their fees. This is also true for other institutions in the United State. The office of bursar in University of Connecticut released a "Hold Policy" that says "Students with outstanding balances on their fee bills will have a "Bursar hold" placed on their accounts. This hold prevents students from accessing services such as class registration, moving into residence halls, recreation services, library services, parking services, transcripts and other important services" (Nyandwi, 2014, BODA <https://bursar.uconn.edu/failure-to-pay-your-bill-on-time-graduates/>).

Educationist noted the way failure to pay school fees on time affects the students in their intended educational goals. He recognized the observable fact of late or non-payment of school fees in recent times to the harsh economic situation in which we found ourselves. He urged that, "It does not necessarily mean that parents do not care about paying their children's school fees, but truth is that, most parents cannot even feed their children, much less pay their school fees. Some families eat once a day, some two times. Therefore in such situation, government has a role to play" (Madu, 2018).

Absenteeism in learning environment is urged to relate with poor academic performance. The students who have not paid their fees in time are subjected to various inconveniences including absenteeism in learning settings. The results from study by Kamau, (2015) show that the highest cases of school absenteeism were due to lack of school fees or failure of the parents to pay fees on time. Many of the parents avoid responsibilities that have high influences on school attendance. Majority of those students have been found to suffer low academic performance in their all test and examinations (Kamau, 2015, Subhrabaran, Monalisa, and Tanwi, 2014).

In the learning environment, there are number of causes leading to poor academic performance. The report from Nairaland Forum (2018), insists that, among other causes of poor performance, poor economic background of parents is a momentous factor, and if this would not be dealt with, those students would persist on swimming in poor performance. Due to this reason, many students by no means can excel in class; they are relaxed taking distance position in their classes. The key cause of this factors is financial constrain. Financial constraint is one of the factors inhibiting students' performance in their studies. When there is no money to pay fee and other learning needs, they would

not reach the pinnacle of their success and the end result is often falling on low or average performance (Nairaland Forum, 2018).

Students' failure to pay their fees in time has grounded from the socioeconomic and educational background of the parents. This has reported to have considerable impact to the overall students' academic performance. The results of the study by Farooq et al, (2011), revealed that socioeconomic status (SES) and parents' education have a significant effect on students' overall academic achievement as well as achievement in the subjects of Mathematics and English. The high and average socio-economic level affects the performance more than the lower level.

The study result of Shoukat et al, (2013) differs from Farooq et al, (2011) in the view of effect of socio-economic on academic performance. This study says, the students belonging from higher social economical backgrounds will perform better than other students associated with low social economic backgrounds. However, the author agrees with Farooq that, "Social and economical status of student is generally determined by combining parents' qualification, occupation and income standard.

The social and economic development of the family is straightforwardly linked with student academic performance. Mushtaq & Khan, (2012) in their study revealed that, the students' academic performance depends on a number of socio-economic factors such as students' attendance in the class, family income, mother's and father's education, teacher-student ratio, presence of trained teacher in school, sex of the student, and distance of schools

Conclusion and recommendation

There is never single factor to consider in determining the students' academic performance. This article discussed only socioeconomic factor of the parents in relation to students' academic performance. Through many literatures reviewed, socioeconomic factor appeared to stand behind the academic performance. Poor socioeconomic background of the parents has directly found to associate with poor academic performance of the students as they delay or fail to pay their fees in time. Furthermore, through this review, poor socioeconomic background of the parents is responsible with poor academic performance of students in many training institutions. However, the degree to which it is responsible among other factors is subjectively reviewed and objectively unclear.

The author of this article advises parents to keep on strength and take active charge on supporting their children in financing education in time because such support is viewed as the main contributor towards the student academic performance. Good performance is realized when parents work in consultation with the teachers in order to understand their children performance. They should discuss together the matters on how better to pay school costs. The educational stakeholders are advised to take role in how to subsidize the school costs for those students with socioeconomically deprived in line with offering financial scholarship and loans for education for those students studying at middle levels (certificate and diploma).

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