



Home Environmental Factors and Their Effects on Students' Academic Achievement in Secondary Schools in Tanzania

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Abstract: *This study assessed the effects of the home environmental factors on students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Dodoma city, in the Dodoma region - Tanzania. The study was qualitative in nature whereby data were collected through interviews and observations. The findings indicated that, excessive household chores such as cooking, collecting firewood, fetching water and taking care of siblings, to mention just a few, had significant negative impact on students' achievement at school. These home activities hindered students to study at home as they lacked ample time to concentrate on their studies, which led to poor attendance and performance at school. The study also revealed that sometimes students failed to concentrate during class due to tiredness. Additionally, the study revealed that poor family income, low level of parents' education, parents' conflicts and divorce, poor supervision at home, and long distance from home to school negatively affected students' academic achievement. The study recommends that parents need to be educated on how they can create a supportive home environment for the academic success of their children. The study also recommends the need of strengthening parent-school cooperation, supervising and motivating children at home when they perform better in their studies.*

Keywords: *Academic achievement, Home environmental factors, Learning, Parents, Students, Local Street chairmen, Tanzania*

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1.Introduction

Intelligence is not the only determining factor for academic achievement of a student. The home is very connected and crucial to the child's well-being and development in later life (Kiilu & Mugambi, 2019). The family is the primary cell of society where the child's upbringing must begin since his birth, still in cradle (Tokan & Imakulata, 2019). Academic achievements of students are always associated with many components of learning environment.

Home environment is the most powerful informal learning situation in which the families, especially parents, act as

educators. The family represents the first and probably the most influential learning context where very young children typically acquire language, knowledge, skills, and behavior. This has the potential to shape their readiness for school, attitudes towards learning, and their later academic attainment (Crouch et al., 2019). The child often sees the parents, siblings and things in their immediate environment to be most significant and they can promote or diminish his self-worth and academic performance (Ekanem, 2004). Parents are child's first educators. A child's family and home environment have a strong impact on his/her language and literacy development and educational achievement. This impact is stronger during the child's

early years but continues throughout their school years (Sulaiman et al.,2021).

The home learning context has been studied extensively, especially in developmental psychology and has been linked to the child's cognitive and social development (Bradley, 1994). The environment can affect the academic achievement of learners in different ways. For instance, the cross-sectional study by Wankasi, (2022) assessed environmental factors that affect academic performance of public secondary school students in Bayelsa State, in Nigeria. The findings indicated that parental income had a significant impact on academic performance of students. That, students who came from families where parents have good income, performed better because parents afforded to buy them their school needs compared to students who came from low level family income. The study concluded that parental income level affects students' academic performance. Wankasi's study also revealed that the family structure of children has a significant impact on their academic achievement. When compared to students from single-parent households, students from two-parent families had higher or better academic achievement. Moreover, a similar study found that, other family structure characteristics, such as socioeconomic position, family size, parent education, parental participation, and the like, had a significant impact on enhancing children's academic achievement. Thus, the current study recommends that family structures be strengthened to improve children's educational outcomes.

In, Mabula and Ligembe's, (2022) study found that, home environmental factors such as parents' educational level, parents' occupations, parents' income, learning environment within home, parental motivation, and availability of learning facilities at home like tables, books and maps greatly affect the academic performance of the learner.

1.2 Problem of the statement

The home environment is a deciding factor in students' academic achievement (Devi, 2007; Jagero, Agak & Ayodo, 2010). A conducive learning environment leads to some achievement while poor learning environment hinders students' academic success and their future life in general (Devi, 2007). Despite the government efforts in supervision of education through enhancing good environment at school, home environment is another criterion which needs to be considered in promoting students' academic achievement.

Studies indicate that home environmental factors have great influence towards basic education, psychosocial, moral and spiritual foundations and the overall development of the children (Ajila & Olutola, 2008).

Kamuti, (2015) revealed that, home environment is viewed as consequential for child developmental outcomes such as cognitive ability, school readiness, academic achievement and emotional adjustment. Obeta's, (2014) study in Nigeria revealed that, academic performance has been largely associated with many factors, including school environment, lack of learning re-sources as well as home environmental factors. Conducive learning environment leads to some achievement while poor learning environment hinders students' academic success and their future life in general (Devi, 2017).

Effective teaching and learning, combined with the efforts of the government, teachers, students, and home environmental factors produce a quality education (Devi, 2017). Despite the government's efforts to provide a high-quality education, most students are unable to achieve their goals.

Although studies have shown the effects of home environment for students' academic achievement, in Tanzania, particularly in Dodoma region, this is not yet known. Teachers and school administrators are held accountable for students' poor performance in school. Such accusations indicate that the community is not yet aware of the importance of the family environment on their children's education (Devi, 2017). Therefore, this study aims to fill up the gap by examining the home environmental factors and their effects on students' academic achievement in secondary schools in the Dodoma region, in Tanzania.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Empirical Literature Review

The home environment has a significant impact on the academic achievement of students worldwide. The study conducted by Jain and Mohta, (2019) in India aimed to evaluate the influence of the domestic setting on the academic performance of secondary school pupils in Kota, India. The findings of the study indicated a positive association between the family environment and academic achievement. According to this study, children who were exposed to a positive home environment exhibited higher levels of academic achievement, whilst those who experienced an unpleasant environment were likely to experience a negative impact on their academic performance.

Similarly, the study by Wankasi, (2022) unveiled that the familial composition of children exerts a noteworthy influence on their scholastic performance. In contrast to students hailing from single-parent households, students originating from two-parent families have superior

academic performance. Furthermore, the Wankasi's study revealed that additional attributes of family structure, such as socioeconomic status, household size, parental educational attainment, and parental involvement, had a noteworthy influence on bolstering the academic performance of children.

In Tanzania, several studies have been conducted on the effects of home environmental factors on students' academic achievement. For instance, the study conducted by Ilomo and Chawanga, (2015) in Arusha Municipality on the influence of home environment on students' academic performance revealed that parents' occupation, family income, home structure, access to electricity, and social interaction influenced students' academic performance in school. Ilomo and Chawanga, (2015) emphasized that there is a significant relationship between the influence of home environmental factors and the academic performance of students. In addition, Ilomo and Chawanga's, (2015) research found that parents of higher socioeconomic status are more involved in their children's education. In this instance, parental involvement in their children's education increases with the parent's education level, occupational status, income, and household income. Consequently, the intensity of parental involvement improves the academic performance of the children.

Moreover, Ulugumu, (2016) investigated the impact of family and school on the academic performance of students in the Wangung'ombe District of Iringa, Tanzania. His study revealed low parental income, low parental sensitivity to investing in education for their children, low parental involvement in academic activities, and low parental assignment of household activities to their children. In addition, the school environment was not conducive to learning because the facilities were inadequate and unable to accommodate both instructors and students.

Similarly, Mabula and Ligembe's, (2022) study has found that, families that have children who perform well academically demonstrate certain attributes. These include implementing a consistent daily family routine, which involves allocating dedicated time and a peaceful environment for studying, as well as delegating household responsibilities to the children.

Mapigano's, (2018) study examined the impact of home learning on the academic performance of primary school children in Mbeya City. The findings indicated that parents with lower levels of education faced challenges in providing adequate academic support to their children. These challenges included difficulties in timely payment of school fees, provision of necessities, sufficient stationery, and access to counseling sessions. From the review of the literature, there appears to be no studies conducted in

Dodoma Tanzania concerning the effects of home environmental factors on academic achievement of students. This study, therefore, aims to fill this gap by investigating the home environmental factors and their effects in academic achievement to secondary students in Dodoma City Council, Tanzania.

2.2 Theoretical Review

The study was guided by Social Learning Theory. The Social Learning Theory (SLT) was developed by Albert Bandura, and it posits that learning takes place within the social setting, with the home environment serving as the initial social context for children. It is posited that individuals acquire knowledge and skills through seeing and imitating others, particularly within their immediate surroundings, a process commonly referred to as modeling (Juma, 2016)

According to Bandura's theory, it is posited that a child who has observed their parents exhibiting behaviors characterized by kindness, care, and trustworthiness is likely to adopt similar dispositions. Conversely, children who have been exposed to situations such as parental divorce, domestic violence, and interfamilial conflicts are more likely to develop aggressive tendencies and adopt violent strategies for navigating their surroundings (Bandura,1977). This implies that students' academic performance can be affected by observing and imitating the behavior of parents and other family members.

The theory was employed in this study because it has inter-relationships and goes with the nature of the problem being investigated. The Theory explains how the social environment of home influence the child behaviors and emphasizes the ways that children and adults mentally operate on their social experiences and how these mental operations then influence their behavior and help to create a sense of self efficacy (Bong, 2008).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative approach with phenomenology design to collect the information from the informants. The study used in-depth interviews with informants about home environmental factors and their effects on students' academic performance among secondary school students. A total number of 28 informants were selected to provide the information. The informants were 10 parents, 14 secondary school teachers, and 4 street chairpersons who participated through

interviews. The study also employed observations to gather information.

The data were collected from four secondary schools in Dodoma city, Tanzania. The data were obtained from parents, teachers and local street chairmen. The information about the effects of home environment on students' academic among secondary school students were obtained through interview and observation. The interview is the best technique of collecting data in which the researcher poses the questions to the informants and the latter responds to the questions asked orally by providing deep and detailed information (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). The researcher used questions and probes to get more and detailed information on the research topic from parents, secondary school teachers, and street chairmen. Observation, as a research method, involves systematically watching, listening, and recording occurrences in a natural setting to gather data. In this study researcher employed systematic and purposeful observation; the researcher gained valuable insights into the home circumstances impacting students' academic development. The method allowed for a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by students in their learning environments.

3.2 Data Analysis

The research methodology employed in this study encompassed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, aiming to investigate the impact of home environmental factors on the academic performance of secondary school students. The data collection process involved in-depth interviews and systematic observations with a total of 28 informants, including 10 parents, 14 secondary school teachers, and 4 street chairpersons. These informants were purposefully selected to provide diverse perspectives on the research topic. In-depth interviews, characterized by oral responses to posed questions, were utilized as the primary method of data collection. The questions and probes employed during interviews aimed to extract comprehensive and detailed information from the participants (Yin, 2014). Additionally, systematic and purposeful observation, involving the careful recording of occurrences in natural settings, was employed to gain valuable insights into the home circumstances influencing students' academic development. The collected data, sourced from parents, teachers, and local street chairpersons, were subjected to qualitative analysis techniques, likely involving coding and thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to the research question (Kumar et al., 2021). The results of this analysis were then reported in a narrative form, emphasizing key findings and insights derived from the interviews and observations. To enhance the study's rigor and trustworthiness, techniques such as member checking,

triangulation, and peer debriefing were incorporated into the research process.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Home Environment not Conducive for Learning

The present study investigated the correlation between home environmental factors and students' academic performance. The results obtained from the analysis of data collected from the key informants described above revealed that in instances where the home environment lacked conditions that fostered learning, such as the absence of educational resources, presence of noise, or lack of access to electricity, students generally exhibited poor academic performance at school. Commenting on the same issue during interviews, most of the parents stated that educational learning materials are not readily available at home. For example, one parent from street "A" said:

"There are no learning materials in my house, and we have no intention of purchasing any. In my opinion it is the government's responsibility to purchase educational materials for the pupils and the school, not mine as a parent. (Interview with a parent from street A, May 2023).

The parent's comment above suggests that students residing in the research locations exhibited a lack of engagement with educational resources, including books, reading materials, writing materials, and supplementary books, within their home environments. The absence of adequate access to educational resources within the home environment has, in various ways, hindered their ability to attain higher levels of academic success. These findings align with the research conducted by Jain and Mohta, (2019), which revealed that, a positive home environment is associated with elevated academic performance, whereas an unfavorable environment has a detrimental impact on a child's academic achievement.

4.2 Presence of household chores minimizing time for self-studies

The research findings indicated that household responsibilities, including but not limited to food preparation, firewood collection, laundry, environmental sanitation, water retrieval, and sibling care, exerted a notable influence on kids' academic performance. The respondents affirmed that the inadequate academic performance of students can be attributed to family responsibilities, which result in reduced opportunities for

self-study at home. During the interviews one of the parents said:

“When my daughter comes back at home from school, I assign her some activities to perform; firstly, because I have no one else to help me with home activities. And secondly, I have a duty to prepare her to manage the household in the future. I do not know whether these activities influence her academic achievement”. (Interview with a parent May 2023).

The parent’s comment above implies that a considerable proportion of children, especially young girls, are involved in diverse domestic duties immediately after their school hours. These jobs involve a range of activities, including food preparation, collecting firewood, laundering, farm works, sanitation, water fetching, and caretaking responsibilities for their younger siblings. The performance of household tasks hinders students from dedicating adequate time to their academic pursuits, leading to suboptimal school attendance and diminished attentiveness in classroom settings. As a result, their educational advancement is negatively impacted, potentially posing difficulties in their transition to more advanced academic levels.

These study’s findings are consistent with a study conducted by Munir et al., (2023), which revealed that assigning children domestic responsibilities impedes their capacity to achieve their academic potential and obtain improved academic outcomes. Ilomo and Chawanga, (2015) argue that optimal learning outcomes are contingent upon learners receiving sufficient rest in their home environment. A child who is fatigued from performing domestic tasks may encounter difficulties in maintaining optimal focus and concentration during their educational endeavors. This suggests that the allocation of household tasks has a negative effect on children's academic performance since it limits their availability to engage in review and reinforcement of school-related knowledge (Ilomo & Chiwanga, 2015). Based on these findings, it becomes apparent that the limited availability of time for self-directed learning among students in their personal environments has a deleterious effect on their scholastic achievements.

4.3 Parents’ Conflicts and Divorce

The current investigation unveiled that a proportion of children encounter academic difficulties because of familial conflicts and parental separation (divorce). The participants highlighted that in contemporary times, numerous households encounter difficulties within their marriages, leading to divorce. This phenomenon, to some

extent, has a detrimental effect on the educational attainment of young children who are still reliant on parental care and affection. One of the local chairmen from street C had this to say:

“For many parents who entered into conflicts in their marriage and ended up with divorce, it has resulted in hugely affecting the educational life of their children”. (Interview with a local chairman, street C, June 2023).

Likewise, during the interviews, some female parents claimed that they have been left with a huge burden of caring for children on their own follow divorce settlement with their husbands. For example, a female parent from street D had this to say:

“Since the dissolution of my marriage with my spouse, there has been a noticeable lack of consistency in the attendance of my children at their school. One influential factor is that during their visits to their father, it is common for them to spend an extended period with him before resuming their academic activities.” (Interview with a parent, street D, June 2023).

The findings of this study can be interpreted within the context of the study done by Oduro-Ofori et al.'s (2023), which has shown that the dissolution of familial bonds resulting from divorce negatively affects children's educational achievements, thus leading to subpar academic performance. Juma, (2016) posited that the dissolution of adult marriages leads to a substantial reduction in support from spouses and hinders the academic achievements of children, hence providing additional evidence in favor of these assertions. As a result, children may encounter negative consequences because of the restricted availability of parental oversight and individualized care. Based on this the study findings, it is posited that individuals who have encountered harsh circumstances, such as parental divorce and marital violence, are prone to developing aggressive inclinations and resorting to violent tactics as a means of navigating their environment. As a result, these behavioral habits may hinder their academic achievement within an educational environment.

4.4 Parents’ Education Level

The study also investigated the association between the educational attainment of parents and the academic achievement of their offsprings. The findings indicated a noteworthy influence of parental education on the academic achievement of students. Generally, the results indicate an association between the educational attainment of parents and the academic performance of their offspring.

This finding is substantiated also by one the parents interviewed who articulated the following:

"I have implemented a consistent routine of visiting the school to oversee my daughter's academic development, furnish her with educational resources, and enroll her in supplementary learning sessions held on Saturdays." (Interview with a parent, street B, May 2023).

The results of this study indicate that parents who have a lower level of education encounter difficulties when it comes to providing academic support to their children within the home environment. The present findings are consistent with prior research, specifically the study conducted by Alokun et al., (2013), which identified that youngsters hailing from households with lower levels of education frequently experience a dearth of educational assistance and motivation necessary for engaging in substantial learning. Egunsola, (2014) also discovered that parents who possess higher levels of education tend to establish a more advantageous educational atmosphere within their households for their offspring. According to Sciences (2021), there is evidence to suggest that parents with higher levels of education tend to create a conducive atmosphere for their children's academic achievements and are more inclined to offer academic assistance inside the school setting.

4.5 Lack of Learning Supervision at Home

The findings of this study also indicate that the lack of parental supervision during home-based learning has a substantial impact on pupils' academic achievement. The utilization of interviews which was responded by teachers, parents and street chairperson unveiled that pupil exhibit a propensity to partake in efficacious learning, whether it be within the confines of their residence or educational institution, when they are provided with unwavering guidance and oversight from their parental figures or guardians. Insufficient parental supervision during private study and homework assignments might result in diminished desire and self-assurance in academic pursuits.

Besides, the comments provided by teachers provided more evidence to support the notion that insufficient parental supervision during home-based learning played a substantial role in pupils' subpar academic achievements. One teacher from School A expressed support for this notion by asserting that a significant proportion of students at their institution experience inadequate parental supervision inside their household environment. Consequently, a decline in motivation to acquire

knowledge occurs, which, in certain instances, prompts students to form connections with unfavorable peer circles, thereby exerting an adverse influence on their educational pursuits. As this teacher is quoted specifically saying:

"At my school, I have observed that majority of students are not well supervised by their parents while at home. This contributes to students' waning of interest in learning and, ultimately ending up joining bad peer groups which affect their educational interest negatively". (Teacher. School A, May 2023).

Overall, the findings of the current study emphasize the significant role that parental supervision and monitoring of children's home-based learning activities, such as academic assignments, play in fostering their participation in the learning process. Children who are provided with good supervision in their home-based learning, including support with school assignments, demonstrate increased levels of interest and active engagement in their school classes. This can be attributed to the encouragement they receive from their parents. This result is consistent with the principles of the Social Learning Theory, which posits that a substantial portion of a child's acquisition of information and development is contingent upon contextual variables, with parents and caregivers assuming a pivotal role in molding behavior and cognitive advancement. The results align with a study conducted by Funke, (2020), which emphasized that parents who engage in active supervision of their children's learning at home through assistance, guidance, and emphasizing the significance of education can significantly influence their children's academic accomplishments.

4.6 Long Distance from Home to School Leading to Drop out and Failure in Examinations

This study also revealed that the extended duration of travel from students' residences to school is an additional environmental factor that detrimentally affects their academic achievements. The data gathered through interviews revealed that students residing in the examined region encounter difficulties as a result of the considerable journey distance, resulting in weariness throughout their educational pursuits. Some students choose to quit their pursuit of education, while others encounter disciplinary measures because of their lateness in attending school. Moreover, during the interviews, parental respondents have articulated apprehension regarding their offspring's waning enthusiasm for educational pursuits, which they attribute to the protracted duration of their daily commute. This arduous journey has been identified as a contributing

factor to fatigue and subsequent academic underachievement. A parent residing in Street B expressed that their daughter encounters difficulties in maintaining regular attendance at school due to the significant distance, resulting in fatigue and diminished engagement. The circumstance has a detrimental effect on academic accomplishments, as their unable to attend sessions. This parent was quoted saying:

“The distance that my daughter frequently walks to reach her school is of significant magnitude. The kid experiences significant fatigue, which subsequently leads to a decline in motivation and her interest in school, ultimately impacting her academic performance.” (Interview with a parent, street B. May 2023).

The above comments suggest that a considerable proportion of students residing in the examined region are confronted with the arduous challenge of commuting substantial distances to attend school. This circumstance hampers their capacity to concentrate on educational pursuits inside the school setting, hence exerting a negative impact on their scholastic advancement. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Juma, (2016), which similarly emphasized the detrimental impacts of extended commutes on students. These consequences encompass diminished opportunities for teacher-student engagement, as well as health-related concerns such as the development of stomach ulcers and headaches.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study investigated home environmental factors and their effects on students' academic achievement in secondary schools in Tanzania. The findings largely revealed that parents in the studied areas provide excessive domestic chores to their children thus making them tired and lacking enough time for competing school assignments. The study also found that the low level of economic income of parents contributed much to making the home environment not conducive for students to make studies because parents could not afford to buy educational facilities for their children which enhance learning at home and at school in general. Further, it was found out that absence of learning materials at home, insufficient parental education to some parents, walking long distance from home to school, inadequate home learning supervision, and family conflicts to be the main source of poor academic achievement of students in secondary schools.

Notably, the research emphasized the impact of parental involvement, highlighting that the lack of checking homework completion and infrequent school visits by parents further exacerbated these challenges, underscoring

the need for comprehensive strategies to address these issues and enhance students' academic achievement.

5.2 Recommendations

Basing on the research findings and the conclusions drawn, this study recommended that:

1. Both the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations need to provide mass education to educate parents and caregivers on the importance of maintaining a home environment for their children's academic achievement.
2. The Government should ensure that those students who are in need are well equipped with necessary facilities for school including books and other learning materials.
3. The Government should enforce laws that will protect school children from child labor that they are facing in their surrounding areas.
4. The Government should build hostels for public schools so that students should stay at schools to avoid excessive household chores and other activities which are conducted by students at home. This can help students to get more time for self-studying and can raise the academic performance of students.

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