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Prospects of Parental Attitudes towards Students Educational Aspirations A Case of Public Secondary Schools Kongwa District Dodoma- Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

The study focus was to find out prospects of parental attitudes towards students' educational aspirations in Kongwa district. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative research approach. A total of 72 respondents were involved in the study including head of schools, teachers, parents and students. The study involved six government secondary schools from Kongwa district and it was guided with Expectancy Theory as proposed by Vroom in 1964 which seem to be relevant to the phenomenon under investigation in the sense that, both attitudes and aspirations ends with certain expectations. The reliability of the instruments was tested using Cronbach's Alpha and the results were 0.722. The data collection method was interview, questionnaire and focus group discussion. The qualitative data obtained was presented through thematic analysis while quantitative data was presented in tables of frequencies and percentages. The study findings revealed that, the parental positive attitude towards their children's education inspired the students to perform better and aspire for higher education. It was recommended that, Educational administrators should strive to keep good relationship with parents and constant communication so as to create a rapport between the community and school to enhance students' educational aspirations. Awareness should be created among parents towards the importance of education so as to inspire their children educational aspirations.

Key Words: *Parental attitudes, students' aspirations, expectations*

INTRODUCTION

Student educational aspiration is an expression of the will to identify and set goals for the future expectations that accompanied with working hard in school activities provided by their teachers. The educational aspiration seem to be influenced by different aspects across countries [1]. For example, in European countries like Latin America, students who came out of Spain have higher college aspirations compared to students of Spanish origin after accounting for parental socioeconomic status and educational performance. Also, the aspiration of pupils with Latin American origin – are concentrated among low-performing and disadvantaged students [2].

India, the educational aspiration for students belong to urban background differ significantly in their academic achievement than that of rural students though the country believed educational aspiration to have equal positive and contributory effects across students [1]. In South Africa, educational aspiration viewed to differ among students due to socio-economic status where by students from low socio-economic status homes and schools had lower educational aspirations. This lead to the needs for improving educational resources at schools as well as the school climate, as schools matter for learners in low-income countries [3]. In Nigeria, some studies show the school environment to have great influence on secondary school students' educational aspirations. The country was also faced the challenge for the socio-economic status of parents to have impacts on the educational aspiration of vocational choices of the female secondary school students [4].

The study conducted in some Asia-African countries indicated no significant relationship between life skills inspired by students and their educational aspirations due to family background, sex and age factor [5]. The studies had further indicate that gender and type of school do not influence educational aspiration of adolescents, but different levels of intelligence influence the educational aspiration of the adolescents [6]. The aspirations of students who studies in technical secondary schools seem to differ from non-technical secondary school students [7].

In all the above surveyed countries, attitudes seem to play a crucial roles in shaping students education aspirations and academic success [7], though some factors like individual differences and ability to understand subject contents among students make them to differ in aspiration [8]. Another factor was an individual attitude among parents which could be negative or positive where by parents with higher positive attitude on their children education might lead to increasing students' efforts in studies towards their educational aspirations [9,10]. This means that, there should be a significance relationship between parental attitudes and students' academic achievements [1].

In other hand, the goal of education is to see children succeed and mature in the knowledge they have acquired from their teachers in schools. However, teachers alone cannot motivate students to succeed; rather parents are the foundational elements to ensure that their children succeed in educational matter yet the society expects everyone to be a high achiever. Literature reviewed had clearly show that there is a significant relationship between parental attitudes and academic achievement [1,2,4,5,11,12,13].

In case of Tanzania context, some studies by Taslima[14]; Nyambeke[15]; Gama [16]; Mwakililo and Mgaya[17]; Seni and Onyango[18]; and Kigobe, Ghesquiere & Ng'umbi[19] have all dealt with the parental participation and or involvement in motivating the students' academic activities in both public and or community primary and secondary schools. The findings point to the fact that there is low participation due to various factors that affects students' expectations in their educational achievements. Thus, there is limited literature on prospect of parental attitude and student educational aspiration.

The general objective

To find out prospects of parental attitudes towards students' educational aspirations in Kongwa District public secondary schools

Methodology Employed in the Study

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative research designs (mixed method approach) in order to have a wide range in finding and discussing different parental attitudes towards the students' educational aspirations from the respective schools. It also uses descriptive research design so as to obtain detailed and accurate information. A total of 72 respondents including parents, teachers and students were from the selected schools in Kongwa district were selected through simple random, purposive and convenience sampling technique. They were finally requested to give their information via interview, questionnaire and focus group basing on their categories.

Study Findings

The objective of the research study was set to find out the parents' expectations of their children academic achievements. The respondents were required to state the mode they consider appropriate for the parents' attitudes to students' academic aspirations. The presentation of the finding in this article will base on two categories of respondents (Teachers and patents). The mode given were whether responses from parents would rank High, Medium or Low. Both teachers and parents were required to show their responses. Table 1 presents the summary of the distribution of teachers' responses whether it was high, medium or low on parental expectations.

Teachers responses on the prospects of parental attitudes towards students' educational aspirations

Table 1: Teachers responses on parental expectations (n=14)

Item(s)	High F (%)	Medium F (%)	Low F (%)	Total F (%)
Parents expectations on children academic achievement	11(78.6%)	3(21.4%)	0(00%)	14(100%)
Parents participation in children learning behavior and good discipline	8(57.1%)	6(42.9%)	0(00%)	14(100%)
Parents willingness in making monetary contributions for children schooling	0(00%)	2(14.3%)	12(85.7%)	14(100%)
Parents expectations in children academic performance in internal school exams	1(7.1%)	0(00%)	13(92.9%)	14(100%)
Parents expectations in children academic performance in NECTA exams	10(71.4%)	4(28.6%)	0(00%)	14(100%)
Willingness in attending school academic meetings when invited	0(00%)	11(78.6%)	3(21.4%)	14(100%)
Parents expectations on teachers' ability towards their children aspirations	10(71.4%)	3(21.4%)	1(7.2%)	14(100%)
Most parents discussed their children academic performance with teachers	0(00%)	5(35.7%)	9(64.3%)	14(100%)
Parents engagement in committees	7(50%)	5(35.7%)	2(14.3%)	14(100%)
Expectations for their children to go to universities	5(35.7%)	7(50%)	2(14.3%)	14(100%)

Source: Research Data, 2023

The above table 4.4 shows the majority of respondents 11(78.6%) had higher expectations on academic achievements. The finding concurred with the study conducted by Khanam, Akram and Kamran [20] who found that, parents' higher expectations on their children's aspirations could be easily identified through the parents' desire and interests. It can be concluded that, the higher the expectation of parents on their children, the higher it is expected that they will inspire their children academic activities leading to better performance.

The second sub-item on the parents' expectations on their children academic achievements was the parents' participation in their children learning behavior and good discipline 8(57.1%). The study reveals that the majority had the ability to participate the learning behavior and discipline of their children. The finding was in line with Wanja[21] who found that, parents should use different parenting styles/practices in solving students' discipline. Parents should also collaborate with the school administration when it comes to students' discipline.

The sub-item on parents' low willingness in making monetary contributions 12(85.7%) for children schooling was also a sub-item viewed by the majority of respondents. The low willingness was associated with the misconception of fee free education policy of 2014 which prohibits parents to pay for school fee and other contributions [22]. Yolcu[23] found that, the parents' contributions for their children achievement should be high and unlimited. It can be concluded that the school administrators had to encourage parents' participation as well as educating them on their tenets for participating in their children education.

The sub-item on parents' expectations in children academic performance in their examinations was among the sub-items in table 4.4 which set to determine parental expectations in their children academic achievement. The item was sub divided into internal examinations which seem to be low and the external examinations which was high.

The low expectations in the internal exam was due to the reasons that, the majority 13(92.9%) did not believe on the resources and assessment tools used by teachers to be accuracy. And the higher expectations in NECTA exams was due to the belief from the respondents 10(71.4%) that, the exam was standard. It seems that, parents had to concentrate in higher expectations towards their children academic performance due to its positive impacts in both internal and external examinations.

The sub-item on willingness of parents in attending the school academic meetings was selected by respondents 11(78.6%) to be in moderate. Gilani, Waheed and Raza[24] found that, parents' expectations from the school should generally expressed in the meetings with teachers and it was significantly important to understand how do these expectations were met by the school administration. It seems that, the higher response in moderate was due to the fact that, the attendance depends on the willingness. This means that only parents who knew the value of their expectations to their children could attend all the academic meetings and vice versa. Also, the education for parents on how to meet their expectations might be conducted to help them reaching their efforts towards students' better performance.

The sub-item on teachers' ability towards their children aspirations was revealed by the study to be with high expectations 10(71.4%). The higher expectations were due to the fact that teachers were professionally trained to deliver the required subject contents to students. The finding was contrary to Bonney et al., [3] who found that, even though the quality of teachers would be high in terms of their academic and professional qualifications but their qualification ability could not reflect much on the performance of students. This means that, the current study unveils the truth of professional ability among teachers to be with positive influence on students' performance compared to previous studies. It can be concluded that, teachers' professional ability had to be enhanced for the sake of improving students' better performance across schools.

The sub-item on whether most parents to have the habit on discussing their children academic performance was revealed by the study to be low 9(64.3%). Hence, the involvement of parents was below to the past study experience Martinez [25] who found that, students of highly involved family members significantly outperformed those with family members who were not involved based on scores of the cumulative. The current study had further revealed that, the best way of involving parents was through parent's committees 7(50%) where parents were engaged in solving their children problems towards academic performance. The current study had further revealed that, through engagement was when parents explain their expectations towards their children aspirations. For instance, some respondents 7(50%) were explained their expectations for their children to go to universities for further studies

Parents' responses on the prospects of parental attitudes towards students' educational aspirations

Table 2: Parents expectations towards children academic achievements (n=14)

Item(s)	Yes	No	Total
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
Telling their attitudes influences children aspirations	10(100%)	0(00%)	10(100%)
Use their education to help children in meeting their education	3(30%)	7(70%)	10(100%)

aspirations			
Payment for remedial classes to meet children expected children academic achievements	9(90%)	1(10%)	10(100%)
Payment for children meals to meet children expected children academic achievements	6(60%)	4(40%)	10(100%)
Buying subject books for better children performance	3(30%)	7(70%)	10(100%)
Contribution for school stationaries	10(100%)	0(00%)	10(100%)
Purchasing school uniforms	10(100%)	0(00%)	10(100%)
Participating in academic forums/meetings	1(10%)	9(90%)	10(100%)
Participating in the discussion of exams results	5(50%)	5(50%)	10(100%)
Attending school meetings	9(90%)	10(10%)	10(100%)
Ownership attitudes of the school	3(30%)	7(70%)	10(100%)
Establishing good communications with teachers	8(80%)	2(20%)	10(100%)
Provide rewards to children when perform well	8(80%)	2(20%)	10(100%)
Advising children on their education aspirations	8(80%)	2(20%)	10(100%)
Helping individual children learning ability	8(80%)	2(20%)	10(100%)
Participating in school different activities rather than academics	8(80%)	2(20%)	10(100%)
Establishing good relationship with school leaders	10(100%)	0(00%)	10(100%)
Policy recommendations to parents roles on children academic performance	4(40%)	6(60%)	10(100%)

Source: Research Data, 2023

The above table 4.5 shows that, parents were highly participated in some aspects compared to others. For instance, they highly show their 10(100%) expectations to some aspects like telling their attitudes to influence children aspirations. Stephen and Ezati[26] in their study on the parents' contribution towards education process found parental attitudes to differ across families basing on earning, residence and education. Hayes [27] found the importance of parental attitudes and students' aspiration to be bound the common educational goal. Therefore, it can be concluded that, having attitudes might be worthless if parents would not collaborate with their children's aspiration to build the common goal to be achieved by students.

The sub-item on contribution for school stationaries 10(100%) was revealed to be among parents' expectations towards children academic achievements. According to Khanam, Akram and Kamran (earlier cited) parents' expectations could easily identify through their desire and interests. The free education policy of 2014 the important stationaries to buy by parents for their children including exercise books, pens and other personal staffs helped them in their learning process. This means that, parents had to increase their attitudes in contributing for their children school services including stationaries as the way of encouraging higher performance. The finding was supported by Vroom theory which encourage the presence of different motivational factors towards better achievement. Hence, the presence of stationaries was among the motivation on students.

During interview the respondents indicate that, most parents to be engaged in academic activities though their involvements had limited roles. For instance, in free education policy of 2014 parents were required to buy uniforms, exercise books, shoes and school bags but prohibit them to make classroom assessments as the head of schools do [28,22]. Hence, engagement of education stakeholders had to abide in education policy recommendations on how they have to be involved. The finding was in line with integrated conceptual model by Perna and Thomas (2008) which emphasized positive integration between school and home environment for better students' performance.

Expectations towards children achievement was also revealed to be parents purchasing school uniforms for their children 10(100%). According to education circular No. 5 of 2014, parents were responsible for buying school uniforms while the government saves for learning material as well as improving other facilities [28]. The removal of parents from full contribution for their children education lower students' performance due to decrease number of resources required for teaching and learning process. This means that, though most parents manage to buy school uniform for their children but they have to reconsider in buying other teaching and learning facilities which had direct impacts on their children performance.

The sub-item on establishing good relationship with school leaders 10(100%) was also an expectation mentioned by parents towards children academic performance. Eble, Alex and Maya [6] found a good relationship to be established under effective communication. The good relationship under effective communication would enable the school management to understand the expectations of parents towards their children academic performance. This means that, the school administrators had to ensure that the relationship established with parents had a positive outcome in students' performance.

The sub-item on parents attending school meetings 9(90%) shows expectations towards their expectations for their children academic performance. The study revealed parents who attended the meetings to be equipped with knowledge

on school programs that could enhance higher performance among learners. Also, their expectations in the meetings were associated with their participations in giving out their ideas on how they could contribute for their children education. Gilani, Waheed and Raza (already cited) found that, the school administrations had to ensure the majority of parents attending the meetings so as to set common goals towards students' performance. Hence, it can be concluded that, attending meetings for parents had to be compulsory with effective towards students' better performance. The findings was supported by Vroom theory which emphasized on reaching expected outcomes by having an effective task performances among learners which could be effectively created via teachers and parents participation.

Also during interview, the respondents show that creating education programs to parents involves people within and outside the schools including political leaders where the school was located. Also, parents seem to be involved for the education programs during the parent meetings where the school leaders and local or political leaders enhanced parents to become aware on the education program to be established. This means the school programs might be effective when involving different education stakeholders. The findings concurred with Gilani, Waheed and Raza (already cited) who found that, the school administrations had to ensure the majority of parents attending the meetings so as to set common goals towards students' performance.

The sub-item on providing rewards to children when performed high 8(80%) was revealed to be among the parents' expectations towards better education performance. (Mendoka, 2002) found the individuals who were highly motivated to have higher expectations in reaching their targeted goal. Hence, there was an attendance for an individual to perform basing on the level of motivation employed by the authority or any other person with power to provide such a reward. This means that, there was a need for establishing strong reward system among parents for the sake of bringing positive impacts on students' academic performance. The finding was supported Vroom theory which emphasized the presence of both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for the better students' performance.

During interview the respondents indicates that, parents had a great role in children motivation towards their educational aspirations. Noah and Benson [29] contended the motivation to have good outcome if there was a strong positive attitude. This means that, there was a need for establishing strong reward system among parents for the sake of bringing positive impacts on students' academic performance. The finding was supported by Vroom theory which explained motivational learning school and home learning environment to children.

The sub-item on advising children on their education aspirations 8(80%) was also an expectation shown by parents towards their education aspirations. In this case students were advised to select their expectations and make full engagements to their selections so as to be competent in their career by performing different activities. The finding was in line with Mathibe[30] who emphasized people to concentrate or engage on tasks which they had high expectancy beliefs. It can be concluded that, both teachers and parents had to give advice to children on how they could reach their expectations. The finding was supported by integrated conceptual model which encourage collaboration between teachers and parents for the sake of improving learners' performance.

The sub-item on helping individual children learning ability 8(80%) was also revealed by the study as among the parents' expectations towards their children aspirations. In this case, parents should provide necessary material for their children, preparing conducive learning environment and collaborate with teachers in controlling learning behavior of their children. The finding was in line with Mussa[31] who found the good discipline to have contribution in students' performance. This means that, there was a need for identifying individual children learning ability so as to enhance them reaching their aspirations.

Another revealed aspect was for parents to participate in school different activities rather than academics 8(80%). According to Wanja[21] there should be different ways of parents' participation in their children educational activities. URT [32] under the policy which explain how parents could be involved in school activities suggest the three categories including academics, discipline, counselling and guidance committees to be formed from the major parent committee. This means that, the engagement of parents in other school activities than education was also important in helping students reach their education aspirations.

The sub-item on payment for children meals to meet children expectations towards their academic achievements 6(60%) was an expectation for putting different strategies for their children achievement. The contribution for children meals concurred with the finding from Yolcu[23] who suggests parents' contribution for their children education to be unlimited. This means that parents might be encouraged to contribute for their children meals so as to establish students healthy towards good performance. The findings were in line with Vroom theory which encouraged the extrinsic motivation to be established so as to motivate students to work hard in their studies. Hence, the school meals were the extrinsic motivation.

Sub-item on parents' participation in the discussion concern with exams results 5(50%) was among their expectations for putting different strategies for their children achievement. According to Gilani, Waheed and Raza[24] parents' meetings was necessary for discussing how to improve their children performance as they might impose

different agendas for improving the learning environment and resources. This means that, there should be an effective strategy for enhancing parents' discussion on their children examinations results. The finding concurred with the used interactive model which explained the importance of having parents and schools' integration for the sake of enhancing students achieving in their goal.

In other hand, parents' responses show higher negative expectations including in participating in academic forums/meetings 9(90%). The negative expectations lead to their poor participation. According to Hakielimu[22] most parents were show their less participating after the introduction of fee free education policy of 2014. The findings show among the less expectations were their negative aspects in buying subject books 7(70%) for their children and poor attitudes for school ownership 7(70%). All these were associated by their poor perceptions in policy recommendations to parents roles on children academic performance 6(60%). It can be concluded that there should be a systematic method for shaping parents' expectations by educating them on how they could reach their expectations and students performance.

Discussion of the findings

The findings show both parents and teachers to agree on parents to have higher positive attitudes towards their children educational aspirations under the assumption that, parents who had high expectation of their children academic achievements. Their expectations were revealed from different aspects such as their desire and interests, participating in school academic activities as well as collaborating with teachers and school leaders for the sake of improving their students' academic performances.

In the case of the desire and interests most respondents from both side of parents and teachers view parents to have a great desire and interests of having teachers with high ability in using their pedagogical skills to integrate learners with the available teaching and learning resources so as to enable the students to perform high for further studies. Also, parents desired to use their little education they have to help their children to meet their educational aspirations by solving some difficulties they face across subjects. The challenge of this desire was that, majority of parents' education level was lower compared to the current education level of their children.

Another parents desired attitudes towards their children educational aspirations were establishing good relationship with school leaders who could direct how to reach their attitudes towards their children education, the desire to have rewards for higher performers in internal and external examinations and the desire to be ownership of the school so as to have ability to establish their immediate plans.

In case of parents' attitudes to participate for their children education, the data collected shows the participations in different ways. One of the participation was when parents participate in discipline matters to control their children learning behavior in schools. The common learning behavior revealed by the study was truancy which seem to base on personal problems. Hence, parents decided to control the learning behavior by attending school meeting, paying for remedial classes, paying for school meals, contributing for school stationaries, buying for school uniforms for their children as recommended by the policy and helping their children learning ability by providing ample time for studying in their homes.

In case of collaborations the study findings show that, most parents collaborate with their teachers by establishing good communication as well as advising their children on how to meet their education aspirations.

CONCLUSION

The research study aimed to find out prospects of parental attitudes towards students' educational aspirations in secondary schools and to determine if other factors rather than parental attitude influence students' education aspirations. It can be concluded that parents' expectations on children educational aspirations, enhanced their ability to work smart and aspired to higher education. The study revealed some factors that affect parents' attitudes towards their children educational aspirations were grounded on school academic activities and administrative matters like disciplinary policy, political issues and ignorance or lack of awareness among parents. The other factors that influence students' educational aspirations rather than parental attitudes such as creating learning environment and community activities to education were paramount. Thus, parents and care givers whose positive attitudes towards education impact positively on students' educational aspirations.

Recommendations

From the findings of this study, it can therefore be recommended that:

- The government should employ qualified teachers who would be the role model to students so that they can aspire for higher education.
- Educational administrators should strive to keep good relationship with parents and constant communication so as to create a rapport between the community and school to enhance students' educational aspirations.
- The school management should avail teaching and learning resources that would motivate learners and parents towards children's educational aspirations.

- Teachers should create friendly learning environment so that the students can be free to express their ideas, opinions, suggestions and express their problems concerning educational issues.
- Awareness should be created among parents towards the importance of education so as to inspire their children educational aspirations.

Suggestions for further studies

From the study findings, the following topics are advocated for the further studies

- 1) Studies determining the types of activities parents would be willing to participate in at their child's school.
- 2) Children's motivation and their academic achievement.
- 3) Open lines of communication between the school and home, for the benefit of the child.

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