The Impact of Students' Socio-economic Background on Academic Performance in Universities, a Case of Students in Kisii University College

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Abstract

This study is about the impact of students' socio-economic background on academic performance in universities, a case study of students in Kisii University College. The objectives of the study were to Evaluate the factors that influenced the student academic performance and the relationship between the student socio-economic background and academic performance. To achieve this, a sample of 186 respondents in Kisii University College was selected in all the six faculties using simple random sampling. Questionnaires were administered to the respondents. Research Assistants presented copies of the questionnaires to students to complete and supplementary information was obtained from the university academic staff. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Regression analysis was used to establish the relationship between the student socio-economic background and academic performance The likert analysis were used to analyse the data, the weighted mean, standard deviation and ANOVA to measure the level of dispersion from conformity, the results revealed that the student social economic background influenced student academic performance since Education plays a major role in skill sets for acquiring jobs, as well as specific qualities that stratify people with higher and lower social economic status. The middle class parents take an active role in their children's education and development by using controlled organized activities and fostering a sense of entitlement through encouraged discussion. Families with lower income do not participate in this movement, causing their children to have a sense of constraint. A division in education attainment is thus born out of these two differences in child rearing. Lower incomes families can have children who do not succeed to the levels of the middle income children have a greater sense of entitlement, more argumentative, or better prepared for adult life.

Key Words: Education, Economic, Social, Performance

Background of the study

Socioeconomic status is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position relative to others, based on income and education, and occupation (Marmot, Michael, 2004) indicates When analyzing a family's social economic status, the household income, earners' education and occupation are examined, as well as combined income, versus with an individual, when their own attributes are assessed.

Lareau, Annette (2003) observes that Socioeconomic status is typically broken into three categories, high, middle, and low to describe the three areas a family or an individual may fall into when placing a family or individual into one of these categories any or all of the three variables income, education, and occupation can be assessed. Additionally, low income and little education have shown to be strong predictors of a range of physical and mental health problems due to environmental conditions may be the entire cause of that person's social predicament to begin with.

Simiyu, J.W (2001) argues that The family income refers to wages salaries, profit, rents and any flow of earnings received. Income can also come in the form of unemployment or workers compensation, social security, pensions, interests or dividends, royalties, trusts, alimony, or other governmental, public, or family financial assistance. Income can be looked at in two terms, relative and absolute. Absolute income, as theorized by economist Keyenes, is the relationship in which as income increases, so will consumption, but not at the same rate.

Relative income dictates a person or family's savings and consumption based on the family's income in relation to others. Income is commonly used measure of social economic status because it is relatively easy to figure for most individuals.

Income inequality is most commonly measured around the world by the Gini Coefficient, where 0 corresponds to perfect equality and 1 means perfect inequality. Low income focuses on meeting immediate needs and do not accumulate wealth that could be passed on to future generations, thus increasing inequality. Families with higher and expendable income can accumulate wealth and focus on meeting immediate needs while being able to consume and enjoy luxuries and weather crises (GOK, 1983)

Ominde, S.H (1964) observes that Education plays a major role in skill sets for acquiring jobs, as well as specific qualities that stratify people with higher from lower Social economic status. Annette Lareau speaks on the idea of concerted cultivation, where middle class parents take an active role in their children's education and development by using controlled organized activities and fostering a sense of entitlement through encouraged discussion. Laureau argues that families with lower income do not participate in this movement, causing their children to have a sense of constraint. A division in education attainment is thus born out of these two differences in child rear

Gachathi, P (1976) indicates that Occupational prestige as one component of socio-economic status encompasses both income and educational attainment Occupational status reflects the educational attainment required to obtain the job and income levels that vary with different jobs and within ranks of occupations. Additionally, it shows achievement in skills required for the job. Occupational status measures social position by describing job characteristics, decision making ability and control, and psychological demands on the job (Erick, Nyakundi etal, 2012).

Occupations are ranked and some of the most prestigious occupations are physicians and surgeons, lawyers, chemical and biomedical engineers, and communications analysts. These jobs, considered to be grouped in the high status in classification, provide more challenging work, ability and greater control over working conditions. Those jobs with lower rankings were food preparation workers, counter attendants, bartenders and helpers, dishwashers, janitors, maids and housekeepers, vehicle cleaners, and parking lot attendants. The jobs that were less valued were also paid significantly less and are more laborious, very hazardous, and provide less autonomy. Economic reserves or assets, presents a source of security providing a measure of a household's ability to meet emergencies, absorb economic shocks, or provide the means to live comfortably. Wealth reflects intergenerational transitions as well as accumulation of income and savings, income, age, marital status, family size, religion, occupation, and education are all predictors for wealth attainment (Marmot, Michael 2004)

The family wealth gap is due in part to income disparities and differences in achievement. The differences in savings due to different rates of incomes, inheritance factors, and discrimination in the housing market lead to the wealth gap. The savings increase with increasing income, the amount a person inherits, either during a lifetime or after death, can create different starting points between two different individuals or families. These different starting points also factor into housing, education, and employment discrimination. (Amutabi, M.N 2003) In line with similar research on monkeys, humans showed an increase in brain activity while viewing individuals they perceived to be of similar status. This means the brains of people with a high socioeconomic status showed more activity when looking at a picture of an individual they thought also shared high status. The same goes for people with lower perceived socioeconomic status when they viewed others similar to them.

Problem statement

A study published in 2001 issue of Psychological Science found that children of parents with a high socioeconomic status tended to express more "disengagement" behaviours than their less fortunate peers. In this context, disengagement behaviours represent actions such as fidgeting with other objects and drawing pictures while being addressed. Other participants born into less favoured circumstances tended to make more eye contact, nods as signs of happiness when put into an interactive social environment. the more fortuitous peers felt less inclined to gain rapport with their group because they saw no need for their assistance in the future.

A family's socioeconomic status is based on family income, parental education level, parental occupation, and social status in the community such as contacts within the community, group associations, and the community's academic performance of the family, Families with high socioeconomic status often have more success in preparing their young children for school because they typically have access to a wide range of resources to promote and support young children's development. They are able to provide their young children with high-quality child care, books, and toys to encourage children in various learning activities at home. Also, they have easy access to information regarding their children's health, as well as social, emotional, and cognitive development. In addition, families with high socioeconomic status often seek out information to help them better prepare their young children for school.

The study aimed at finding out the contribution of socio-economic status of the family on the academic performance of the student in public Universities in Kenya, A case of Kisii university college.

Literature Review

Amutabi, M.N (2003) discuss the impact of socioeconomic status on children's readiness for school:"The segregating nature of social class, ethnicity may well reduce the variety of enriching experiences thought to be prerequisite for creating readiness to learn among children. Social class, ethnicity, dictate neighbourhood, housing, and access to resources that affect enrichment or deprivation as well as the acquisition of specific value systems.

APA (2001) describe the relationship of family socioeconomic status to children's readiness for school, Across all socioeconomic groups; parents face major challenges when it comes to providing optimal care and education for their children. For families in poverty these challenges can be formidable. Sometimes, when basic necessities are lacking, parents must place top priority on housing, food, clothing, and health care. Educational toys, games, and books may appear to be luxuries, and parents may not have the time, energy, or knowledge to find innovative and less-expensive ways to foster young children's development.(Ominde, S.H 1964) observes that even in families with above average income parents often lack the time and energy to invest fully in their children's preparation for school, and they sometimes face a limited array of options for high-quality child care both before their children start school and during the early school years. Kindergarten teachers throughout the country report that children are increasingly arriving at school inadequately prepared.

Families with low socioeconomic status often lack the financial, social, and educational supports that characterize families with high socioeconomic status. Poor families also may have inadequate or limited access to community resources that promote and support children's development and school readiness. Parents may have inadequate skills for such activities as reading to and with their children, and they may lack information about childhood immunizations and nutrition. Lareau, Annette (2004) state that "low maternal education and minority-language status are most consistently associated with fewer signs of emerging literacy and a greater number of difficulties in preschoolers." Having inadequate resources and limited access to available resources can negatively affect families' decisions regarding their young children's development and learning. As a result, children from families with low socioeconomic status are at greater risk of entering kindergarten unprepared than their peers from families with median or high socioeconomic status.

Research Strategy

To understand the impact of student socio-economic background on academics performance in public Universities a case of Kisii University College, the researcher used *ex post facto* design. This type of design was most appropriate because it enables use of descriptive statistics and explanations for analysis. It brings out the possible antecedents of events that already occurred and therefore cannot be manipulated. Further, it explores and describes phenomena. The design is effective in obtaining information relating to people's thoughts, feelings and opinions. It collects generalizable information from a population. To find out student responses on their academic performance based on socio- economic background, the design enabled the researcher to collect and analyze data. The study targeted the undergraduate students of Kisii University College, both males and females. The population comprised 242 second year, 84 third and 74 fourth year students, which made a total of 400. First years were not included because of they have not sat for the examination in the university.

Table 1: Distribution of Population

Year of Study	Female	Male	Population Size
2nd Year	54	188	242
3rd Year	29	55	84
4th Year	24	50	74
Total	107	293	400

Source: Kisii University College Admission Records.

The study employed proportional sampling method in picking the sample size from the population of study. proportional sampling is a probability sampling technique employed alongside stratified sampling and ensures complete representation of a given sample hence reducing sampling error/biasness. The researcher considered second to fourth year classes of Kisii University College students. These groups were considered to have stayed in the college for a considerable period of time and have done their examination hence having been well acquainted with the campus environment and its characteristics. The Purposive sampling was used in picking the academic staff members.

Out of the population of 400 being second to fourth year students, a sample of 183 was selected. $S = \frac{X^2 NP (1-P)}{d^2 (N-1) + X^2 P (1-P)}$

S = Required Sample Size

N = Given Population Size

P = Population proportion for table construction has been assumed to be 0.50 (As this magnitude yields maximum possible sample size required.

d = degree of accuracy as reflected by amount of error that can be tolerated in the fluctuation of sample proportion P about the proportion P the value of being 0.05 in the calculations for entries in the table.

X^2 = Table value for chi-square for one degree of freedom relative to the desired level of confidence. The value 3.481 for the .95 confidence level represented by entries in the table.

The working in order to arrive at the sample size was as follows:

$S = \frac{3.481 \times 400 \times 0.50 (1- 0.50)}{0.05^2 (400 -1) + 3.481 \times 0.50(1- 0.50)} = 186$

Table 2: Distribution of Population and Sample Size

Year of Study	Population	Sample Size
2nd Year	242	113
3rd Year	84	40
4th Year	74	33
Total	400	186

Data was collected using structured and unstructured questionnaires. The Questionnaires were designed to use the Likert type of scale in measuring the student perceptions and attitudes on their socio- economic background and how it impacts on their academic performance. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), the Likert types of scales are used to measure perception, attitude, values, and behaviour. Rating scales consist of numbers and descriptions which are used to rate or rank the subjective and intangible components in research. After developing the instruments the researcher did a pilot testing involving 50 students from Moi University who were not part of the research study. After pilot testing questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and collected them after an agreed period of time.

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) describe validity as the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences, which are based on the research results. It is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of data actually represent the phenomenon under study. Data should be a true reflection of the variables. The researcher used the content and construct validity to develop the instruments in line with the objectives of the study.

Data for the administration of the questionnaires were set. The researcher visited each group at different times in three days and explained the purpose of the study and gave assurance of confidentiality of the information they will give. They were also assured that the research was aimed at assisting in adding knowledge to studies on student welfare in the Kenyan public universities.

Descriptive statistics with the help of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was applied in this research in organizing, coding and analyzing quantitative data collected. The descriptive statistics involved calculations of the mean, frequencies and percentages and weighted averages. In addition, standard deviation and coefficient of variation were used in the research specifically to measure the degree of disparity and consistency of responses to statements on student academic performance. The lower the coefficient variation the more consistency/uniformity such responses are, regarding the variable under investigation. The SPSS is a commonly used set of computer programmes in educational research. It is comprehensive and integrated for managing, analyzing and displaying data.

Results and Discussions

4.1 Respondents on socio economic background on academic performance
The result of the study indicated that 94% of the respondents felt that socio economic background impacted positively to the student academic performance, while 6% indicated socio economic background does not impact on the academic performance of the students.

Table 3 on Respondents socio economic background on student performance

Respondents on socio economic background	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	175	94
No	11	6
Total	186	100

Source: Researcher, 2012

4.2 Years of experience in working in the University College

The study sought to establish the experience in years for the staff members dealing with matters of university education and the take on the contribution of socio economic factor. The results are shown in figure 1 below.
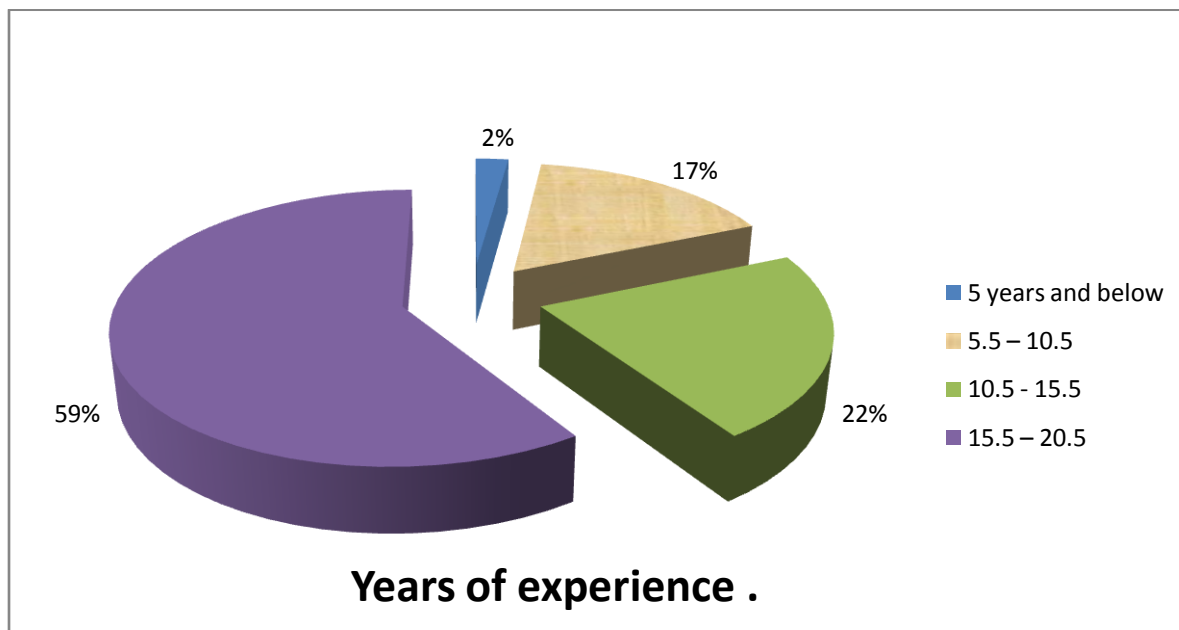
Figure 1– Respondent years of experience

The study shows majority respondents have experience ranging from 5 – 20 years, with the respondents having 16-20 years representing 59% and those with experience ranging between 10-15 year, constituting about 35%.

Overall, the staffs involved in the study have a wealth of experience which is necessary for the appraisal of student performance based on their socio economic background.

4.3 Respondents on how Socio-economic background affect academic performance

This study sought to find the students' perceptions on how socio-economic background affects academic performance. Perception was measured on a 5 point range Likert scale using 9 items (statements) relating to the students socio-economic background. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement.

Table 4: Distributions of Respondents on how Socio-economic background affects student academic performance

Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total
Affordability of Student Residential room	8.4	18.0	3.9	22.5	47.2	100
Ability to afford basic items	2.2	11.2	7.3	24.7	54.5	100
Ability to buy academic materials	2.2	0.6	1.7	18.5	77.0	100
Easy access to Library Books	7.3	3.4	1.1	15.2	73.0	100
Easy access to quality Bedding items	18.0	37.1	9.0	12.4	23.6	100
Ability to Maintain of Cleanliness	3.4	14.0	4.5	22.5	55.6	100
The affordability of catering facilities	4.5	10.1	6.2	27.5	51.7	100
Afford quality food	5.6	6.2	3.9	30.3	53.9	100
Easy access to quality entertainment	2.8	3.9	6.2	27.5	59.6	100

Source; Researcher, 2012

Table 4 presents the results of responses as indicated. The interview results that were obtained from the twelve items show that students' perception on 5 statements solicited negative responses by scoring highest percentages of the lowest mark by strongly disagreeing on all the statements except the statement which sought to know whether they had easy access to quality bedding items which scored 37.1 % positive perception. Students generally agreed that the entire student had access to quality bedding items.

Affordability of Facilities for special needs78.1%, easy access to library materials 77% and books73.0% respectfully, recorded the highest percentage of disagreement from the respondents. The responses indicated that students were more sensitive to socio- economic background that dealt with issues of affordability and easy access to facilities for special needs, library materials and books. This indicated that the needs of the students continue to increase, the more demand of the higher socio- economic status will be. These were the primary areas of students' interest in the general student welfare. It was observed that the socio- economic background was inadequately provided for the students. The statement which required a response whether the university college had socio- economic subsidy for students with special needs, attracted higher response of 78.1% not because there is a big number of student with special needs but because there isn't much attention given to students with special needs. The secondary interests of students' welfare were statements on sports/games socio- economic status 59.6%, ability to maintain cleanliness 55.6%, easy availability of food 55.6%, affordability of quality food 53.9%, and size of catering facilities 51.7%. Though statements on affordability of spacious residential rooms, water, recreational facilities, registered higher percentage on negative perception, they scored below 50%. This implies that students did not consider these services and facilities as core compared with those that touched on their academics.

The general observation from the respondent's perception on the socio- economic background on student academic performance was negative. This shows that the said socio- economic background was low hence many students came from poor families. This is indicated by students responding negatively to 8 out of 9 statements. Students' negative perceptions of these statements shows how they perceive their socio economic background in which they interact with, which in turn shapes their attitudes and behaviour in various ways. The day to day's learning from the interactions of these characteristics and activities bring about affective responses that is said to be their attitudes, behaviour and emotions. This is in agreement with Richard and Robert (1990) on classical conditioning theory which states that an organism learns through practice.

Repeated and systemic association between the attitude object (conditional stimulus) and a positively or negatively valued event (unconditional stimulus) is assumed to produce a condition, which is either favourable or unfavourable affective reaction toward the object and situation which is related.

Table 5: Ranking of responses of the impact of student socio-economic on academic performance

Statement	Ranking	Frequencies	Percentages
Easy Access to ICT equipments	1	152	85.40
Easy access to Library materials	2	130	73.00
Easy access to Quality entertainment	3	106	59.60
Easy Availability of Food items	4	99	55.60
Affordability of Quality food	5	96	53.90
The size of catering facilities	6	92	51.70

Source; Researcher, 2012

The table above indicates the order of responses in terms of frequencies and percentages showing services and facilities they most students need in ranking. The easy access to ICT equipments, library materials which ranked in the order of 1&2, to a greater extent show how students valued characteristics that touched on the academic needs. Frequencies and percentages of responses seemed to be higher in descending order of prevalence. The students perceived the academic welfare to be core in campus life. From the sample population of 186 respondents, a frequency of statements on ICT equipment 152, Library materials 130 responded by strongly disagreeing with the statements by scoring 85.4 % and , 73.0% respectively. Therefore, putting into priority these services and facilities as core in the student life in the campus.

4.4 The family socio economic background

The study evaluated the effect of student social economic background on academic performance, the ranking of the four variables for each intervening variable as indicated in the questionnaire while considering socio-economic status in the acquisition of facilities and materials by the student. This was necessary to find out the views of the respondents as regards each variable. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 6 below. The findings of the analysis for each question of the questionnaire indicates the Family income as the most important factor to consider in the socio-economic background of the student with an overall mean of 4.038, followed by high education Standard background with a mean of 4.025, while parents occupation with a mean of 3.833 and 3.635 respectively. Additionally, results of the analysis of the overall descriptive statistic for each of the independent variable taken as a whole indicated that Family income forms the basis for wealth creation and improvement of family status as the most important factors to consider while studying the student social background with a mean of 4.563 and 4.124 respectively as shown in table 6 below which is consistent with the results of the means for each independent variable on the intervening variables.

Table 6. Mean and standard deviation of the independent variables

Independent Variable	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Family income	4.563	0.248
Higher education Standard	4.124	0.352
Parents occupation	3.846	0.286
Family wealth	3.210	0.384

Source: Researcher, 2012

Table 7 summary of regression analysis results

Regression model summary	Dependent variable student performance
R squared	0.7204
Adjusted R squared	0.6409
Observation	186

Source; Researcher 2012

ANOVA (Analysis of variance)

	Degree of freedom	Sum of squares	Mean squares
Regression	185	3.299	1.099
Residual	1	1.281	0.426
Total	186	4.580	
Calculated F		2.577	
Significance F		0.2286	

Source; Researcher 2012

Table 7 above summarises regression results, as indicated in the regression statistics E squared was 0.724. this means 72% variations from the expected and actual output (dependent variable academic performance) as explained by the independent variables. These indicate good fit of the regression equation. Thus, this is a good reflection of the true reflection that academic performance is depended on the socioeconomic background.

Analysis of variance shows that F calculated is greater than F critical (2.577>0.228) this implies that the regression equation was well specified.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.2 Summary

Based on the study objective of socioeconomic background affects the student academic performance and the analysis of the collected data, the following major findings were established: Student's recorded highest on the affordability of quality of residence room, catering and recreational facilities based on socio- economic background of the student, the higher the socioeconomic background the easy to afford the basic needs necessary for the academic performance. The basic means of life bring about the student academic performance. The access and affordability of Information Communication facilities and services, library materials which dealt with academic matters were regarded by students to be the core in the general students' interest and welfare of the student in performance.

5.3 Conclusions

The study determined the impact of student socio-economic background on student academic performance. Based on the summary findings, the study makes the following conclusions: Students indicated that the affordability of residence rooms, catering facilities and recreational facilities was based on the socio- economic background as inadequately provided to students of low socio-economic background also easy access to Information Communication and Technology facilities and services; Library materials are to be core in the general students' academic performance.

5.4 Recommendations.

The parents should re-examine its financial support to student since such support is viewed as the main contributor towards the student academic performance.

Research should be conducted to examine the student spending habits on their academic performance.

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