

Parental Occupation as a Predictor of Students' Academic Performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Public Mixed Day Secondary Schools in Nyamira North Sub-County, Kenya

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Submitted: 7th August 2015; Accepted: 10th January 2017; Published online: 24th February 2017

Abstract

This study examined the influence of parental occupation on academic performance in Public Mixed Day Secondary Schools in Nyamira North Sub-County, Kenya. Performance of the sub-county in KCSE has been dismal over time. The study was carried out amongst 857 parents of KCSE candidates and 22 head teachers of Public Mixed Day Secondary Schools in Nyamira North sub-county. The objective of the study was: To establish how parental occupation influences students' academic performance in selected public mixed day secondary schools in Nyamira North Sub-County. The study adopted *ex- post facto* research design. Validity was established during piloting and through expert's opinion, while reliability was obtained through test-retest methodology and cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.753 obtained. A randomly selected sample made up of 265 parents and 21 head teachers of Mixed Day Public Secondary Schools was used. Primary data were collected by use of questionnaires and interview schedules. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and non- parametric tests to establish relationships between variables. The analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20. The study findings revealed that parental occupation did not affect performance in KCSE examination in 2010. Notwithstanding these finding, the study revealed that most parents were involved in manual low paying occupations which attracted low payments and thence limiting parental participation and input in the education of children. From these findings, the study recommends that: the Government of Kenya to consider coming up with policies that lead to the uplifting of the living standards of the parents; for instance creation of job opportunities, and capacity building. Parents should be involved in decision making in issues affecting their children. Finally, the findings may form a basis for policy formulation.

KEY WORDS: Academic Performance Mixed Day, Parental Education.

Introduction

A myriad of variables exhibit a direct or indirect bearing on academic achievement particularly at the secondary level of education in Kenya. Among these variables is parental occupation. It's against this backdrop that a study was designed to investigate the influence of occupation on academic performance in Kenya certificate of secondary education (KCSE) in Nyamira North Sub County, Kenya. The Sub County has continued to trail in performance indices for some time now at this level of education.

Background of the Problem

According to the Government of Kenya education sector report 2013/14-2015/16 the education sector has a wide range of stakeholders with varied interests in the learning process and outcomes (R.o.K 2012). Vision 2030 second medium term plan 2013 -2017, emphasizes on the link between education and training (E&T) and a strong public and private partnerships

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(R.o.K 2013). Besides this the government is addressing issues related to access, quality, equity, relevance and service delivery among others. However the education sector faces emerging issues and challenges among them being; limited community participation, high dropout rates, poor planning of human resources and geographical disparities in quality, equity access to education and affordability (R.o.K 2013). Quality and relevant education provision involves the government, communities, development partners, and parents among other stakeholders. The quality of education in Nyamira North Sub County is a product of many stakeholders among them being parents. A number of demographic aspects in Nyamira County relate to parental participation in education.

According to Kenya open data (2011), the following statistics apply to this County and by extension to the Sub County : School gross attendance ratio in secondary schools is 78% for male and 69% for female; The proportion of households engaged in crop farming is 94.5% of the total population; In the wider former Nyamira District, where Nyamira North Sub County was inclusive, poverty rate was 46.6% (ranked number 43 out of 69); The total population in urban areas was 14%, indicating that majority of people live in rural areas.

Available literature indicate that in the former Nyamira District from where Nyamira North District was carved in 2008, poverty rate in 2005-2006 stood at 46.6% with the number of the poor totaling to 262,688 (Kenya open data 2011). The 1999 national census put dependency ratio as 100:95 which was manifested in low savings and investments in the district, leading to slow economic growth and a high incident of poverty (Institute of economic affairs, 2002). The District had 64% of its population with primary education, while only 17.7% of its population attained secondary education. This can be a limiting factor to people's full participation in educational matters especially in secondary school level. The population density in the district stood at 665 people per square kilometer in 2009, implying a strain on social amenities like schools and hospitals. According to Nyamira District strategic plan 2005-2010 (where Nyamira North Sub County was inclusive) the District had: high rates of school drop outs, high rates of H.I.V AIDS prevalence, low levels of education, child labour, child negligence, drug abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM), and gender violence, increased number of single parenthood, low transition rates, and poor continuing learning environment at home (R.o.K 2005).

The consortium for research on educational access, transition and equity (CREATE 2011) report recommended strengthening quality of education received by pupils who enter district schools in Kenya (Lewin, Wasanga, Wanderi & Somerset 2011). The majority of secondary schools in Nyamira North Sub County are district schools. The relevance of this study stemmed from empirical review which showed that parents use materials and non-material resources to create a home environment that fosters academic skills (Xia, 2010). Parental occupation is one of the non material resources, which as well is among indicators of social economic status. The study was keen at establishing whether parental occupation could influence academic performance in Nyamira North Sub County. This was against a backdrop of the fact that the researcher did not come across a similar study done in the sub county, which evidently was a gap to be filled.

Statement of the Problem

Performance in the Kenya certificate of secondary education (KCSE) in Nyamira North Sub County has been dismal for some time now. Although the government and other pertinent stakeholders have invested heavily by providing prerequisite resources, academic results have not been commensurate

as such. So far there is lack of knowledge on whether parental occupation has a bearing on academic performance in public mixed day secondary schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish the effect of parental occupation as a predictor of students' academic performance in KCSE in public mixed day secondary schools in Nyamira North Sub County, Kenya.

Objective of the Study

To establish how parental occupation influences students' academic performance in selected public mixed day secondary schools in Nyamira North Sub County.

Research Question

How does parents' occupation influence students' academic performance in selected public mixed day secondary schools in Nyamira North Sub County?

Theoretical Framework.

The study was informed by Epstein (2001) theory of parental involvement. As cited in Stelmack (n.d), the study asserts that informed parents who are involved in their children's school can positively impact their children attitude and performance. Parental involvement is depended on a number of contextual variables, however there are many advantages attributed to parental involvement (Stelmack n.d). Key among these advantages is parental impact on student's learning and academic performance. Parental involvement programme focuses on six areas which are: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. These involvement levels are explicated by Stelmack (n.d pg 3) when he contends that: "Epstein's (2001) research offers a comprehensive parent involvement program, and is perhaps the most frequently cited in this area of scholarship" This notion has been emphasized in more recent studies. As noted in the work of Apodaca, F.R., Gentling,, G.D.,Steinhaus K.,j.,and Rosenberg A.,E.,(2015) parental involvement in the academic performance of children has been a subject of keen interest to educators. This interest first manifested itself in the work of theorists like Epstein.

Epstein's typology suggests effective parent involvement programs focus on:

- (a) Parenting skills to assist parents with understanding their children's learning needs, and helping teachers understand family needs;
- (b) Communication that allows for two-way, open communication between the school and home;
- (c) Volunteering that recognizes parents' talents and contributions both in and for the school;
- (d) Learning at home strategies that engage the family with their children's school work;
- (e) Decision making that includes parents as key stakeholders in making decisions that will impact student learning; and
- (f) Collaborating with the community to create mutual benefit by sharing resources and contributing to both school and community goals.

Comprehensive parent programs will incorporate the six keys into an action plan that is developed and implemented by an Action Team of parents, teachers, students, administration, and community members. Epstein emphasizes the need for grassroots planning involving all stakeholders. In her

conceptualization, parents, teachers, and community members are coined “spheres of influence”; all stakeholders are considered equal partners in student learning.

Conceptual Framework

The relationship between various variables for the study is shown in figure 1.

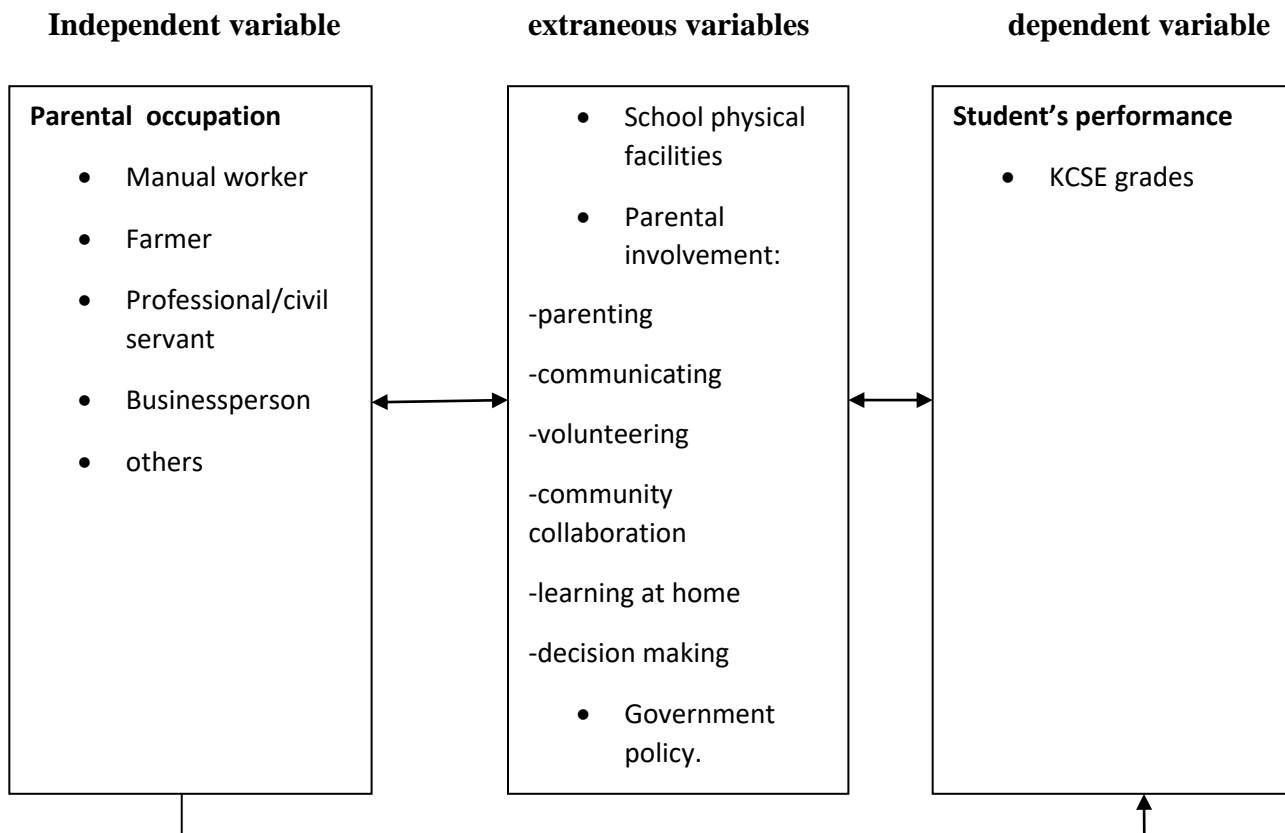


Figure 1. conceptual framework showing relationships between variables.

In view of the conceptual framework displayed in figure 1, parental occupation (in the independent variable) is a significant determinant of student’s academic performance (in the dependent variable) This is largely because the social economic background and other family characteristics particularly parental occupation influence the degree of parental involvement (in the extraneous variable) in learning and in school activities which ultimately influences performance.

Literature Review

Substantial information exists in the literature relating to parental occupation on academic achievements.

Parental Occupation and Academic Achievements

Research by the RAND Cooperation in Australia found that the most important factors associated with the educational achievement of children are not race, ethnicity or

immigrant status; instead the most critical factors appear to be socio economic status (SES) (Sandras, Cinisomo, Pebley, Maggio, Berends & Lucas 2004). These factors include: parental education levels, neighborhood poverty, parental occupation status, and family income (New South Wales, (NSW) department of education and training, 2010).

Various studies have found positive correlations between parents' occupation and educational performance of children. A research in Uganda, found a positive correlation between parents' occupations with pupils education performance (Onzima, 2010). From this study it was concluded that parents' low economic status impacted negatively on pupils' performance, through denying the children access to resources which are readily available to children from higher SES.

Mdanda (1997) found a significant relationship between parents occupational status and pupils' academic achievement. From the study, it was found that pupils born of professional parents obtain higher scores on academic performance. Parental occupation is one of the determinants of SES. Farooq *et al.* (2011) argues that Parents' occupation has little effect on a child's performance in studies. The researchers further argue that parents' education means more than their occupation in relation to their children's academic performance at school. This argument is reinforced by Considine and Zappala (2002) who found that social factors such as parents' education attainments are more significant than economic factors in explaining a child's education outcome.

Moreover, Shamsuddin (2006) found that parental nature of occupation does not make any significant relationship between parent-child interaction and children's school performance. Shar (1993) in Pakistan had early established a negative relationship between father's occupation and children's academic achievement. The results from the study showed that about one fifth (20.2 percent) of fathers of the respondents had a high level of occupation, but approximately one tenth (9.6 percent) of the respondents had high level of academic achievement.

However it's worth noting that Parental occupation has a signification affect on the academic achievement of students. It plays a remarkable role in students' academic achievement. Good parental occupation has a positive effect on the academic achievement of students. A given occupation is a source of income to a family. Different occupations attract different levels of incomes. In the same connection, Rothestein (2004) cited in Ogunsola (2012) posited that parents of different occupation classes often have different styles of child rearing, and different ways of disciplining their children. In Nigeria, Ogunsola and Adewale (2012) established that SES and a host of other factors relating to the home environment of students such as educational background of parents, health status of students, parental occupation, and family size could have effects on academic achievement. Samatha (2013) observed that many factors influence a child's academic achievement beyond a child's ability. The neighborhoods children live in, the qualities of the school, and parental occupations, all have an effect. Families with low income face greater hurdles in achieving effective parenting which in turn harm their children's development and educational achievement (Berk, 1997) as cited in Considine and Zappala (2002).

Research Methodology

The study adopted *ex post facto* research design.

In this design, the independent variable is not manipulated, since it already exists.

(<http://www.cedu.niu.edu/~walker/research/Research%20Types.pdf>).

Inferences were made without direct manipulation of the independent variable. Since the study examined the influence of parental occupation on student performance, this research design was perceived to be appropriate since the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable had already occurred over time.

For any research, the sample size of any study must be determined during the designing stage of the study. However, before determining the size of the sample that needed to be drawn from the population, a few factors must be taken into consideration. According to Salant and Dillman (1994), the size of the sample is determined by four factors: (1) how much sampling error can be tolerated; (2) population size; (3) how varied the population is with respect to the characteristics of interest; and (4) the smallest subgroup within the sample for which estimates are needed.

The study used a formula which was first developed Krejcie and Morgan (1970) to determine the sample size. The following formula used is given as:

$$S = X^2NP (1-P) / d^2 (N-1) + X^2P (1-P)$$

S = required sample size

X² = the table value of chi-square for one degree of freedom at the desired confidence level

N = the population size

P = the population proportion (assumed to be .50 since this would provide the maximum sample size)

d = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (.05)

Based on this formula table, a sample size of 265 parents was obtained; all the 22 head teachers were selected through the census sampling technique.

Data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Analyzing qualitative data followed a series of steps: the data were coded or indexed to identify themes, which were then organized into coherent categories, by assembling all the data pertaining to a particular theme; finally an interpretation of the findings was done to find out the lessons learnt and the gaps revealed in the investigation. The Scientific Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used to analyze quantitative data. The study also used chi square tests in computing the relationship between the parental occupation and students' performance in KCSE.

Instrumentation

The study used questionnaires and interview schedules as research instruments. Questionnaires for head teachers sought to collect precise information on; students' *biodata*, On the other hand interviewing the parents was done to obtain information on their various occupations.

Questionnaires for Head Teachers

Questionnaires for head teachers sought demographic data about KCSE stations under review and KCSE performance of various candidates of 2010. The questionnaire used closed ended questions, which were ideal for collection of facts. In general terms, the study used questionnaires because:

they provided an objective means of collecting information, they provided responses which were amenable to quantification through content analysis, they were cost effective, easy to construct and convenient to work with.

Interview Schedules for Parents

Interview schedules were used for obtaining information from parents of students who sat for KCSE examination in 2010. Respondents in this category were thought to be multifaceted in terms of literacy levels. It was thought that some of the respondents were illiterate or semi-illiterate prompting the researcher to make certain critical clarifications, where need arose during the interview process. The schedules were divided into parts A and B. Part A sought to obtain demographic and general information. Specific close ended questions were used for this purpose. The Questions were appropriate, given that the information given was factual and hence required minimal clarification. Part B of the schedule dwelt on the influence parental occupation on performance. Responses in this section were categorized on a Likert scale. Combinations of closed ended and open ended questions were used in order to preserve the possibility of easy computation, but at the same time providing respondents with the space to develop their own ideas.

Piloting

To test on the validity of research instruments, a pilot study was conducted in two mixed day secondary schools in a neighboring sub county. During piloting any possible shortcomings were noted, and addressed before the actual study was carried out. Parents of 2010 KCSE candidates were interviewed. Head teachers from two public mixed day secondary schools filled respective questionnaires.

Validity of Instruments

The researcher did not at all manipulate participants as they filled questionnaire items. Face validity of the research instruments was established during piloting. This ensured that the required information was gathered. Further insight was sought from supervisors and other experts from Mount Kenya University who were consulted for testing internal and external validity.

Reliability of Instruments

To test on reliability of research instruments, the researcher administered a test-retest reliability analysis. In this case, research instruments were administered to the same respondents after duration of two weeks. Reliability was established by comparing responses that were received on the first and second administration. Further establishment of reliability, was attained through calculation of Cronbach alpha coefficient of reliability.

A score of 0.753 for the parents' interview schedule obtained was higher than the recommended Cronbach alpha coefficient of reliability of 0.7 thus, making the tool appropriate in terms of reliability for data collection. A score of 0.812 for the head teachers' questionnaire was higher than the recommended Cronbach alpha coefficient of reliability of 0.7 thus, making the tool appropriate in terms of reliability for data collection.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher sought an introductory letter from Mt. Kenya University. The researcher then applied for a research permit from the National Council for Science and Technology (NCST). Thereafter, the researcher sought permission from the Ministry of Education Office for Nyamira North District, and the District Commissioner before travelling to sampled schools for familiarization. The researcher then sought permission from the head teacher(s), to conduct the research. The head teacher(s) subsequently were asked to fill questionnaires. The head teachers supplied data on KCSE 2010, which was used to assess academic performance. The researcher then went to visit various homes to interview parents of 2010 KCSE candidates earlier sampled.

Data Analysis

Data received was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Analyzing qualitative data followed a series of steps: the data were read through thoroughly to establish their quality; data from each question were put together then an exploration of consistencies and differences identified; the data were then coded or indexed to identify themes, which were then organized into coherent categories, by assembling all the data pertaining to a particular theme; finally an interpretation of the findings was done to find out the lessons learnt and the gaps revealed in the investigation.

The Scientific Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used to analyze quantitative data. Calculation of measures of central tendency and variability was obtained to describe distributions. The study also used chi square tests in computing the relationship between the parental occupation and students' performance in KCSE. The chi-square test measured the discrepancy between the observed cell counts and the expected values. Where the two-sided asymptotic significance of the chi-square statistic was greater than 0.10, it was considered safe to say that the differences were due to chance variation, which implied that the relationship was significant.

Results and Discussions

Candidates' Performance in KCSE examination

The response in respect to the candidates' performance in KCSE Examination was as given in Table 1.

Table 1: Candidates' performance in KCSE

Response	Frequency	Percentage
11 - 20	84	35.6
21 - 30	75	31.8
31 - 40	56	23.7
41 - 50	4	1.7
51 - 60	8	3.4
61 - 70	6	2.5

71 - 80	2	0.8
81 and above	1	0.4
Total	236	100

The findings show that 35.6% of the candidates scored between 11 and 20 points in KCSE, 31.8% scored between 21 and 30 points, 23.7% scored between 31 and 40, 1.7% between 41 and 50 points, 3.4% between 51 and 60 points, while 3.7 scored above 61 points. This implied that students' performance in KCSE was poor in most schools. The implication and interpretation of these results is that performance at KCSE level of education has a high wastage rate; with very few students scoring quality grades which can enable them join University.

Influence of Parents' Occupation on Students' Academic Performance

This section contains the findings in respect to objective the research objective which sought to establish how parents' occupation influences students' academic performance in selected Public mixed Day Secondary.

Parents' Current Occupation

The response in respect to Parents' Current Occupation was as given in Table 2.

Table4: Parents' Current Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Manual worker	35	14.8
Farmer	163	69.1
Professional /civil servant	10	4.2
Businessperson	18	7.6
Others	10	4.2
Total	236	100

The findings show that 69.1% of the parents were farmers, 14.8 were manual workers, 7.6% were businesspersons, 3.4% were teachers, 4.2% were professional /civil servants, while 4.2% were involved in other occupations. This implied that most of the parents were involved in manual work, which ordinarily attracted very little pay. Onzima (2010) concluded that parents' low economic status impacted negatively on pupils' performance, through denying the children access to resources which are readily available to children from higher SES.

Chi Square tests showing the relationship between Parents' current occupation and child's score in KCSE examination

A chi square test showing the relationship between parents' current occupation and child's score in KCSE examination was as given in Table 3 and 4. Table 3 presents a cross tab showing the performance link to the parents' occupation, while Table 4 presents the chi square tests.

Table3: Relationship between Parents' current occupation and performance in KCSE examination.

KCSE Performance	Current Occupation						
	Manual worker	Farmer	Teacher	Professional/ Civil servant	Business person	Others	Total
11 - 20	13	59	2	2	0	8	84
21 - 30	8	52	5	0	10	0	75
31 - 40	12	34	1	0	7	2	56
41 - 50	1	3	0	0	0	0	4
51 - 60	0	7	0	0	1	0	8
61 - 70	1	5	0	0	0	0	6
71 - 80	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
81 and above	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	35	163	8	2	18	10	236

The findings show that most candidates represented in this study (178 out of 198) whose parents were either farmers or manual workers scored 40 or points; and that the parents believed that this was attributed to parents' occupation. Performance in the District was generally low irrespective of parents' occupation and this could be due to the fact that most persons in this area were involved in more or less in subsistence farming, or worked as manual labourers. A chi square test showing the relationship between parents' occupation and performance was as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: A chi-square test showing the relationship between Parents' Current Occupation and performance in KCSE examination

	Value	df	Asymp.Sig.(2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	35.701	35	.435
Likelihood Ratio	47.016	35	.084
Linear-by-Linear Association	.494	1	.482
N of Valid Cases	236		

39 cells which represent 81.2% have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01. The findings show a chi square test result of 35.701 at a degree of freedom of 35. The chi square test table value for the df of 35 at 0.05 significance level is 50.892 (Kothari, 2006). The result shows a Chi-square value of 35.701 observed at $X^2_{.05}$. This value is much lower than the Table value of 50.892, thus implying that candidates' parents' occupation did not effect on Performance in KCSE examination in KCSE 2010, the effect was insignificant. The performance there could be attributed to other factors besides parents' occupation. Refer to the bar chart in Figure 2.

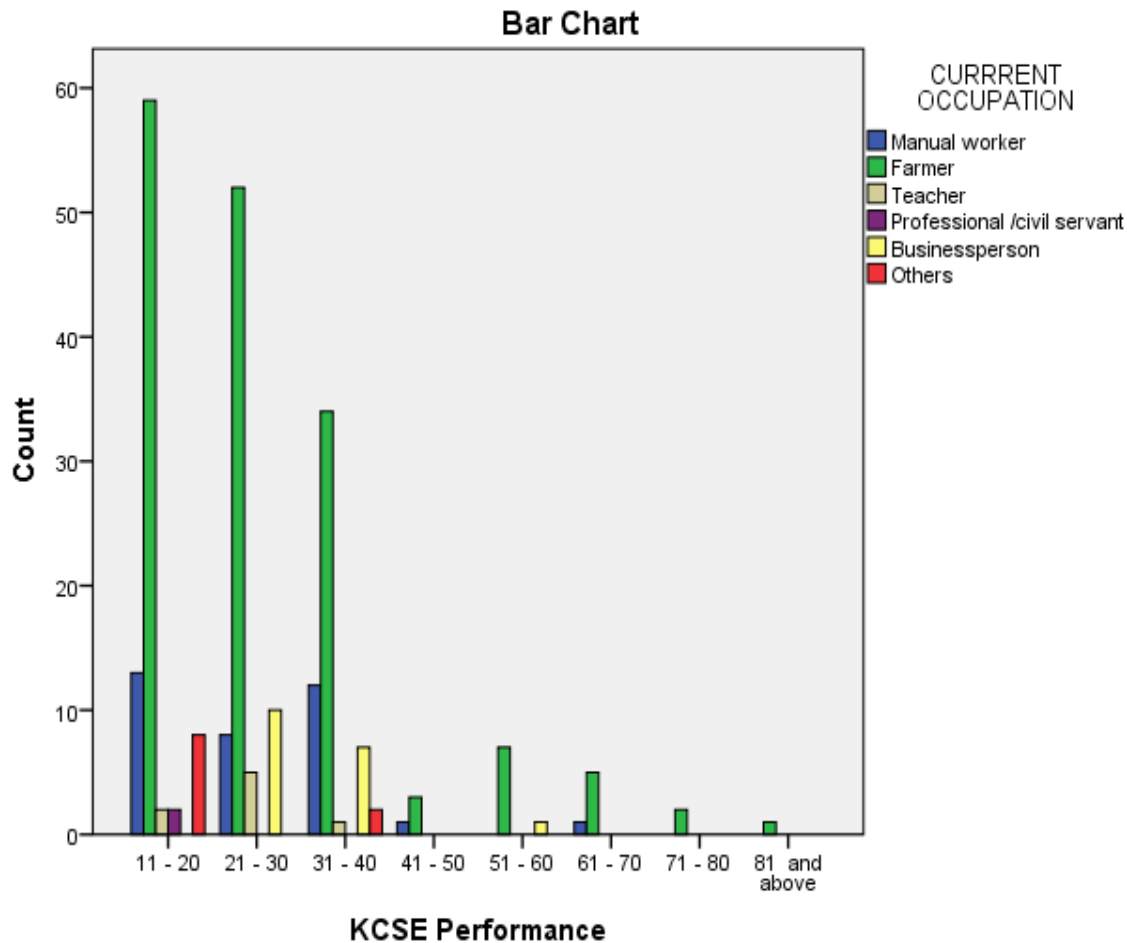


Figure 2: Link between parent's occupation and candidates' performance in KCSE.

Figure 2 shows that in the categories of performance, farmers were the majority, in fact even the best performers in KCSE were of parents who were farmers. This supports the fact that in Nyamira North Sub County, parents' occupation was not a key influencing factor to students' performance in KCSE.

Summary and Conclusions

- (a) Student performance in most public mixed day secondary schools in Nyamira North Sub County was low.
- (b) Performance in secondary schools had a high wastage rate with few students scoring quality grades.

- (c) Annual income earned by most parents was very low to support quality education required for enhancement of quality grades.
- (d) Most parents in Nyamira North Sub County were involved in manual work which ordinarily attracted little pay thus denying the children access to resources which are readily available to children from higher SES.
- (e) In Nyamira North Sub County, parental occupation did not affect performance in KCSE examination in 2010.
- (f) Regarding parents' occupation 69.1% of the parents were farmers, 14.8 were manual workers and 7.6% were businesspersons

Recommendations

- (a) The Government of Kenya to consider coming up with policies that lead to the uplifting of the living standards of the parents; for instance creation of job opportunity, capacity building and developing and executing programmes aimed at raising the living standards of the local community.
- (b) The school management boards should be cognizant of the need for guiding parents on the importance of their involvement in school activities. The management boards should make deliberate efforts to initiate and execute programmes for professional development of teachers, particularly those in top management positions and those involved in guidance and counseling, to empower them to enhance meaningful relationships and partnerships between the school, parents and the community.
- (c) It is strongly recommended that at all levels of the school management, parents should be involved in decision making in issues affecting their children. By doing so the school shall get technical and financial inputs from a wide spectrum of the parent's community given that they have unique talents, skills, experience, and talents.

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