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The Influence of the School Climate on the Academic Performance of Form One Students in Dadaab Refugee Camp Kenya

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Abstract: The central problem of this study is that, the school climate is a critical aspect of the academic achievement of any student. This psychological construct ranges from the type of school, the nature of the school's leadership, to the teachers and the relationship of the student to other learners among others. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between school climate and test scores among form ones. The study was guided by Social cognitive learning by Albert Bandura. The study adopted a descriptive correlational design. It also used simple regression to find out whether the school climate would predict test scores. The study was conducted in four public schools of Dadaab refugee camps in the North-Eastern part of Kenya. The target population consisted of students and teachers. The sampling technique was that of convenient, purposive and systematic sampling in that order, where thirty-five participants were selected from each school, to sum up to one hundred and thirty-eight form one students and a total of thirty-four teachers. Research instruments included questionnaires for teachers and students and the interview schedule for teachers. Piloting was done as well to ascertain the reliability of the instruments. The test-retest technique was used to estimate the degree to which the instrument would yield consistent results after repeated trials. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and examined before condensing and presenting information using frequency distribution tables, pie charts and bar graphs. The results revealed that there is a negative and insignificant relationship between school climate and academic performance of form ones.

Key Words: School Climate, Academic Achievement, Form Ones, Secondary school students

I. INTRODUCTION

School climate is a broad factor that could be viewed in varied perspectives; school policies and physical environment, how the staff interact with each other and the students, the type of school leadership and whether the administration of the school engages the learners in matters to do with decision making, and the varied beliefs and attitudes that the teachers bring into the school from the families and their communities. The leadership, staff, students, community and families all interact to produce a favorable school climate. School environment is a powerful force and plays a pivotal role in the all-round development of the child. School is a social institution where several teachers having different personality traits, values and dispositions must work together

for the harmonious development of the children's abilities, attitudes, and the personality. This environment therefore is a powerful force and plays a pivotal role in the all-round development of the child.

The school climate may cause disengagement as well as many other factors and may be a source of test anxiety, consequently having an impact on the test scores. Some form one students have also failed to adapt to secondary school because of the feeling that they were admitted to a wrong school that was not of their choice and hence they keep seeking or anticipating a change of school. Mazilla (1998) conceptualized that, teacher characteristics consist of: their knowledge of respective subjects, experience in use of didactic materials and student-teacher relationships. Huha (2003) suggests that a teacher must possess theoretical knowledge about human learning behaviour and must demonstrate a repertoire of teaching skills that are believed to facilitate student learning. He or she must display attitudes that foster learning and genuine human relationship and must possess knowledge of subject matter if at all the students are to benefit.

Eccles et al. (1997) noted that a student's ability to cope with the transition to secondary school is likely to depend on several factors, including personal maturity and coping resources, the nature of the new school environment, and the level of preparation and social support available prior to and during the transition. Campbell (2001) reported a case study of success in sustaining good grades via shifting curriculum and pedagogy. The secondary school of study focused on 80 (eighty) Grade 10 (ten) students who were experiencing a decline in grades and paired them with four teachers who worked together to teach study skills, goal setting, and who used an integrated curriculum. Academic achievement improved for at least 61(sixty-one) % of the students in science, mathematics, English, and history.

Ndanuko (2001) carried out a study in forty primary schools in Kenya using the Ex-Posto facto design using scores based on KNEC results 1997-1998. The findings of the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between school organizational climate and pupil's academic performance. The study revealed that an open climate favored academic achievement. In a different study, significant

correlations were found between several student perceptions of school environment, academic achievement. Bennett & Moore (2001) studied significant relationship between the climate factors of friction and difficulty when compared to mathematics achievement.

Nagar (2010) studied the relationship between school climate and academic achievement of the students in mathematics in states in India. The sample included 100 teachers and 100 students selected by using random sampling technique, out of which 60 were male and 40 were female teachers from secondary schools and 60 were boys and 40 were girls. The Organizational Climate Inventory and Achievement test for ninth standard in mathematics were used for data collection. The Pearson's correlation coefficient technique was adopted for data analysis. The results of the study revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between school climate and academic achievement of ninth standard students in mathematics among the gender, educational qualification, teaching experience and types of school.

Literature on poor academic performance by school pupils is in support of the pupil environment, personal characteristics and factors related to the pupils' environment - the school and the home as factors in academic achievement (Little and Thompson, 1983). They continue to argue that the difficulties resulting in failure by the pupils may not necessarily lie with the child but with the educational system and in particular the school. They report that if we control for the student background, school characteristics have significant effects on academic achievement and that in many cases the effects of the school characteristics are greater than the effects of family background.

From the above review, the research by Ndanuko (2001) adopted the ex-posto facto correlational research design. The proposed study will adopt the cause-effect correlational design to look at whether there will be a difference in the findings. In addition, the above studies all focused on the school organizational climate, while the proposed study will focus on the school climate specifically the teacher variables. None of these studies focused on form ones only. It would be necessary to find out whether school climate would have a different effect on form one students.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The central problem of this study was that, despite very distinct changes and differences between primary and secondary school life, form one students have had to adapt to secondary school without pre-planned guidance on critical issues that shape their academic lives at the secondary school level, such as: the different forms of exam methods, strictness in standards for judging performance, strictness in school work, less play and less student-teacher interaction. The lack of prior guidance might be the cause of low academic performance among some form ones. According to Barber & Olsen (2004), this phase has also long been associated with a decline in academic performance. It is not exactly known what

factors may be held responsible in explaining the differences, consistencies and inconsistencies in performance at primary and secondary school levels amongst form one students. It is therefore imperative that, the school climate be researched on to shed some light on the factors that may affect the test scores among form ones and to make the necessary amendments to make secondary school more favorable for form ones.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study utilized the Socio-cognitive learning theory by Albert Bandura. Bandura (1977) defined learning as an internal mental process that may or may not be reflected in immediate behavioral change and postulated that human behaviour is as a result of interplay of factors both inside and outside the individual. He suggested that personal factors like cognition, biological variables and other internal events like a person's beliefs and expectations relevant to ability are related to behaviour which affects the external environment. In the same way, the environment can influence the person's feeling and cognition. Bandura (1986), posits that learning is as a result of reciprocal causation or determination. This implies that learning involves the interaction of several factors, such as behavior, environment, storing information in memory and personal factors. This theory was of great significance to the study, because it concurs that socio-contextual factors, such as the school climate (environment) therefore, affect learning.

IV. METHOD

The study adopted a descriptive correlational design because it is appropriate in discovering the existence of relationships between variables and the degree to which the variables relate. In addition, the design was appropriate because it was measuring pre-existing variables.

V. PARTICIPANTS

The population of study consisted of four hundred form one students, both boys and girls in equal numbers, and of mean age fifteen and thirty-four form one teachers of four secondary schools. One hundred and thirty-eight form one students and thirty-four form one teachers were selected in the study

VI. MEASURES

The study employed a close-ended questionnaire as the most convenient instruments for collecting data on the students and teachers as it can reach many students who are able to read and write independently (Orodho, 2008). The questionnaire was subdivided into two sections, where Section A contained an introduction to the questionnaire and biographical data of the respondent, while section B contained the statements. Each of the statements were scored on a four-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 4 (Strongly agree) to 1 (Strongly disagree). The positively worded and negatively worded questions were randomly arranged in the questionnaire.

VII. PROCEDURE

After constructing the instrument, it was vital to determine its validity and reliability to ensure that the results of the study were accurate enough. It was carried out to identify anticipated problems and deficiencies in the questionnaire such as; unclear directions, insufficient space to answer the questions and even incorrect phrasing of the questions (Orodho, 2008: 40).

The piloting was conducted in secondary schools which were not among those included in the actual study. This minimized chance of the Hawthorne effect. The sample consisted of five male and five female students of form one. The reliability and validity of this instrument was ensured with procedures explained later. This exercise took one day.

VIII. RESULTS

Table 1.1:Tally of school climate responses

Statement	SA		A		D		SD		UNSURE		TOTALS	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Primary school teachers were more supportive than Secondary teachers	24	20	11	9.6	44	38.3	27	23.5	9	7.8	115	100
The many school rules teachers emphasize make me uncomfortable	15	13	28	24.3	27	23.5	38	33	7	6.1	115	100
If my teachers do not Support me academically, I will not perform Well	39	33.9	44	38.3	9	7.8	17	14.8	6	5.2	115	100

The study found out that 22.6% of the form one students were in strong agreement with this measure and 24.07% in agreement, 23.77% strongly disagreed while 23.2% disagreed, 6.37% were unsure. Most form one students disagree that their primary school teachers were more supportive than secondary school teachers. The results were as follows; 20.9% strongly agreed, 9.6% agreed, 23.5% strongly disagreed, 38.3% disagreed while 7.8% unsure. In addition, an inquiry as to whether school rules in secondary school were uncomfortable; 13% strongly agreed, 24.3% agreed, 33% strongly disagreed, 23.5% disagreed while 6.1% were unsure. These revealed that generally, school rules do not make form ones uncomfortable. Finally, in the indicator of school climate that teacher support is necessary for academic achievement, 33.9% strongly agreed, 38.3% agreed, 14.8% strongly disagreed, and 7.8% disagreed while 5.2% were unsure. This revealed that majority of form ones believe that support from their teachers would help them excel academically.

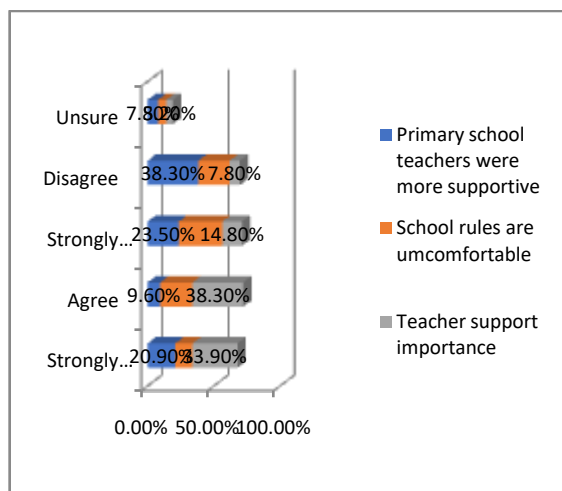


Figure 1.1 Student responses on school climate predictors

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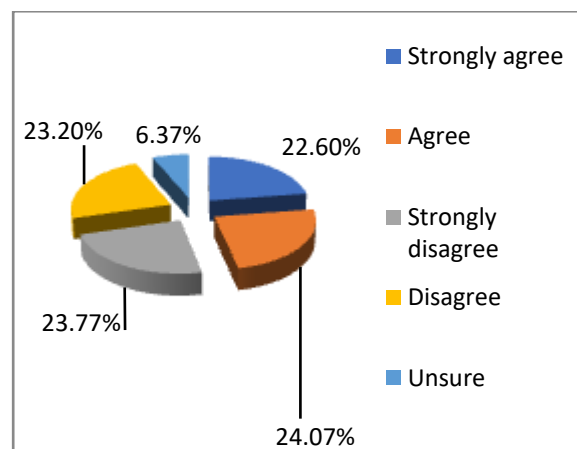


Figure 1.2 Summary of school climate responses

Finally, in the indicator of school climate that teacher support is necessary for academic achievement, 33.9% strongly agreed, 38.3% agreed, 14.8% strongly disagreed, and 7.8% disagreed while 5.2% were unsure. This revealed that majority of form ones believe that support from their teachers would help them excel academically.

Table 1.2 Relationship between school climate scale and test scores

Aspect	N	Rx	Significance
School climate scale scores and test scores	138	-0.468	0.01

Results in table 1.1 indicate that, there is weak negative and insignificant relationship between students' test scores and school climate scale scores. It also established that, test score is not significantly related to school climate. The range of relationship of the scale is less than 50%, and this is weak in magnitude. This indicates that school climate in terms of the teacher variables is not a predictor of students' test score among form ones

IX. DISCUSSION

Results indicated that, there is a negative and insignificant relationship between school climate and test scores. These findings contradict studies by Ndanuko (2001) which concluded that, there was a significant relationship between school organizational climate and pupils academic performance and Nagar (2010) who studied the relationship between school climate with academic achievement of the students in mathematics in states in India, where the results suggested that, there is a positive and significant relationship between school climate and academic achievement of ninth standard students in mathematics among the gender, educational qualification, teaching experience and types of school.

The difference in the findings may be attributed to the school aspects that the two studies focused on. The study by Ndanuko (2001) focused on organizational climate and used the Ex-posto facto correlational design whereas the study here in focused on the teacher variables and used the descriptive correlational design. In addition, although the study by Nagar (2010) focused on the teacher variables, it laid emphasis on the professional aspects of the teacher like their education level and teaching experience. The study here in focused on teacher behaviour with the students. This above may explain the difference in findings.

X. LIMITATION

The research instrument for collecting data was the questionnaire, this made it impossible to identify all the variables affecting the test scores of form ones apart from the school climate. The study was only done on form ones as they are the immediate class from primary school. This hindered generalization of the findings to the subsequent classes.

XI. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that school climate is favorable for most form one students. On the contrary, the impact of school climate on the academic performance is not significant.

XII. FURTHER RESEARCH

Following the findings of the study, this study therefore recommends that other variables that affect school climate be examined to establish whether they would be predictors of form one test scores.

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