



PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF COMMUNICATION AT HOME ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN MERU COUNTY, KENYA



Francis Silas Mwirigi<sup>1</sup> --- George Muthaa<sup>2†</sup> --- Sammy Mutisya<sup>3</sup> --- Richard Ronoh<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Principal, Meru School

<sup>2</sup>Department of Education, Chuka University

<sup>3</sup>Lecturer Department of CIEM, Maasai Mara University

<sup>4</sup>CIEM Department, Maasai Mara University

ABSTRACT

*Home environment plays an important role in students' academic achievement. The environmental condition and the nature of social interaction in the family may have some influence on the academic achievement of a child. This study investigated the perceived influence of communication at home on the secondary school students' performance. The study used a cross-sectional survey research design. The study employed structured questionnaires and interview schedules to collect data. A sample of 598 respondents was used in this study. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The study established that communication between parents and students greatly affect students' academic performance. The researcher recommends that parents should create an environment that promotes free communication with children to help enhance their academic performance.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education empowers young people to become useful members of the society. Education begins at home in an informal way. The home is a place where pupils live with their parents or guardian as a family and is the place where they are groomed to become law abiding citizens. The family is a social unit in any society and it is the source of early stimulation and experience in children where they first begin to learn the norms and values of the society (Collins, 2007). The child often sees the parents, siblings and things in their immediate environment to be most significant and they are capable of promoting or diminishing him/her in self-worth and academic performance (Ekanem, 2004). Home environment is the physical and psychological conditions that affect children in their home surrounding (Ogbemudia and Aiasa, 2013). Furthermore, in pupil's home environment, some factors that may influence their academic performances include: parents' educational background, occupation, economic status, marital status, home location, family size and peer group. Thus, the home is the basic institution that socializes and lays the educational foundation for the child upon which the other agents of socialization are built (Egunsola, 2014). The education received by a child from parents and others at home has high potential of affecting the behaviors of the child later in life. What the child learns at home and how his/her family motivates him/her towards education contributes to the child's success or failure at school.

† Corresponding author  
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Parents who communicate effectively with their children are more likely to have children who are willing to do what they are told. Such children know what to expect from their parents, and once children know what is expected of them, they are more likely to live up to these expectations. They are also more likely to feel secure in their position in the family, and are thus more likely to be cooperative. Research provides inconsistent findings regarding the importance of parent-child communication and other forms of parental involvement activities to children's school success (Fan, 2001; Englund *et al.*, 2004; Domina, 2005).

Some studies report positive associations with academic achievement (Hong and Ho, 2005; Houtenville and Conway, 2008) other studies indicate no association (Barnard and Kelly, 1990; Fan, 2001; Mattingly *et al.*, 2002; Patall *et al.*, 2008) and even others point to negative associations (Fan, 2001; Domina, 2005). It is on the basis of mixed results from previous findings on the influence of communication at home on students' performance that this study sought to establish the perceived influence of communication on students' academic performance.

In Kenya, a study by Mwaura (2014) on home based factors influencing students' performance in KCSE in public day secondary schools reported that educated parents assist their children in doing their school work. The study indicated that parents' socio-economic status influences the students KCSE performance. Mwaura (2014) established that teachers perceived that parents contribute to students' participation in home chores and a such more time is spent on home chores than on school work. It should however be noted that Mwaura's study restricted itself on public day school and also investigated the influence of parents' level of education, socio-economic status, professional qualifications and home chores on students KCSE performance. The current study focused on the perceived influence of communication on academic performance in public secondary schools in Meru County.

### 1.1. Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To establish the perceived influence of communication at home on secondary school students' academic performance in Meru County.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study used a cross-sectional research design to assess the perceived influence of selected home environment factors on the secondary school students' academic performance. The target population was 109,151 subjects made up of 52,650 students, 52,650 parents and 3,851 teachers in the 351 public secondary schools in Meru County. A sample of 598 respondents was selected for the study using through multistage, purposive and simple random sampling from the 106 schools that had been sampled through simple random sampling method. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and interview schedules. Three categories of questionnaires were developed for parents, teachers and students. The researcher pre-tested each of the questionnaires. The study used the Cronbach's Coefficient alpha to estimate the reliability. The researcher obtained reliability coefficient of 0.72 for students' questionnaire, 0.77 for teachers' questionnaire and 0.74 for parents' questionnaire.

Quantitative data was mainly analysed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics consisted of computation of sums, means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages. The analysed data was presented in the form figures and tables. Qualitative data was analysed thematically. The patterns identified in the data were used to develop themes that addressed study objectives. The researcher observed and adhered to the ethical standards and issues with regard to: voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw by individual participant from the process.

## 3. FINDINGS

The demographic information included gender, age, and marital status. The demographic data of students is shown in figure 1.

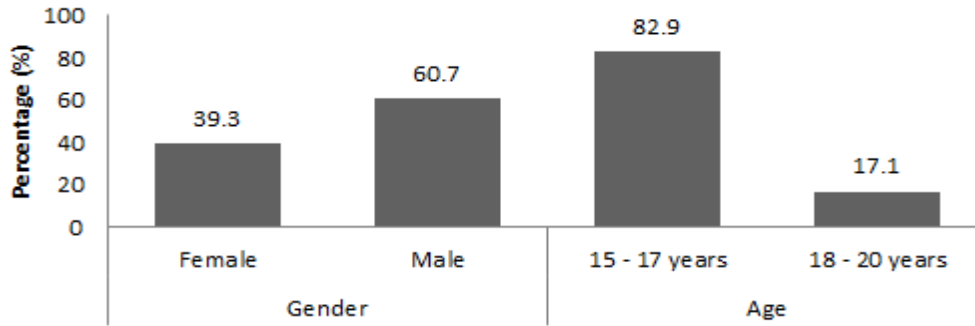


Figure-1. Demographic Data of Students (N=193)

Field Data

The findings show that majority of the students (53.4%) were male while 46.6% were female. On age, the study established that majority of the students (82.9%) were aged between 15 and 17 years while the rest (17.1%) were aged 18 to 20 years.

The study also sought to establish demographic data of students' parents. The results are presented in figure 2.

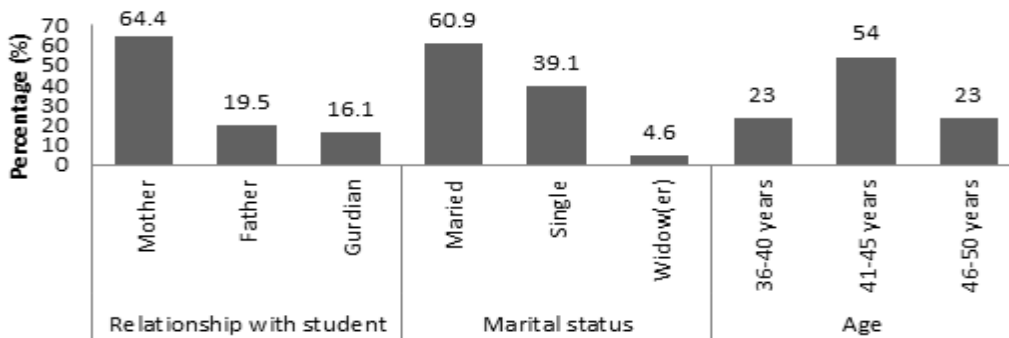


Figure-2. Demographic Data of Parents (N=174)

Field Data

The findings show that most of the parents (64.4%) who responded were mothers while only 19.5% were fathers. The study also established from the parents that 60.9% of them were married while 39.1% were singles. The findings mean that majority of the parents were married. The findings also show that 54% of the parents were aged between 41 and 45 years while 23% were aged between 36 and 40 years and another 23% were aged between 46 and 50 years. The study also sought to establish demographic data of the teachers. The findings are presented in figure 3.

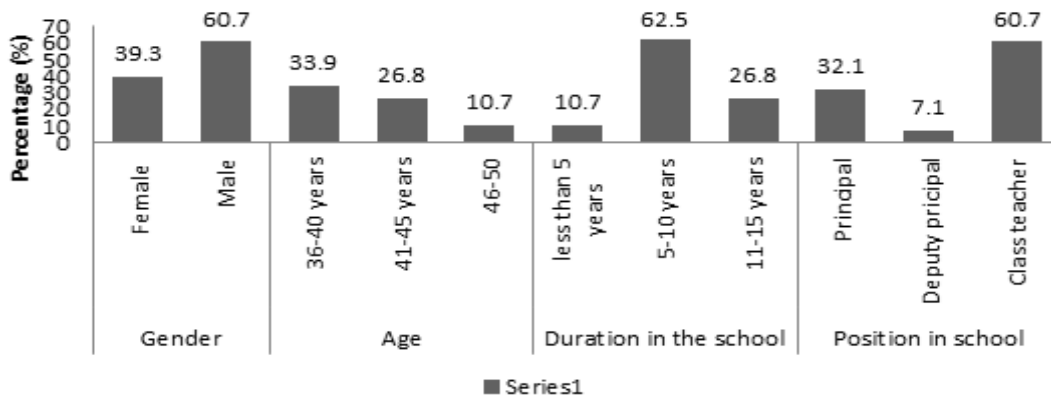


Figure-3. Demographic Data of Teachers (N=112)

Field Data

The results show that majority of the teachers (60.7%) were female with male teachers being 39.3%. Most of the teacher respondents (39.3%) were aged between 41 and 45 years while 33.9% were aged between 36 and 40 years. The results further indicated that 26.8% were aged between 46 and 50 years. The results show that most (62.5%) of the respondents had worked in their schools for a period of between 5 and 10 years.

The objective of the study sought to determine the influence of communication at home on the students' academic performance. To do this the study sought to establish from teachers, students and the parents the extent to which they agreed with the statements regarding the perceived influence of communication at home environment on the academic performance of the students. This was on a scale of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. The findings are presented in Table 1.

**Table-1.** Perceived Influence of Communication at Home Environment on Academic Performance

Statement	Response	Students		Parents		Teachers	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
The way students relate with parents positively influence their academic performance	SA	30	15.5	6	3.4	16	14.3
	A	115	59.6	118	67.8	88	78.6
	U	5	2.6	20	11.5	2	1.8
	D	38	19.7	26	14.9	2	1.8
	SD	5	2.6	4	2.3	4	3.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>
The way students communicate with parents/guardian influenced their academic performance	SA	39	20.2	6	3.4	10	8.9
	A	100	51.8	144	88.5	94	83.9
	U	38	19.7	6	3.4	2	1.8
	D	9	4.7	6	3.4	2	1.8
	SD	7	3.6	2	1.1	4	3.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>
The fact that parents/guardians do not listen to students negatively influence their academic performance	SA	19	9.8	2	1.1	4	3.6
	A	34	17.6	2	1.1	100	89.3
	U	97	50.3	34	19.5	2	1.8
	D	23	11.9	134	77.0	2	1.8
	SD	20	10.4	2	1.3	4	3.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>
Students confiding in parents/guardian positively influence their academic performance	SA	55	28.5	2	1.1	2	1.8
	A	120	62.1	120	69.0	102	91.1
	U	7	3.6	36	20.7	2	1.8
	D	2	1.0	14	8.0	2	1.8
	SD	9	4.7	2	1.1	4	3.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>
Discussing academic performance with parents positively influence students' academic performance	SA	50	25.9	20	11.5	14	12.5
	A	123	63.7	140	80.5	90	80.4
	U	7	3.6	2	1.1	4	3.6
	D	5	2.6	10	5.7	2	1.8
	SD	8	4.1	2	1.1	2	1.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>
Getting constant advice from parents on education matters positively influence student' academic performance	SA	8	4.1	14	8.0	12	10.7
	A	60	31.1	54	31.0	38	33.9
	U	80	41.5	90	51.7	60	53.6
	D	30	15.5	10	5.7	0	0
	SD	15	7.8	6	3.4	2	1.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>
Parents' availability for the students positively influence their academic performance	SA	41	21.2	60	34.5	34	30.4
	A	127	65.8	80	46.0	68	60.7
	U	10	5.2	12	6.9	10	8.9
	D	11	5.7	16	9.2	0	0
	SD	4	2.1	6	3.4	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>

Field Data

The findings show that all the respondents (78.6% of the teachers, 59.6% of the students and 67.8% of the parents) agreed with the statement that the way students related with parents or guardians positively influenced their academic performance. The findings mean that the relationship between students and their parents is of importance with relation to their academic performance.

On the perceived influence of student parent communication, the study established that all the categories of the respondents (83.9% of the teachers, 51.8% of the students and 88.5% of the parents) agreed to the statement that the way the students communicated with their parents/guardians directly influenced the students' academic performance. The teachers, parents and students perceived that parents who discuss and encourage their children about their educational issues often influence academic performance of students positively.

The study sought to determine the perceived influence of not being heard by the parents/guardians and how it influenced students' academic performance. The results show that majority (89.3%) of the teachers agreed with the statement. The results show that most (50.3%) of the students neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. The results were in agreement with majority of students during interview schedule who indicated that in most instances they are passive listeners because their parents do not give them an opportunity to talk about their academics. The students however perceived that this does not impact negatively on their academics. The findings show that all the categories of the respondents (91.1% of the teachers, 62.1% of the students and 69% of parents) agreed that the students confiding in their parents or guardians had a direct influence on the academic performance of the students.

The respondents were asked to state the level of agreement with the perceived influence of discussing academic performance with the parents or guardians. The findings revealed that all the categories of the respondents (80.4% of the teachers, 63.7% of the students and 80.5% of the parents) agreed that discussing academic performance with the parents positively influenced the students' academic performance. The results were also supported by majority of the respondents during interview schedule.

The study established that majority of the respondents (65.8% of the students, 46% of the parents and 60.7% of the teachers) agreed that availability of the parents or guardians positively influenced the academic performance of the students. The findings by the study show that availability of the parents has a direct influence on the students' academic performance.

The study also sought to establish the extent to which the indicators of communication were perceived to influence the students' performance. The findings are presented in Table 2 (VGE represents Very Great Extent, GE represents Great Extent, NO represents No Opinion, SE represents Small Extent and NE represents No Extent).

**Table-2.** Perceived Influence of Communication indicators on Students' Academic Performance

Statement	Response	Students		Parents		Teachers	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
Transparency	VGE	31	16.1	26	14.9	24	21.4
	GE	99	51.3	14	8.0	58	51.8
	NO	17	8.8	98	56.3	18	16.1
	SE	13	6.7	22	12.6	8	7.1
	NE	4	2.1	14	8.0	4	3.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>
Accountability	VGE	41	21.2	60	34.5	34	30.4
	GE	127	65.8	80	46.0	68	60.7
	NO	10	5.2	12	6.9	10	8.9
	SE	11	5.7	16	9.2	0	0
	NE	4	2.1	6	3.4	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>
Participation	VGE	60	31.1	54	31.0	38	33.9
	GE	80	41.5	90	51.7	60	53.6
	NO	8	4.1	14	8.0	6	10.7
							<i>Continue</i>

	SE	30	15.5	10	5.7	0	0
	NE	15	7.8	6	3.4	2	1.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>
Knowledge sharing	VGE	55	28.5	2	1.1	2	1.8
	GE	120	62.1	120	69.0	102	91.1
	NO	7	3.6	36	20.7	2	1.8
	SE	2	1.0	14	8.0	2	1.8
	NE	9	4.7	2	1.1	4	3.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>
Policy dialogue	VGE	19	9.8	2	1.1	4	3.6
	GE	34	17.6	2	1.1	100	89.3
	NO	97	50.3	34	19.5	2	1.8
	SE	23	11.9	134	77.0	2	1.8
	NE	20	10.4	2	1.3	4	3.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100</b>

Field Data

The findings show that according to majority (51.8%) of teachers and 51.3% of the students, transparency influenced the students' academic performance to a great extent. The results however, show that most (56.3%) of the parents had no opinion as of the influence of transparency on the students' academic performance. The results therefore mean that transparency greatly influenced the students' academic performance. The study findings show that according to all the categories of the respondents (60.7% of the teachers, 65.8% of the students and 46% of the parents) accountability greatly influenced the academic performance of the students. Thus the results therefore indicated that the respondents perceived that accountability influenced academic performance of the students.

The study established that most (53.6% of the teachers, 41.5% of the students and 51.7% of the parents) of the respondents indicated that participation greatly influenced the students' academic performance. The findings mean that participation greatly influenced the students' academic performance. The study findings show that majority (91.1% of the teachers, 62.1% of the students and 69% of the parents) of the respondents agreed that knowledge sharing influenced the students' academic performance to a great extent. On the dialogue policy, the results revealed that most (89.3%) of the teachers indicated that the policy dialogue influenced the students' academic performance greatly while majority 50.3% of the students had no opinion on the influence of dialogue policy. Majority (77%) of the parents however, perceived that the policy dialogue had only a small influence on the students' academic performance.

Asked to state how the communication at home could be improved to influence the students' academic performance, the teachers perceived that there was need for the parents to create an environment at home where the students could feel free to communicate with their parents or guardians. The teachers also indicated that the parents need to discuss educational matters with the students with the view of helping enhance their academic performance.

Availability of the parents or guardians positively influenced the academic performance of the students. The findings support those of [De Lint \(1987\)](#) who, in his study noted that the relationship between parent and child may closely be linked to the child's ability and potential where he explained that the children's slow progress could be attributed to threats and insults they receive from the parents or guardians. According to teachers and students, transparency influenced the students' academic performance to a great extent. Majority of the respondents (60.7% of the teachers, 65.8% of the students and 46% of the parents) indicated that accountability greatly influenced the academic performance of the students. Respondents indicated that parental participation greatly influenced the students' academic performance. The study findings revealed that respondents perceived that knowledge sharing influenced the students' academic performance to a great extent. The study findings support the arguments by [Domina \(2005\)](#) and [Englund et al. \(2004\)](#) who noted that the parents who communicate effectively with their children are more likely to live up to their expectations and which was associated with the academic achievement. An

interview schedule with all the respondents further supported these findings. The findings also agree with Kale (1974) who noted that children feel that they are heard and understood by their parents which boost their self-esteem.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of this study, the following are the conclusions of this study:

- i. The relationship between students and their parents has an influence on the academic performance of their children.
- ii. Communication between parents and students affect children's academic performance. The teachers, parents and students perceived that parents who discuss and encourage their children about their educational issues often influence academic performance of students positively.
- iii. Accountability greatly influenced the academic performance of the students. The results therefore indicated that the respondents perceived that accountability influenced academic performance of the students.
- iv. On the dialogue policy, the teachers felt that the dialogue policy influenced the students' academic performance greatly.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

- i. There is need for the parents to create an environment at home where the students are free to communicate with their parents or guardians.
- ii. The parents need to discuss educational matters with the children with the view of helping enhance their academic performance.

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