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### The Contribution of Parents' Occupation on Students' Academic Achievements in Public Secondary Schools in Njombe Town Council

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Parents,  
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Schools.

The parents are considered very important in their children's education, as they actively support the implementation of their children's education. The study sought to determine the contribution of parents' occupation on students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Njombe Town Council. The study was guided by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory of Human Motivation. The study was conducted across 14 public secondary schools, analyzed 3113 targeted populations of students, teachers, school heads, and parents using an embedded research design, combining quantitative and qualitative data. The sample size consisted of 192 respondents; thus, five (5) school heads and ten (10) parents were purposively selected to take part in the interview guides, while 83 teachers and 94 students (form III and IV) were randomly selected to take part in the study through the questionnaires. The instruments' reliability ( $r=0.78$ ) was obtained using the Test-retest method. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics with the help of the SPSS version 23, and results were presented in the table of frequencies and percentages. Meanwhile, qualitative data was analyzed thematically and presented through categories and themes' narration. The findings revealed that parents' occupation contributes to students' academic achievement through learning morale, absenteeism, child labor, and uncondusive home environments. Parents influence monitoring and supervising children's academic progress at home and school. The study suggests that parents should be educated on their work-education relationship and invest in education based on their occupation. Policymakers and curriculum developers should re-consider making reforms to education financing policy to be more equitably favourable to students from poor families for sustainable academic achievement. Government and NGOs should ensure that all students from poor parental backgrounds are supported to receive quality education.

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## INTRODUCTION

Through Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which states that by 2030, every country shall provide high-quality education to all children, academic achievement is the desired aim for all nations worldwide. This is related to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) "Education for All" (EFA) policy, which calls on governments and parents to fulfil their obligations to children by funding enough schools to educate every child for better success in the future (UNESCO, 2017). However, since education is the cornerstone of any country's economic, social, and cultural development, the challenge is how parent occupation can contribute to student academic achievement in public secondary schools for sustainable country development. This is because the world is working to ensure quality education for all children.

Finau (2021) states that in California, parents' economic situation in the context of education will be determined by occupation or work. Bhat et al. (2016) state that parents in India are required to educate their children regardless of their economic position. It means that student achievement in school may be influenced by their parents' occupations, which determine their economic status.

In Zimbabwe, the School Improvement Grant program (SIG) has been implemented to reduce the low school attendance of children including those from households with the lowest economic status, disabilities, orphans, and vulnerable children. (Tarisayi, 2016). This suggests that parents' occupations are the key to children's academic success.

Idris and Rufus (2021) in Nigeria reported that parents' occupation circumstances significantly influenced students' academic performance. The home environment can be improved by improving parents' occupation, resulting in greater academic achievement for children associated with improved school attendance and focus on studies. Therefore, it is crucial to contemplate the contribution of parents' occupation on students' academic performance.

Parents' occupation substantially impacts children's preparedness for school in East Africa (Mbugi et al., 2017). Parents or guardians must provide all the necessary educational materials to encourage their children to focus on the learning process and improve their future performance (Loice et al., 2020). Providing such materials requires money/income from any Income Generating Activities (IGA).

According to Wilberforce (2020), a notable correlation exists between students' academic performance in Uganda's public secondary schools and their parents' occupations. Parents have a crucial impact on their children's education; however, the level of achievement may vary based on factors such as the parents' professional interests and interest in academic pursuits. Boit (2015) noted that parents' occupations are essential in determining children's achievement at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education in Kenya.

Since independence in 1961, Tanzania has struggled, like other nations worldwide, to raise academic achievement among students to enable the country to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For instance, the introduction of

the Fee-Free Basic Education Policy in 2014, which covers primary to advanced levels of education, and the implementation of the Secondary Education Development Program II (SEDP II) from 2010 to 2015 highlight the government's commitment to providing all children with unrestricted access to excellent education in public secondary schools (URT, 2020; MoEST, 2020).

Despite all government initiatives, improving students' academic attainment in public secondary schools remains challenging. According to previous research, many primary factors, such as parental education, income, and family size, hinder children from achieving academically in Tanzanian public secondary schools (Kemanae & Mnjokaya, 2022).

Consequently, Kwiluhya (2016, p. 82) reports that the main economic activities in Njombe Town Council (NTC) are small-scale agriculture (peasant agriculture), forestry, and other minor income-generating activities; this sometimes causes rural and urban families to encounter hardship and fail to meet basic needs for their families as well as the school expenses. Because of this, most children from these households cannot perform better in their academics because their home environment does not inspire them to engage in learning activities. Schools' report (2020/2021) indicated that 1886 students from five (5) public secondary schools in Njombe Town Council wrote the form four (IV) national exams. Out of this number, only 558 (30%) performed well by attaining division (I-IV), and only 117 (21%) qualified to further their studies to advanced levels in different fields. The majority failed to pursue further studies (Ugulumu, 2016).

Most public secondary schools in Njombe Town Council, specifically, are characterized by students whose parents had low-paying occupations. This study reveals that, despite the existence of other factors, both good and bad, academic achievements for students can be related to parents' occupation. Therefore, this scenario instigated the researcher to determine how parents' occupation contributes to students'

academic achievement in public secondary schools in the study area.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

The study constitutes reviewing and analyzing theoretical and empirical literature concerning the research objective. The study was guided by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory of Human Motivation.

### *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory of Human Motivation*

The study was based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory of Motivation by Psychologist Abraham Maslow (1943). Based on the notion, "people are motivated to achieve requirements and some needs take priority over others," which leads people in different directions. Maslow argued that a humanistic educational approach would develop stronger and healthier people. This philosophy examines human behaviour through the motivational perspective. Because humans are motivated by physiological desires such as food, water, shelter, and clothing, Maslow believes these needs are more important than others since they disclose higher-level demands (McLeod, 2018).

### *Strengths of the Theory*

Mbugi et al. (2017) assert that Maslow's theory is significant for teaching and managing learning in educational contexts. Students must prioritize fulfilling their fundamental physiological demands before they can address their cognitive needs. Moreover, children want a sense of security and acknowledgement inside the school environment to advance and achieve their maximum capabilities. For instance, a fatigued and famished student would struggle to focus on academic pursuits; likewise, those without proper attire or other educational materials would lack motivation to attend school for learning objectives (Oneya & Onyango, 2020). This idea proposes that children need to know they are recognized and liked in the classroom and at home. Their parents and teachers should provide a motivating

environment for them to learn efficiently, resulting in higher academic accomplishment.

### ***Application of the Theory to the Study***

This theory was essential for this study because it focused on motivation in academic issues and helped the researcher to determine the factors from parental occupations that contribute positively and negatively to students' academic achievement. For instance, if the environment at home and school does not motivate them, students will not focus on their learning (Mbugi et al., 2017). Moreover, it helps to discover how parents' occupations can influence the improvement of students' academic performance in the study area.

### **Empirical Literature**

#### ***Parents Occupation on Students' Academic Achievement***

Globally, different studies show that parents' occupations help students become more productive in their schooling life because they define the level of capital spent on educating their children (Kim et al., 2017; Li & Qiu, 2018). Therefore, for students to do better in academic matters, they need to be motivated by their parents through daily economic activities that they are practicing, such as agriculture, business, and other economic activities that help them get some income. This helps parents/guardians assist their children in all school requirements and other school activities, such as providing extra learning facilities and helping them do their homework by providing a supportive home environment for learning activities. These results in better academic achievement of the students, while on the other side, parents' occupation might lead to negative academic achievement of students in schools.

Halperin (2020) conducted a study investigating the correlation between the racial background of parents' occupations and kids' academic performance in the American public school system. The study used a quantitative technique, including the involvement of 133 students. Data gathering was carried out via the use of a questionnaire. The results suggest that there is no

discernible association between race and the academic performance of children. Nevertheless, a significant association was detected between parents' employment and kids' academic achievement. Moreover, the study recommended further research using samples from different socioeconomic backgrounds, where parental occupation is considered a significant variable. This would help resolve the discrepancy in academic achievement across teenagers. This study aimed to determine the contribution of parents' occupation on students' academic achievement to cover the gap.

Shah and Hussain (2021) found that parents' occupation status encompasses income and education realization. The nature of parents' occupation causes them to fail to provide whatever needed support and inspire their children and provide them with modern learning facilities to enhance their children's education due to the instability of finance.

In Nigeria, Idris and Rufus (2021) conducted a study on the influence of parental socioeconomic status on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Taraba. The findings revealed that parents' occupation influences students' academic performance. Despite parents' daily occupations, they should develop a habit of following up with the children at home and school to ensure that they attend school and do their given homework. Suppose the home environment is not logically attractive for children to learn. In that case, they can find it challenging to handle school work and focus on learning and may finally drop out, hence a low academic achievement (Atolagbe et al., 2019).

Rose et al. (2016) noted that parents' occupation can change their attitudes toward children regarding education development. According to the study, having a favourable attitude toward education encourages improving the home environment, which inspires children to keep their attention on learning when they get home from school and feel at ease going to school every day. Furthermore, the findings support the notion that adolescents who lack parental motivation perform

poorly and leave school. This implies that the nature of parents' occupation can determine the outcomes of students in academics.

Parental professional status significantly influences teenagers as they want to identify with those in prestigious fields, such as teaching, law, or medicine. Consequently, they exert great effort in their academic pursuits to attain similar employment. It would be more convenient if the parents had prominent vocations or high-ranking positions and would be inspired to improve, favourably impacting their academic success (Kiboi, 2018).

Kapinga (2014) maintains that social occupation and income are indicators of parents' economic status in Tanzania. His findings conclude that parents with higher occupations can have a home environment that supports their children rather than those surrounded by poverty. Most of the family's lifestyle depends on normal daily work such as small peasants, selling vegetables, fruits, and food (mamalishe), which helps them get just a little money for their daily survival. Therefore, basing academic achievement on that context would automatically differ from one student to another in public secondary schools.

Furthermore, the report by FAO (2018) indicates that about 68 percent of Tanzania's engages in farming both in urban and rural areas. This leads to a lack of motivation for learning and academic performance because the students are not comfortable learning due to the nature of their parents' occupation as a critical factor in economic status development. Therefore, children from such families might face challenges meeting all school requirements according to their parents' occupation. The impact would be on social and economic needs that could challenge the nation's sustainable development. Thus, there was a need to assess the contribution of parents' occupations to students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Njombe Town Council.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The study adopted the mixed research approach, using an embedded design. The use of a mixed approach assisted the researcher in going deeper in investigating the contribution of parents' occupations to students' academic achievement. The researcher visited the study area, collected qualitative and quantitative data, analyzed them separately, and merged them at the end; thus, the two approaches complemented each other.

### Population and Sampling Techniques

The study was conducted across 14 public secondary schools in Njombe Town Council with 1,504 students, 497 teachers, 14 heads of schools, and 1,098 parents. The sample size of 192 respondents consisted of 83 teachers, 94 students, 5 heads of schools, and 10 parents. The researcher used both probability and non-probability methods to select the sample from five (5) public secondary schools. Teachers and students were randomly selected to participate in the study through closed and open-ended questionnaires. Heads of schools and parents were purposively selected to participate in the interview because the researchers believed they had crucial information about the study.

### Instrumentation

Questionnaires (open and closed-ended questionnaires) and interview guides were used for data collection. Regular consultation of research experts and supervisors was used to test the content and face validity of the research instrument. The test-retest technique was used to calculate the reliability in which the Coefficient Index of  $r = 0.78$  was obtained; thus, instruments were considered reliable for data collection.

### Statistical Treatment of Data

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 software, and results were presented in the table of frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically based on research questions.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical principles were adhered to in carrying out the study by seeking authorization from the St. Augustine University authority and Njombe Region government authorities. Participants were fully informed about the purpose and the importance of the study and were given the freedom to participate or not. Anonymity and confidentiality were observed during and after data collection.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**Contribution of Parents' Occupation to Students' Academic Achievement**

**Research Question:** How does parents' occupation contribute to students' academic achievement in Njombe town council public secondary schools?

The study sought to determine the contribution of parents' occupation on students' academic achievement in public secondary schools; the findings are in *Table 1*.

**Table 1: Contribution of parents' occupation on students' academic achievement**

Statements	SD F (%)	D F (%)	N F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)
The nature of parents'/guardians' occupation determines the provision of a conducive environment for students learning at home	4 (2.2%)	9 (5.1%)	21 (11.9%)	76 (42.9%)	67 (37.9%)
The nature of parents'/guardians' occupation influences students' learning morale and focus	3 (1.7%)	5 (2.8%)	50 (28.2%)	51 (28.8%)	68 (38.4%)
The nature of parents'/guardians' occupation influences parents to discuss with teachers about students' progress at school	3 (1.7%)	11 (6.2%)	66 (37.3%)	57 (32.2%)	40 (22.6%)
The nature of parents'/guardians' occupation causes their children to engage in child labor at the expense of their studies	8 (4.5%)	13 (7.3%)	16 (9%)	78 (44.1%)	62 (35%)
The nature of parents'/guardians' occupation causes absenteeism in students	6 (3.4%)	8 (4.5%)	24 (13.6%)	73 (41.2%)	66 (37.3%)

Source: (Field Data, 2023)

***How Occupation Determines the Provision of a Conducive Environment***

Table 1 portrays various findings on the contribution of family occupation on academic achievement; 42.9% agreed, 37.9% strongly agreed, 11.9% were neutral, 5.1% disagreed, and 2.2% strongly disagreed on 'nature of parents' occupation determines the provision of a conducive environment for students to learn at home. This implies that in the selected secondary schools in Njombe town council, for students to learn at home, it depends much on the nature of the parent's occupation, as most respondents supported. This is related to the study by Kapinga (2014), who maintained that parents' occupation had a significant influence on students learning and their academic achievement. Parents with suitable occupations that help them earn a good

income can prepare a home environment that is helpful to their children rather than those surrounded by poor jobs. Likewise, parents with a good job can motivate their children so that they can perform better.

***Students Learning Morale and Focus***

Moreover, Table 1 results show that 67.2% of the respondents agreed, while 28.2% of respondents were neutral, and only 4.5% of the respondents disagreed on the influence of parents' occupation on students' learning morale and focus. The findings entail that most students in public secondary schools in Njombe town council had low learning morale due to parent occupation, which did not motivate their learning progress. This is simply because of the nature of occupation limiting them to get income that can support them to motivate their children to perform better in

learning. The findings differ from the study by Li and Qiu (2018), which revealed that for learners to do better in academics, they need to be motivated by their parents through daily economic activities that they practice to help them get some income. Maslow (1943) argued that parents should preserve the comfort to encourage their children's education and learning process. On the other hand, the qualitative findings obtained from the interview are in agreement with those from quantitative findings, as one of the interviewees confirmed that:

*We strive to encourage our children to concentrate on learning to do well in their subject and ultimately to have a good life in the future. Nevertheless, we face challenges in telling our children something unrealistic because most of us depend on local farming. We are not employed; they try to compare our occupations, and sometimes, we fail to provide them with the school requirements they want. Then they get discouraged, give up, and fail to focus on learning.* (Interviewee P10, July 2023).

Similarly, Halperin (2020) discovered that a parent's job is closely connected with how well their children do in school. This is because students from parents/guardians with good jobs like government office, teachers, doctors, and other professional jobs tend to be encouraged by their parents' occupation; hence, they desire to be like them, contrary to students from parents with poor jobs they always bored in learning, and later they can perform poorly in examinations. Still, vice versa comes true for some students.

#### ***Influence Parents to Discuss with Teachers and Monitor Students' Academic Progress***

About the parents/guardians, whether parents monitor their children's academic progress or they do not, 32.2% agreed, 22.6% strongly agreed, 37.3% neutral, 6.2% disagreed, and 1.7% strongly disagreed. This entails that parents/guardians' occupation, whatever has made them not regularly make follow-up about students learning progress and vice versa, is true, as shown by the respondent. The findings affirm that students may

not be doing well because their parents are busy with daily work and not focusing much on their children's learning development. These findings contradict the study by Idris and Rufus (2021), which revealed that parents' occupations influence students' academic achievement in Nigeria; despite daily parents' occupations, they spend their time following with the children at home and school to make sure that they attend school and participate fully in the learning process. This leads to improved academic achievement in the schools while it leads to lower academic performance of the students in the schools.

The findings from the interview revealed that in public secondary schools in Njombe town council, the participation of parents/guardians in supervising their children is of medium level, as most of them spent more time performing their activities that can help to acquire income for their survival. One of the interviewees said:

*As parents, we must ensure we monitor our child's learning. But we rarely do this because we are usually busy with income-related activities and not considering our children's learning progress, resulting in some children underperforming in final exams.* (Interviewee P1, July 2023).

This concurs with the study by Rose et al. (2016), which found that parents' occupation can change their attitude toward students' supervision and inspire them to keep learning when they go back home and lead them to feel comfortable in the process of learning. Therefore, parents' occupation significantly contributes to improving academic achievement in public secondary schools.

#### ***How Parents' Occupation Forces Children to Engage in Child Labor***

Furthermore, the results in Table 1 show that 44.1% of respondents agreed, 37.3% strongly agreed, 13.6% were neutral, 4.5% disagreed, and 3.4% strongly disagreed on 'children engaging in child labour due to the nature of family occupation that they were experiencing. This implies that child labor has been associated with students dropping out of school, leading to low academic

achievement, as 81.4% of respondents agreed. On top of that, all interviewees revealed that the nature of family occupation could improve academic achievement if it motivates the learners, but parents' occupation could hinder children from meeting the expected achievement in their studies. The findings are related to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory of motivation (1943), which shows that students' motivation depends much after succeeding in basic needs. Also, these findings relate to the findings by Kwiluhya (2016), who found that parents' occupation influence students to spend more time in child labor rather than in learning, and this has negative effects on students' learning achievement because their home environment does not inspire them to engage in learning activities.

#### ***Nature of Parents'/Guardians' Occupation Causes Absenteeism in Students from Schools***

Finally, the findings of this study revealed that 41.2% of respondents agreed, 37.3% strongly agreed, 13.6% were neutral, 4.5% disagreed, and 3.4% of respondents strongly disagreed that parents' occupation contributes to students' absenteeism from schools in public secondary schools. Shah and Hussain (2021) found that parents' occupation status encompasses both income and education realization. It can make parents fail to provide whatever needed support and inspire their children and provide them with modern learning facilities to enhance their children's education due to the instability of finance. Furthermore, parents' occupations could not offer income that can help to provide full support to children to attend learning daily; as a result, the attendance of students remains irregular (Halperin, 2020). Detailed information from qualitative data revealed that the parents' occupation affects students' frequent attendance in schools; as a result, this causes low performance for the students. This implies that students had inadequate time to study, leading to low academic progress. Generally, this finding confirms that the nature of parents' occupation contributes negatively to students' daily school attendance, which results in poor academic achievement; parent occupation has caused students to be absent

from learning, affecting their daily performance progress.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

This study assessed the contribution of parents' occupation on students' academic achievement in public secondary schools. From the findings, the majority of the participants strongly agreed that parents' occupation had both positive and negative contributions to academic achievements, including the provision of a conducive environment for learning at home, parents/guardians to have time to make some follow-up on children's learning progress and to supervise them, students to engage in child labours, school attendance/absenteeism from school and students to lose morale and focus in learning.

Finally, the study has revealed that parents' occupation is the crucial factor to be considered in determining their economic status because it directly contributes to the whole process of educating children since it determines the level of parents' income and their expenditures in education and other daily needs. Also, determine the nature of motivation stated by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory of Motivation (1943), for the student has to perform well in academic progress that should first meet the physiological desires and, after all, cognitive development.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the study findings, the researcher recommended the following;

Students should be well trained on the importance of education despite the nature of parents' occupations. Also, they are guided to focus on learning for better achievement instead of being engaged in child labour, which hinders their future educational development. Thus, it would improve academic achievement in many public secondary schools nationwide.

Parents and guardians should be educated on how to relate their occupation with their children's



education, investing in education for future benefits because they are crucial stakeholders in education development and influencing children's academic achievement. This can help students meet their basic needs and stay motivated in learning progress.

Teachers should seek information about the students' economic background and seek to help learners by considering the parents' occupation situation. This could help them to take appropriate measures to assist those students who face different challenges in academic progress in the schools. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education, policymakers, and curriculum developers should ensure that the proposed education policy in public secondary schools including the Fee-Free Basic Education Policy Education should consider students from low-income families if the government is to provide quality education for all.

Government, NGOs, and other educational stakeholders should positively motivate students' learning and promote students' school attendance, which leads to improved academic achievement of the students in public secondary schools, by being in the front line to support students from poor families and providing them with some school requirements such as exercise books, pen, uniforms and to reduce or eliminates unnecessary school costs.

Finally, this study recommends other studies to be conducted in different places using different research methodologies and participants to widen the findings for better generalization. This can help to improve academic achievement in many public secondary schools for sustainable educational development. Also, a similar study needs to be conducted in private secondary schools to compare the contribution of parents' occupation on students' academic achievement between private secondary schools and public secondary schools.

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