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Determinants of Poor Academic Performance among Secondary School Students in Mogadishu Somalia

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Abstract

The study examines the key factors contributing to the poor academic performance of secondary school students in Mogadishu, Somalia. The primary objectives of this research were: to investigate the relationship between limited access to quality education and academic performance; to examine the impact of economic challenges, such as poverty and inability to afford education expenses, on student performance; to explore the role of instability and cultural attitudes towards education; to determine the influence of curriculum quality; and to evaluate the impact of education policy and support.

The study employed a quantitative, descriptive research design to achieve these objectives. The target population consisted of 135 head teachers and teachers from the Northern Zone of the Banadir region, which was selected as the most populated area in terms of schools. A sample of 82 respondents was utilized for the investigation. The findings indicate that the various factors examined in the study, including access to quality education, economic challenges, instability, cultural attitudes, curriculum quality, and education policy and support, all have a significant influence on the poor academic performance of secondary school students in Mogadishu. The influential nature of these factors highlights the need for a comprehensive plan to address the issue, which the researcher recommends should involve infrastructure improvements, teacher training, policy updates, awareness campaigns, psychosocial support, and the establishment of collaborative parent-teacher associations and school committees.

Keywords : Determinants , Poor Academic ,Performance , Secondary School , Mogadishu, Somalia

Introduction

Education is one of the most vital components of human development and societal advancement. A well-educated population can make better decisions, driving innovation and economic growth. As individuals develop their capabilities, they can pursue diverse career paths, improving their own quality of life and that of their families (Kapur, 2018). Student academic performance is the result of a complex interplay of various factors involving individual traits, family background, and neighborhood contexts. Each of these elements contributes uniquely to the experiences and opportunities available to students, ultimately influencing their success in education (Yusuf & Dada, 2016).

Globally, education is recognized as a fundamental human right and a key driver of socio-economic development. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education for all, aiming to ensure that all girls and boys complete free primary and secondary schooling by 2030. Professional development opportunities, mentorship programs, and ongoing support systems are being implemented to help teachers refine their instructional practices, deepen their subject knowledge, and cultivate positive relationships with students. By investing in teacher training and development, educators aim to elevate the quality of instruction and ultimately enhance student outcomes (Barrow & Rouse, 2013).

In Africa, numerous studies have been conducted to explore the intricate relationship between teachers' experience and students' performance, particularly in the context of secondary schools. Studies show that discrepancy in performance could be attributed to various factors, such as inadequate resources, teacher training, and support systems in place (Sagwe et al., 2016). Furthermore, teachers with advanced competencies in their subject areas were shown to facilitate deeper understanding among their students, leading to improved academic results (Sagwe et al., 2016).

Somalia, recovering from decades of conflict and instability, faces profound challenges in its education system. The infrastructure is severely underdeveloped, with a shortage of qualified teachers and inadequate learning materials, so the poor quality of education is reflected in students' results, which will ultimately influence the impact of the education system, the ministry has been striving to make education available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable to secure an inclusive education system (Pickard, 2019). Conflict further contributes to internal migration, with an estimated 1.3 million people being displaced in 2020 alone, and the majority citing conflict as the main reason. Low rates of fully qualified teachers' rates are seen across all types of school types, standing at 36 per cent, 35 per cent, and 36 per cent in primary public, publicly supported (or 'community), and private schools respectively. Furthermore, there are disparities seen among

states, with rates of qualification in private primary schools ranging from a high of 48 per cent in Galmudug to a low of 5 per cent in Jubbaland, suggesting similar variations in the quality of education available across other states (UNESCO, 2022).

Problem Statement

Students' academic performance in Secondary Schools plays an important role in producing the best quality graduates who will in turn join the higher education colleges to compete in the labor market against others. The poor academic performance of secondary school students in Mogadishu, Somalia is a pressing issue that needs to be addressed. Students face challenges including limited access to resources, economic barriers, cultural attitudes, inadequate curriculum, and inadequate policies. The high failure rate has resulted into little number of students continuing higher level of education studies and colleges. However, there is a significant gap in the existing body of research that specifically focuses on investigating how various factors contribute to poor academic performance among secondary school students in Mogadishu. As a result, the researcher has embarked on this study to systematically explore and analyze these contributing factors.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will have important implications for the education system in Mogadishu and potentially other regions of Somalia. By identifying the key determinants of poor academic performance, policymakers, school administrators, and education stakeholders will be better equipped to develop and implement targeted interventions to address the root causes of the problem. The insights gained from this research can inform the design of educational policies, resource allocation, teacher training programs, and student support services that aim to improve the overall academic outcomes of secondary school students in Mogadishu. Ultimately, addressing the determinants of poor academic performance can lead to enhanced educational opportunities, improved student well-being, and better long-term outcomes for the community.

Objectives

The general purpose of this study is to examine the determinants of poor academic performance of secondary school students in Mogadishu.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between limited access to quality education and academic performance among secondary school students in Mogadishu, Somalia.
2. To investigate the impact of economic challenges, such as poverty and inability to afford education expenses, on the academic performance of secondary school students in Mogadishu, Somalia.

3. To explore the role of instability and cultural attitudes towards education in the academic performance of secondary school students in Mogadishu, Somalia.
4. To determine the role of curriculum quality in the academic performance of secondary school students in Mogadishu, Somalia.
5. To evaluate the impact of education policy and support on the academic performance of secondary school students in Mogadishu, Somalia.

Literature Review

The factors that affect academic performance of pupils which has been done by other researchers who have tried to address the issue world over. The reviewed literature has been discussed under the following headings: causes of poor academic performance in learning institutions and strategies that help improve pupil academic performance. A good number of factors have been pointed out for poor pupil academic performance. Kanyika (2000) postulates that learning is a product of formal schooling, communities, families and peers. Learning can be influenced by social-economic and social cultural forces hence influencing learning and consequently pupil academic performance. (Kapur, 2018).

Education Quality in Secondary Schools

Secondary school education is an important channel through which young people acquire skills that improve opportunities for good jobs. High quality secondary education that caters for the widest possible range of abilities, interests and backgrounds is vital not just to set young people on the path to the world of work, but also to give countries the educated workforce they need to compete in today 's technologically driven world (Kurniawati, 2017).

Poor Academic Performance

Poor academic performance is defined as performance that falls short of an expected standard, as determined by the examinee and others. The criteria for excellence might range from 40 to 100, depending on the subjective yardstick of the evaluator or assessor. For example, a 70% result by senior secondary 3 pupils in the junior secondary English language exams are considered extremely good by all standards. (A, Asikhia, 2010).

Factors Associated with Poor Academic Performance

A student's academic performance in secondary schools can be greatly impacted by a wide range of intricate and varied circumstances, but a few essential components stand out. One of these factors is a student's inability to receive high-quality education and support because of limited availability to experienced teachers. When pupils lack access to instructors who are qualified and experienced, their learning experiences may be compromised, leading to lower academic achievement and a lack

of motivation to succeed (Banerjee, 2016).

Effect of Limited Access to Quality Education on Academic Performance:

Access is measured by preschool and school enrollment (or dropout), and mean years of schooling (Akareem & Hossain, 2016). Access to education remains the most significant concern for Somalia with more than 85% of school-age children out of school in 2020 (MoECHE, 2022). Qualified teachers are another critical component of academic success. In many cases, schools may face shortages of qualified educators, resulting in students being taught by teachers who may not be adequately trained in the subjects they are assigned to teach. This not only affects the quality of instruction but also diminishes students' enthusiasm for learning and engagement in the classroom. Teachers have the primary responsibility to help students learn by creating and maintaining a positive, productive classroom atmosphere conducive for learning and managing the learning process. In so doing, teachers are placed at the center of student achievement (Odunga et al., 2020). Alongside access related issues, challenges related to the quality of education being delivered are also exhibited in Somalia. Most starkly are the low levels of teacher qualification, standing at 36% in primary and 15% in secondary public schools. This is further reflected in the weak results seen in the teacher proficiency testing that was carried out in the country in 2019, in which only 53% of primary and 63% of secondary teachers passed. Alongside low levels of teacher qualification, the number of teachers currently in the system is inadequate to support the student population, with pupil-teacher ratios ranging from a low of 32:1 to a high of 60:1 across sub-sectors (Mo ECHE, 2022).

Effect of Economic Challenges on Academic Performance:

Economic challenges further complicate students' ability to perform well academically. Families facing financial hardships may struggle to afford educational resources such as textbooks, extracurricular activities, and even basic school supplies. Additionally, economic stress can lead to emotional distress for students, which can detrimentally impact their focus and motivation in school. Feeding is very important in the life of learners since it affects students' thinking and intellectual development. It takes a central position in institutions that operate a residential program for students(Naisaza, 2017).

In Somalia, the General Education Law (2021) and the National Development Plan (2020-2024) both emphasize the crucial role that education plays in lifting individuals and communities out of poverty. The government recognizes that investing in education is a powerful tool for driving socio-economic development and reducing inequality within the country. By providing quality education to all citizens, Somalia aims to break the cycle of poverty that often traps families for generations.

Effect of Conflict and Culture on Academic Performance:

Conflict and instability can disrupt students' education and lead to significant interruptions in their learning experiences. Students in unstable environments may struggle with the uncertainty in their lives, affecting their ability to concentrate and perform academically. There are numerous instances that take place among the families that are responsible for low academic achievement. There have been cases of families that experience conflicts and disputes on a frequent basis. The occurrence of conflicts and disputes are regarded as major barriers within the course of academic achievement (Kapur, 2018). Secondary schools in Nigeria are faced with so many security challenges include Boko Haram, armed activities, kidnapping, banditry, political, religious and communal crises, murder, destruction of oil facilities by Niger delta militant's, child abduction trafficking and child labor. These different dimensions of security challenges are what the researchers described as thong-religious conflict, politically based violence economic based violence and organized violence (Stephen, 2023).

The poor capacity of using the English language not only affects students' performance in examinations but also hampers their overall academic success. Without a proficient level of English, students may struggle to grasp complex concepts, participate in classroom discussions, and engage with English-language textbooks and educational materials. As a result, their academic progress may be stunted, leading to lower grades and limited opportunities for future advancement (Shyiramunda Theophile et al., 2020).

Gender inequality significantly impacts academic performance as well. In certain cultures, social norms may discourage or inhibit girls from pursuing education at the same level as boys, leading to higher dropout rates and lower achievement for female students. In many regions of Somalia, girls are often forced into early marriages, denying them the opportunity to continue their education and pursue their own goals and aspirations. These early marriages not only result in girls dropping out of school, but also put them at risk of health complications and social isolation. Additionally, early pregnancies further hinder girls' educational prospects, as young mothers are often unable to balance the demands of motherhood and schooling (MoECHE, 2022).

The Effect of Curriculum Quality on Academic Performance:

When there is a change in the education curriculum, it is crucial to consider the impact it will have on all students. The distributional impact across students is significant, as the level of challenge presented by the new curriculum may differ based on the preparedness of each individual student. It is important for educators to be aware of these potential disparities and to provide additional support and resources for students who may struggle with the new curriculum. This could include personalized learning plans, extra tutoring, or modifications to the curriculum to better meet the

needs of all students (Andrietti & Su, 2019).

The availability and scope of extracurricular activities also play a significant role in student engagement and development. Participating in extracurricular activities can also help students build important life skills such as teamwork, time management, leadership, and communication. Moreover, these activities can boost students' self-confidence and self-esteem, as they gain recognition and praise for their achievements (Martínez et al., 2020). According to (Sifuni, 2010), the lack of motivation among teachers has been a recurring issue in the educational system, with detrimental effects on student learning. In a recent study, it was found that 44% of teachers admitted to not providing assignments to their students due to a lack of motivation. This not only hinders the academic progress of students but also deprives them of valuable feedback that can help them improve their skills and knowledge.

Effect of Inadequate Educational Policies and Support:

Inadequate educational policy and support can severely hinder efforts to improve academic outcomes. When education systems lack clear governance, adequate funding, and effective policies geared towards fostering academic success and equity, the entire educational landscape can suffer, leaving students without the necessary support to thrive academically. A strong and supportive leadership style can inspire employees to work towards common goals, foster collaboration, and boost morale. On the other hand, a lackluster or ineffective leadership approach can demotivate employees, create disengagement, and hinder productivity (Sagwe et al., 2016).

In Somalia, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education (MoECHE) is responsible for managing the education sector in the country. National Education Policy guarantees access to free and quality basic education to all Somali children. It also provides for the provision of equal opportunity to education, beyond basic education, to all citizens of Somalia (MoECHE, 2022). A scholarship is a grant of financial aid for the students to attain their further education. Scholarships are assigned to the students on the basis of different criteria. In Enugu State, Nigeria, a case study was brought to analyze the impact of scholarship on students. The results describe that scholarships should be awarded to the poor students who cannot afford the educational expenditures, appetite only two times in one day and also find difficulties in clothing themselves (Habiba & Liaqat, 2022).

Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive research design to investigate the factors contributing to the poor academic performance of secondary school students in Mogadishu, Somalia, employing a quantitative approach for data collection and analysis. The research focused on the Northern Zone of the Banadir region, which includes three districts: Dayniile,

Hodan, and Howlwadaag. From a population of 194 secondary schools, a simple random sampling method was used to select 3 schools from each district, resulting in a target population of 135 teachers and headmasters, of which 82 respondents participated. Data was collected using a Likert scale questionnaire, with results analyzed through SPSS software to compute weighted averages for various influencing factors. The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a value of 0.834, indicating high reliability and reinforcing the credibility of the findings. The researcher prioritized ethical considerations by conducting the study with professionalism and respect for participants. Key principles of privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality were upheld, ensuring that identities and sensitive information would be protected and used solely for research purposes.

Results

Demographic Information of the Respondents

The demographic profile of the study's respondents reveals significant gender and experience disparities among educational professionals in Mogadishu. Figure 4.1 indicates a pronounced gender imbalance, with 93.9% of the 82 respondents being male, which may contribute to insights regarding poor academic performance in the region. Age distribution, shown in Figure 4.2, highlights that the majority of respondents are aged 26-30 (31.7%) and 31-35 (25.6%), while only 6.1% are over 40, suggesting a younger teaching workforce. Experience levels, illustrated in Figure 4.3, show that 40.2% of respondents have 6-10 years of teaching experience, while 30.5% have 1-5 years, and 29.3% have over 10 years. Educational qualifications, depicted in Figure 4.4, reveal that 43 respondents hold a Bachelor's degree, 29 have a Master's degree, and 3 possess a PhD, indicating a range of educational backgrounds that may impact teaching effectiveness.

Finally, Figure 4.5 shows that 72.0% of respondents are teachers, with 28.0% serving as headteachers, underscoring the predominant role of teachers in the educational landscape.

Descriptive Statistics of Study Factors

Table 1. Effect of limited access to quality education and qualified teachers

Items	Statement	Mean	S.D	Result
Q1	Limited access to quality education contributes to poor academic performance of the student	4.18	.944	Highly Influential

Q2	Limited access to qualified teachers hinders the academic performance of the student	3.89	1.217	Highly Influential
Q3	Insufficient training and professional development opportunities for teachers affect the academic performance of the student	4.17	.829	Highly Influential
Grand Mean		4.08		Highly Influential

Table 1 reveals that limited access to quality education and qualified teachers significantly impacts students' academic performance, with a mean score of 4.18 and a standard deviation of .944. The lack of sufficient training and professional development opportunities for teachers is also a significant factor affecting student performance.

Table 2 .Effect of Economic Challenges on Students' Academic Performance

Items	Statement	Mean	S.D	Result
Q1	Economic challenges have a negative impact on the academic performance of the student	3.80	1.071	Highly Influential
Q2	Insufficient infrastructure and facilities negatively impact the academic performance of the student	4.01	.882	Highly Influential
Q3	Lack of educational resources hinder academic performance among students	3.65	1.280	Highly Influential
Q4	Limited access to technology and internet connectivity hinders the academic performance of the students	3.34	1.219	Highly Influential
Grand Mean		3.7		Highly Influential

Table 2 reveals that economic challenges significantly impact students' academic performance, with a mean score of 3.80. Insufficient infrastructure and facilities also negatively affect academic performance, with a mean score of 4.01. The lack of educational resources is another significant factor affecting students' academic performance.

Table 3. Effect of Instability and Culture on Students' Academic Performance

Items	Statement	Mean	S.D	Result
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Q1	Conflict and instability affect the academic performance of secondary school students	3.59	1.065	Influential
Q2	Cultural attitudes towards education play a significant role in the academic performance of secondary school students	4.13	1.051	Influential
Q3	Language barriers significantly hinder the academic performance of secondary school students	2.94	1.309	Neutral
Q4	Gender inequality in education negatively impacts the academic performance of secondary school students	4.07	.953	Influential
Grand Mean		3.68		Influential

Table 3 reveals that conflict and instability, cultural attitudes towards education, language barriers, and gender inequality in education significantly impact students' academic performance in secondary schools. Conflict and instability negatively affect students' academic performance, while cultural attitudes emphasize the importance of considering cultural beliefs and values in education. Language barriers hinder students' academic progress, and gender inequality negatively impacts students' academic outcomes.

Table 4. Effect of Curriculum Quality on Students' Academic Performance

Items	Statement	Mean	S.D	Result
Q1	Curriculum quality has a significant impact on the academic performance of students	3.94	1.058	Influential
Q2	Limited opportunities for extracurricular activities negatively affect the academic performance of students	3.63	1.060	Influential
Q3	Inadequate parental involvement in education contributes to poor academic performance among students	4.13	.828	Influential
4	Inadequate access to educational support services, such as counseling and tutoring, hampers academic performance among students.	3.65	1.093	Influential
Q5	High student-teacher ratios negatively impact the academic performance of students	3.93	1.003	Influential
Q6	Lack of motivation and engagement in the learning	4.13	.926	Influential

	process contributes to poor academic performance among students		
Grand Mean		3.90	Influential

Table 4 reveals that curriculum quality significantly impacts students' academic performance, with a mean of 3.94. However, limited extracurricular activities negatively affect academic performance, emphasizing the need for diverse learning experiences. Inadequate parental involvement, limited access to support services, and high student-teacher ratios also contribute to poor academic performance. Lastly, lack of motivation and engagement in the learning process further hampers academic success. Therefore, it is crucial for schools to provide comprehensive support services, smaller class sizes, and personalized attention to improve students' academic outcomes.

Table 5. Effect of Educational Policy and Support on Students' Academic Performance

Items	Statement	Mean	S.D	Result
Q1	Inadequate educational policies and governance contribute to poor academic performance among students	3.94	1.058	Influential
Q2	Limited opportunities for higher education and scholarships negatively impact the academic performance of students	3.63	1.060	Influential
Grand Mean		3.79		Influential

Table 5 reveals that inadequate educational policies and governance significantly impact students' academic performance, with a mean score of 3.94. Limited opportunities for higher education and scholarships also negatively affect students' academic achievements, with a mean score of 3.63.

Table 6. The Relationship between Independent Variable and Dependent Variable of the Study

IV Variables	DV Variable	Grand Means	Decision
Limited Access to Quality Education	Poor academic performance	4.08	High Influential Ha1 was supported
Economic Challenges	Poor academic	3.7	High Influential

	performance		Ha2 was supported
Instability and Cultural Attitudes	Poor academic performance	3.68	High Influential Ha3 was supported
Curriculum quality	Poor academic performance	3.90	High Influential Ha4 was supported
Educational Policy and Support	Poor academic performance	3.79	High Influential Ha5 was supported

Table 6 shows that the poor academic performance of secondary school students in three districts of Mogadishu city is largely due to factors such as limited access to high-quality education, economic challenges, regional instability, and cultural attitudes towards education. The grand mean for the "Limited Access to Quality Education" variable is 4.08, indicating a significant impact on the dependent variable. The grand mean for the "Economic Challenges" variable is 3.7, indicating a significant impact on the dependent variable. The grand mean for the "Instability and Cultural Attitudes" variable is 3.68, indicating a significant impact on the dependent variable. The grand mean for the "Educational Policy and Support" variable is 3.79, indicating a significant impact on the dependent variable.

Discussion of Findings

This study explored the multifaceted factors influencing poor academic performance among secondary school students in Mogadishu, Somalia, revealing critical insights into the educational landscape. A significant finding is the overwhelming agreement that limited access to quality education is a primary contributor to academic struggles, with a high mean score of 4.18. Respondents underscored the necessity of adequate resources, facilities, and relevant curricula in enhancing students' learning experiences. Equally important, the availability of qualified teachers was recognized as influential, receiving a mean score of 3.89. This highlights the challenges posed by teacher shortages and inadequate training, which compromise the quality of education. Furthermore, the study identified economic challenges, insufficient infrastructure, and the lack of educational resources as key barriers, each receiving mean scores indicative of their impact on student outcomes. The findings align with existing literature, emphasizing the critical role of a supportive learning environment in fostering academic success (Kapur, 2018; Banerjee, 2016). Additional factors such as cultural attitudes towards education and parental involvement also emerged as significant influences on academic performance. The high mean scores for these indicators (4.13 for cultural attitudes and 4.13 for parental involvement) suggest that societal norms

and active parental engagement are vital for motivating students and enhancing educational achievement. Moreover, issues related to conflict and instability received a mean score of 3.59, indicating that ongoing unrest disrupts educational continuity and affects students' psychological well-being (Kapur, 2018). The study further highlighted the importance of a well-structured curriculum and the need for extracurricular activities, which collectively enrich the educational experience (Martínez et al., 2020). Overall, the findings suggest that addressing these interconnected factors through improved educational policies, enhanced teacher training, and increased parental involvement is essential for improving academic performance in Mogadishu's secondary schools (Banerjee, 2016; Martínez et al., 2020).

Conclusion

The study reveals that poor academic performance among secondary school students in Mogadishu is significantly influenced by a variety of interconnected factors. Key issues identified include limited access to quality education, insufficient infrastructure, and inadequate teacher qualifications. Economic challenges, cultural attitudes towards education, and the impact of conflict and instability further exacerbate the situation. Respondents highlighted the critical role of these elements, noting that deficiencies in educational resources, facilities, and teacher expertise considerably hinder student learning and achievement. Additionally, the scarcity of educational resources, lack of technology access, and high student-teacher ratios were found to negatively impact students' academic performance.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of holistic educational experiences and comprehensive support systems. Parental involvement, curriculum quality, and opportunities for extracurricular activities are crucial for fostering student engagement and success. Inadequate educational policies and governance, along with limited opportunities for higher education and scholarships, also pose significant barriers to academic achievement. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that includes policy reforms, improved educational infrastructure, and increased support for teachers and students. By tackling these issues, stakeholders can work towards enhancing the overall educational environment and improving academic outcomes for students in Mogadishu.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed to improve academic performance among secondary school students in Mogadishu:

1. Enhance Access to Quality Education: Invest in educational infrastructure and provide sufficient resources.
2. Improve Teacher Qualifications and Training: Implement professional development programs and address teacher shortages.
3. Address Economic Challenges: Offer financial support and develop community programs to assist low-income families.
4. Foster a Supportive Learning Environment: Reduce student-teacher ratios and maintain conducive learning facilities.
5. Increase Access to Technology and Internet Connectivity: Improve digital resources and provide technology training.
6. Promote Parental Involvement: Encourage parental engagement and offer resources for supporting children's learning.
7. Strengthen Educational Policies and Governance: Develop effective policies and foster collaboration among stakeholders.
8. Support Holistic Educational Experiences: Include extracurricular activities to enhance student engagement and development.
9. Mitigate the Impact of Conflict and Instability: Ensure educational continuity during conflicts and provide psychosocial support.
10. Expand Higher Education and Scholarship Opportunities: Increase scholarships and establish partnerships for better access to higher education.

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