CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HOME ENVIRONMENT OF HIGH AND LOW ACHIEVING GRADE NINE PUPILS IN SELECTED BASIC SCHOOLS IN LUSAKA URBAN DISTRICT
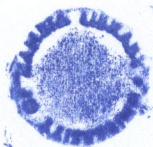
BY

NTHEMBE MBEWE

A Dissertation submitted to the University of Zambia in partial fulfilment of requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education (Sociology of Education)

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DECLARATION

I, Nthembe Mbewe, do declare that this dissertation is my original work. It has been presented in accordance with the guidelines for the award of the Master of Education in Sociology of Education in the School of Education at the University of Zambia. It has not been submitted elsewhere for a degree.

Signed: _____

Date: _____21st April, 2009_____

APPROVAL

The University of Zambia approves this dissertation for Nthembe Mbewe in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the award of the Master of Education in Sociology of Education.

Examiners' Signatures

SIGNED _____ DATE _22/04/2009___

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SIGNED _____ DATE _13/05/09___

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my parents Mrs Margaret Shapaka and Mr Allan Mbewe for educating me and for their love, guidance and support throughout my life.

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iv

TABLE OF CONTENT PAGE

List of Tables

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

SPSS   :   Statistical Package for Social Science

PTA   :   Parents Teacher Association

UNSECO   :   United Nations Scientific Educational and Cultural Organization

MOE   :   Ministry of Education

UNICEF   :   United Nations Children's Emergency Fund

SES   :   Socio- Economic Status

n   :   Total of the Sample

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in selected Basic Schools situated within the areas of Lusaka District. The main purpose was to investigate characteristics of home environment of both high and low-achieving grade nine pupils and assess which home characteristics had most positively and negatively impacted on their academic performance. In investigating these issues the study relied on life narratives of the respondents and empirical data.

A sample of 138 grade nine pupils from five government basic schools was involved in the study in May 2007. The schools and pupils were selected, using the purposive and stratified sampling respectively. Of the 138 grade nine pupils were 50 interviewed, while 88 answered the questionnaire.

Data from the pupils were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaires and interviews sought respondents' opinions about the characteristics of home environment in general. The quantitative data from questionnaires were analysed by means of Chi- square which were generated on a computer, using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPPS) programme. The generated qualitative data from interviews were coded, and emerging themes were grouped into categories using constant comparative analysis technique.

Data from the questionnaires and interviews showed that characteristics of home environment had an impact on the academic performance of grade nine pupils in selected basic schools of Lusaka Urban District. Using the Chi- square, the study found that there

was a significant relationship between language, residential area, parents' perception of their children's academic performance, communication about school, parenting style, monitoring and controlling of behaviour to optimise academic performance, parent-children communication and time spent on viewing TV on one hand and academic achievement. While most of the high-achieving pupils commonly used English at home, most of the low-achieving pupils used local languages at home. Unlike low-achieving pupils, the majority of the high-achieving pupils came from homes where parents had high perception and expectation of their children's academic performance; pupils had favourable feeling about their home environment; parent and children regularly talked about school; parents regularly monitored and controlled children's behaviour to optimise academic achievement and were parent monitored TV viewing and after-school activities regularly. These home environment characteristics contributed to children achieving high academic performance.

This study has established that characteristics of home environment have an impact on the academic performance of grade nine pupils in selected basic schools of Lusaka. The study found that monitoring and controlling of behaviour to optimise academic performance and high parents' expectation of the children's academic performance were the characteristics of home environment that had the most positive impact on the academic achievement of grade nine pupils. On the other hand, lack of monitoring and controlling of behaviour to optimise academic performance had the most negative impact on the academic performance of the pupils.

Based on these findings, this study recommended that parents should see intelligence as ever changing to avoid bias about what students will be able to achieve. It also suggested that parents should monitor the after-school activities of their children and encourage those times spent on activities that would foster and encourage positive academic achievement. It was further recommended that parents should work with their children on homework, talk to their children on school related factors, monitor and control pupils' behaviour and check pupils' academic progress so as to optimize their academic performance.

It was also recommended that schools should encourage parents' involvement in their children's education and provide family intervention programmes through parents' education. Furthermore, it was recommended that the Ministry of Education should develop programmes for teachers that would sensitize them about the impact of home environment factors on student academic achievement.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information

The kind of home a pupil grows up in affects the values he/she holds concerning school and how he/she behaves in general and also the way he/she actually behaves in school. According to Kapambwe (1980), potentials for learning may be developed to the full or remain stunted depending on the nature of the environment in which the child develops. Many people and institutions such as parents, the broader family, peer groups, neighbourhood, schools and other bodies like churches or clubs influence pupils' achievement and adjustment. All these are involved in shaping children's progress towards their self-fulfilment and citizenship.

It should however be noted that, children themselves, with their unique abilities, temperaments and propensities, play a pivotal role in recreating and reforming their behaviour, aspirations and performance in school. The amount of time pupils spend in school and the time they spend outside school may have a strong bearing on how much they learn and on their subsequent academic performance.

According to Zhang and Carrasquillo (1995), children's parents are supposed to be both their first educators and their loyal supporters throughout their school career. This entails that if pupils are to maximize their potential from schooling, they will need the full support of their parents. Family involvement is recognized as a powerful influence on the children's achievement in

school, which is reflected in children earning higher grades and receiving higher scores on the tests, and most likely graduating from high school and enrolling in higher education. Furthermore, Redd et.al (2001), argue that students with high levels of achievement during adolescence are more likely to complete high school and to attend and complete college than their peers with low levels of achievement.

There are many differences among families that can potentially affect the academic achievement of the children in addition to differences in education, occupational level, and income of the parents. For decades, it has been assumed that Socio-Economic Status (SES) is one of the best predictors of academic achievement. The Coleman Report (1966) validated what educators thought they already knew that a strong relationship existed between all kinds of achievement variables and what has come to be known as Socio-economic Status. The Socio-economic Status, which includes parental income, education, occupation and home environment, has an effect on academic achievements of pupils. The effects of SES have historically been thought of as extremely large and rigid to change. The most important aspect of SES has been the effect of home environment, as opposed to factors such as parental income and education. The social capital argument suggests that impoverished parents and children lack supportive social relationship and network within and outside the family necessary for aspiring to and achieving success (Halawa, 2006).

Heyneman (1976) states that, neither physical facilities nor characteristics of teachers match the strength of pupils' socio-economic status and other indices of the pupils' out of school environment. He argues that although such studies can be generalized beyond United States of

America, to Great Britain, to Western Europe, through the industrialised world, these conclusions are however, less qualified for less industrialised societies. He further states that facilities seem to have a larger impact while socio-economic status appears to have less effect than would have been expected. Kellaghan et.al (1993) claim that the family environment is the most powerful influence in determining students' school achievement, academic motivation, and the number of years of schooling they receive. The characteristics of the home environment must be taken into account in any attempt to evaluate education performance and effectiveness. Without such analysis the effects of variation in home environment are liable to conceal the effects of school, teacher and other educational variables.

Furthermore, classifying the youths according to social class position of their parents is to order them on the extent of their participation and success in the education system. Where the school cannot change the income, education or occupation of adults in the home, the school can have potential impact on the atmosphere in the home. Thus, a home environment structured in specific ways can positively or negatively affect academic achievement. Home environment is an important variable that influences children's academic performance and thus, because of this, it was essential to understand and determine the characteristics of the home environment of high and low achievers among grade nine pupils in Lusaka District.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although it is acknowledged that home environment provides substantial intellectual support for children's school success, it is not clear to what extent these characteristics differ among the high

and low achieving grade nine pupils and which of these have the most positive impact on pupils' academic achievement. This study seeks to explore the difference in characteristics of home environment of high and low achieving grade nine pupils in Lusaka District and which of these characteristics have the most positive and negative impact on grade nine pupils' academic performance in selected basic schools of Lusaka.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to establish a relationship between academic performance and home based characteristics of high and low achieving grade nine pupils in Lusaka District.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were:

1. To explore characteristics of home environment of grade nine high achieving pupils in selected basic schools in Lusaka District.

2. To explore characteristics of home environment of grade nine low achieving pupils in selected basic schools in Lusaka District.

3. To investigate what characteristics of home environment provide the most positive impact on grade nine pupils' academic performance in selected basic schools in Lusaka District.

4. To investigate what characteristics of home environment provide the most negative impact on grade nine pupils' academic performance in selected basic schools in Lusaka Urban District.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of home environment of grade nine high achievers in selected basic schools of Lusaka District?

2. What are the characteristics of home environment of grade nine low achievers in selected basic schools of Lusaka District?

3. What characteristics of home environment have the most positive impact on grade nine pupils' academic performance in selected basic schools in Lusaka District?

4. What characteristics of home environment have the most negative impact on grade nine pupils' academic performance in selected basic schools in Lusaka District?

1.6 Significance of the Study

At a time when there is public outcry concerning the declining quality of education in the country, any study that deals with the factors that affect the academic achievement of pupils is very important. One of the things that may affect the academic achievement of the pupils is their home environment. The home has an enormous influence on the pupils' psychological, emotional, social and economic state. This is so because parents are the first socializing agents in an individual's life. While, the school is responsible for the experiences that make up the

individual's life during school periods, parents and the individual's experiences at home play tremendous roles in building the personality of the child and making the child what he is.

Furthermore, research in this area may increase awareness of characteristics of the social home environment of low and high performing pupils that might be helpful in creating home atmosphere that fosters learning. It is hoped that the study will provide information to parents and educators which may help them have a better understanding of how particular kinds of home environments affect children's academic performance and what characteristics of the home environment can have the most positive impact on academic performance for grade nine pupils.

1.7 Theoretical Perspective

Researchers have explained the effects of home environment on students' academic performance in terms of social stratification. This study is underpinned upon the theory of social stratification. This theory explains differences in pupils' achievement based on factors such as parents' occupation and education and the home background. It suggests that impoverished parents and children lack supportive social relationship and network within and outside the family that are necessary for aspiring to and achieving success. The assumption is that intellectual talent is not fixed quantity with which we have to work but a variable that can be modified by social and educational approaches. This is not to deny the existence of a basic genetic endowment; but whereas this endowment has proved impossible to isolate, other factors can be identified. Particularly significant amongst them are the influences of social and physical environment; and

since these are susceptible to modification, they may well prove educationally more important than intellectual talent.

Furthermore, Granovetter, (2004) states that socio-economic background affects mental ability and educational attainment. The social stratification theory explains an association between social class and the responsibility. This includes initiatives taken by parents over children's education, in the interest and support shown by fathers over education and upbringing. This also relates to time and attention devoted to their children's development, their interest and knowledge of their children's work. For all these factors the situation is likely to be more favourable with better social circumstances at home. The home where pupils come from is more powerful in determining the academic performance of pupils.

However, Kapambwe (1980) argues, following Miller (1970), and Surgarman (1970) that social class, as far as the problem of student performance is concerned, is a crude variable of limited direct importance in the sense that the various factors may act independently in producing chances in scholastic achievement. He further states that defective home backgrounds are not the sole prerogative of any social class, and that children in generally privileged homes can be held back in their educational achievement by the existence of adverse environmental factors which are not necessarily material or economic.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Home environment: The structure outside the school environment which centres on enhancing and manipulating the surroundings to encourage and support the children's academic achievement.

Parental expectations: The inferences that parents have about the future academic achievement of their school-going pupils.

Academic achievement: The intellectual or scholarly success that a pupil attains in school, referring to a wide range of attitudes, values and knowledge which, taken together, help a pupil achieve in tests and examinations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Considering that one of concerns in this study is with the characteristics of home environment of high and low achieving pupils, it becomes imperative that we should look at the literature which deals with dimensions of pupils' home environment and academic achievement. This chapter, therefore, reviews literature on characteristics of home environment of high and low achieving pupils. It first looks at the academic performance, then at the significance of academic performance, factors affecting academic performance and characteristics of home environment that affect academic performance of pupils. It further looks at other works relating to other home characteristics affecting academic performance of pupils.

2.1 Academic Performance

Good (1973:7) defined academic performance as "the knowledge attained or skills developed in the school subjects". Academic performance is accomplished by actual execution of class work in the school setting. It is mainly assessed by the use of teacher rating- tests and examinations in action. One of the significances of academic performance is that students with high-level achievement during adolescence are more likely to complete high school, attend and complete college than their peers with lower levels of achievement. Whereas high academic achievement can foretell later success in the job market, such as higher wages, those with lower levels of

education and skills are relegated to lower levels of economic success coupled with a greater likelihood of living in poverty. Furthermore, poor academic achievement increases the chance that a child lacks the skills and opportunities to participate fully in and contribute to society as an adult.

2.2 Factors Affecting Academic Performance

Differences in pupils' academic performance is affected by a number of things which include school-based factors such as, the expertise of teachers, the organisational efficiency of the school, students' cognitive processes and structures to achieve a sufficiently accurate description of what happens in the learning environment and their home environment. According to Tremblay et.al. (2001:32)

> Certain pre- existing factors (such as individual SES and home environment) have a large impact on students' academic achievement. Other factors in the classroom (such as teaching practices and number of students) and in the neighbourhood surrounding the school (such as neighbourhood SES) exert independent incremental effects on school performance.

2.2.1   Social Economic Status (SES)

Coleman Report (1966) and Marzano (2003) support SES as one of the best predictors of academic achievement, a sentiment that is also upheld by both educators and the public at large. Considine, and Zappala (2002: 2) define SES as "a person's overall social position . . . to which attainments in both social and economic domain contribute".

10

When used in studies of children's school achievement, it refers to the SES of the parents or family. It includes measures like a parent's achievements in education, employment, occupational status, income and wealth or some combination of these. There are many comprehensive reviews of the relationship between SES and educational outcomes that exist (Marzono, 2003 and Hyperlink, 1995). These studies and reviews make it clear that children from low SES families are more likely to exhibit lower levels of literacy, numeracy and comprehension; more likely to leave school early, have lower education participation rates (less likely to attend university) exhibit higher levels of problematic school behaviour (for instance truancy); are less likely to study specialised mathematics and science subjects. They are more likely to have difficulties with their studies and display negative attitudes towards school, leading to less successful school-to-labour market transitions in terms of educational outcomes when compared to children from high SES families (Considine, and Zappala (2002). Hyperlink (1995) further explains that a strong association between social background and education performance of almost all types is one of the longest established findings in social and educational researches. Similarly, studies of children's educational achievements over time have also demonstrated that "social background remains one of the major sources of educational inequality implying that educational success depends very strongly on the SES of one's parents" (Graetz, 1995: 28 and Edgar, 1976, cited in Considine, and Zappala, 2002).

The effect of parental SES on children's educational outcomes may be neutralised, strengthened or mediated by a range of other contextual, family and individual characteristics. Parents may have a low income and a low-status occupation, for example, but nevertheless transmit high educational aspirations to their children. What family members have (material resources, for

11

instance) can often be mediated by what family members do. The social and the economic components of SES may have distinct and separate influences on educational outcomes. While both components are important, social factors (for instance, parents' educational attainments) have been found to be more significant than economic factors, such as a family's capacity to purchase goods and services, in explaining different educational outcomes. It is argued that families where parents are advantaged socially, educationally and economically foster a higher level of achievement in their children. They may also provide higher levels of psychological support for their children through environments that encourage the development of skills necessary for success at school (Williams et al., 1980; Williams, 1987; and Williams et al., 1993).

2.2.2 Geographical Location

The geographical location is another factor that can affect academic achievement of students. According to Cheers, (1990) and HREOC cited in Considine, and Zappala, (2000), students from rural areas are more likely to have lower educational outcomes in terms of academic performance and retention rates than students from urban areas. There is usually inadequate number of educational facilities in rural and remote areas and even when it is adequate, school children from these areas remain disadvantaged by other factors like issues of access to education in regional areas. These issues of access include costs, the availability of transport and levels of family income support, inequity with regards to the quality of education that rural students receive, often as a result of restricted and limited subjects of choice. In most cases they

may even have limited recreational and educational facilities within their school. In Zambia, for example, most schools in rural areas are under staffed (Kelly, 1999).

2.2.3   Classroom

Factors in the classroom also exert independent effects on school performance. Doyle (1977) identified three aspects of classroom, complexity, multidimensionality and unpredictability as aspects that have an impact on students' academic performance. He referred to multidimensionality as the interacting network of purposes, events and processes. He stated that teachers face a multiplicity of tasks which include: coping with emotional responses to events and behaviour and establish procedures for routine and particulars assignments. The other aspect of teachers that exerts considerable influence on students' performance is their social origin, as noted by Alexander et al (1987) in Doyle (1977):

> A teacher's own social origin exercises a strong influence on how they react to the status attributes of their students. In particular, low status and minority pupils experience their greatest difficulties in the classrooms of high status teachers. They are evaluated by their teachers as less mature. Their teachers hold lower performance expectations for them and their teachers score exceptionally low and perceived school climate measures. Studies in this area shows that year-end marks and standardized test scores of such pupils are apparently depressed by these indicators of pupil teacher social distance and teacher disaffection.

2.2.4 Home Environment and Pupils Academic Performance

The home environment of pupils is the other factor that has an effect on the academic performance of pupils. It is agreed that academic performance of children is related to their

innate ability. Sparkes (1999), cited in Consisine and Zappala, (2002), noted that, the degree of individual variance in academic performance was accounted for by variation in genetic factors. The relative importance of an individual's innate qualities ("nature") against personal experience ("nurture") in determining or causing individual difference in physical and behaviour traits is a subject of intense debate. The Newson Report (1963), on factors affecting the academic performance of students, as cited in Hyperlink, (2002:6) states that:

> Intellectual talent is not fixed quantity with which we have to work but a variable that can be modified by social and educational approaches..... the results of investigations increasingly indicate that the kind of intelligence which is measured by the tests so far applied, is largely an acquired characteristic. This is not to deny the existence of a basic genetic endowment: but whereas this endowment, so far, has proved impossible to isolate, other factors can be identified. Particularly significant amongst them are influences of social and physical environment: and since these are susceptible to modification, they may well prove educationally more important.

This statement entails that the numbers of those capable of achieving high in school are a function not only of heredity, but also of a number of other influences varying from, the standards of educational provision, family incomes and attitude, to the education received by previous generations. Irrespective of educational policies and prospects for action focused on education or teaching, the families of pupils cannot be disregarded. According to Hammer (2003), the home environment is as important as what goes on in the school. In 1997, the Archived Information confirmed that family involvement and home environment create powerful influence on children's achievement in school, which is reflected in children earning higher grades and receiving higher scores on their tests. This also leads to graduating from high school at higher rates and most likely to enrol in higher education.

Over a period of time now, home environment and social economic status have consistently been shown to be related to student academic performance. Previous studies mainly focused on students' health and nutrition, the physical environment of their family structure (e.g. single parent homes) the parenting styles, beliefs and also the children's inherited intelligence (Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), 2006). Furthermore, SASS (2006) states that, these studies lead us to assume that adverse background conditions such as poverty and lack of parental involvement lower students' academic performance. Kapambwe (1980), also states that, environmental circumstances in education are important in that they may predispose children to failure because learning in school is directly and indirectly influenced by factors outside the classroom.

2.2.4.1 Parental Expectations

Parental expectation is crucial to pupils' academic performance. The manner and extent to which parents communicate their children's academic aspiration to their children has a bearing on their academic performance. The study carried out by Fan and Chen in 2001 is one of the examples of a study that confirms that parental expectation is a very important element of the home environment that affects the academic performance of pupils. In their study Fan and Chen, found that student perceptions of parental expectation correlated with achievement. They further state that it is not clear whether it is the children's own beliefs and expectations or actual parent expectations that influence achievement. Christensen et.al (1992) show that, high parents' academic expectations communicated to students are associated with enhanced achievement. This may result in students' perception of parental expectations being more important than the actual expectations themselves.

2.2.4.2 Parental Involvement

Parental involvement has also been shown to be a very important home characteristic that positively influences children's academic achievement (Deutscher, 2006). Deutscher (2006) has further stated that children learn and grow through three overlapping spheres of influence, family, school and community which must form part of their environment. A number of researchers have identified parents as critical force, even more powerful and direct than teachers, in their children's education (Eccles and Jacobs, 1986 as cited in Hyperlink, 2005). Deutscher (2003) has also shown that parental involvement can be an important variable that positively influences children's education. Parental involvement can be of different type, ranging from parenting, skills, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, home tutors to collaborating with the community. It also involves home-related activities like parents working with children on their home work, parents talking to their children about school-related topics, being involved in parent associations, and checking children's progress. Edwards and Young (1992) in Dale and Griffins (1972:72) summarized that "studies point to higher student achievement when parents participate in school activities, monitor children's homework and when parents also support the extension into the home the work and values of the school".

Furthermore, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994:27), theorized two categories of parental involvement; personal and intellectual involvement.

Parents' behavioural involvement such as visiting school and participating in educational affairs provides information useful to help their child's schooling. Parents' involvement is often characterized as personal when this involvement leads to their child's effective experience in and out of school. This involvement helps refine the affective

16

characteristics of the child in general and creates positive attitude toward schooling and self in particular. Parents' intellectual involvement exposes the child to cognitively stimulating activities such as reading books and discussing current events. All types of parental involvement: not just the intellectual component, have a positive effect on children's school performance. The broader literature identifies five critical factors of parental involvement: home discussion, home supervision, home-school communication, volunteering work for school, and parental expectation.

Home discussion about school has been associated with students' higher academic achievement (Christenson et al, 1992). Christenson et.al. (1992) further state that, high achieving students regularly communicate with their parents about school and the pupils have rich intervention with their parents; delivering verbal cues, guidance and direction. In the same vein, Chao and Willms' (1996:137) study on the effects of parenting practices on children's outcomes, concluded that "it was involvement at home: particularly in discussing school activities and helping children plan their programmes that had the strongest relationship with academic achievement". They study further found that parenting practices had important effects on a child's social and cognitive outcomes.

Home supervision often includes such things as parents' structuring children's time for home work, modelling children's learning, encouraging children to read at home, and limiting the time children watch television. According to Christenson et.al, (1992) parents' setting standards, enforcing rules, and encouraging discussion, negotiation, and independence are associated with students' higher academic outcomes.

A positive home school connection is related to higher academic outcomes (Redding, 1991). Both school-to-home communication (teachers informing parents about school programmes and

children's progress) and home-to-school communication (parents contacting teachers about their children's school life) have been considered important in determining the academic achievement of children (Epstein, 1988).

Most of the parents who actively participated in parent-teacher organizations had children who were high achievers in school (Jencks, 1972). Coner and Hayer in Jencks (1972), descried a pattern that is often referred to as meaning parental participation, in which parents actively get involved at all levels of their children's educational goals.

Astone and Mclanahan in Keith et.al (1986) have also emphasized the positive effects of parental expectation on a range of educational outcomes and that students from a home environment that values academic achievement and promotes intellectual activities achieve better. Keith et.al (1986) also observed that parents with high expectations for their children cooperate actively with teachers and schools, thus improving their children's educational opportunities and attainment.

One theoretical explanation of how parental involvement works for children is that it improves children's cognitive skills and that makes them more likely to succeed in academic work. For example, Epstein (1988) argues that parental involvement makes a child realize the importance of education, which leads to more responsible efforts in school. Parental involvement also has effects in school performance through helping the child with school work and providing resources for skill development.

But it is important to note that not all research points clearly and explicitly at a direct relationship between parental involvement and student achievement. The study by Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994), on dimensions of parental involvement found an indirect association between some types of parent involvement and student motivation, which then led to improved performance. The study asserts that the dimensions of parental involvement support the emerging literature in which children's attitude and beliefs about themselves in school are powerful determinants of school success. But, a study by Yang and Boykin (1994), on the impact of parent attendance at school meetings found no evidence to suggest that high parents' attendance rate is directly related to improvement in the students' reading performance (Epstein and Connors, 1992)

2.3 Summary of the Literature Review

Chapter two has reviewed related literature in three broad categories; the significance of academic achievement, factors affecting the academic performance and characteristics of the home environment that affect the academic performance of pupils. It is worth noting that this is by no means an exhaustive survey of the existing literature on the academic performance of pupils. Important to also note, is the fact that the bulk of literature on both pupils' academic performance and home environment is based on western societies, and that which is on Africa is still based on the former. Nevertheless, this literature is relevant to a Zambian situation.

According to the reviewed literature, it can be concluded that the numbers of those capable of achieving high in school are a function not only of heredity but also of a number of other influences such as parents' expectation of their children's academic performance, and parental

involvement in their children's school work. There are, indeed, a number of factors which explain differences in pupils' performance and these include school-based factors such as, the expertise of teachers and the organizational efficiency of the school, students' cognitive processes and structure to achieve a sufficiently accurate description of what happens in the teaching and learning process.

Tremblay et.al. (2002) and Kapambwe (1980), have argued that certain pre-existing factors such as an individual Social Economic Status (SES) and home environment have a large impact on students' academic achievement. Other factors in the classroom (such as teaching practice and a number of students) and in the neighbourhood surrounding the school (such as neighbourhood's SES) exert independence incremental effects on school performance.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the general methodology of the study. It describes the research design, study population, sample size, sampling procedure, data collection procedures, problems encountered during data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This is a cross sectional, exploratory and quantitative survey, designed to establish characteristics of home environment of high and low achieving grade nine pupils. The research design involved collecting data from samples selected to represent a large population. This was done by asking the pupils characteristics of their home environment and relating the characteristics to their academic performance. The rationale of using this research design is that, it verifies the relationships between the variables. This study attempted to verify the relationship between pupils' performance and the variables existing in the home environment.

3.2 Study Population

The population for this study was consisted of all grade nine pupils in government basic schools in Lusaka Urban District. At the time of conducting this study, Lusaka District had a total of 72

Government basic schools (*Zambia School Directory*, 2005).

3.3 Study Sample

The sample of this study was one hundred and eighty three (183) grade nine pupils from five government basic schools in Lusaka Urban District. In this study, the bio-demographic factor on distribution of participants according to age was that 54.3% of the respondents for the questionnaire were female with male accounting for 45.7%. Out of the male respondents, 55.6% were high performers while 44.4% were low performers. In the case of female participants, 51.6% were high performing pupils while 48.4% were low achieving pupils.

In respect to the age distribution, the majority (80.7%) of respondents were above 14 years of age and among them 54.2% were higher performers with the rest being low performers. Of those who responded to the interviews, 52.6% of them were high achievers with the rest of them being low achiever. Of the high achieving respondents, 33.3% and 63.6% were male and female respectively. This entails that the majority of the low achieving respondents in the interviews were male while the majority of the high achieving respondents were female.

3.4 Data Sampling Procedure

According to Varkervisser et. al. (1996), sampling in a quantitative and qualitative survey, refers to selecting a small group from a larger population. This study was designed to seek out respondents who had knowledge or experiences that would be helpful in the study (Patton 1990).

22

The sampling was based on the purpose of the study. Random sampling was used in selecting five basic schools whose pupils constituted the sample. The five selected basic schools were Kaunda Square, Kabulonga, Chainda, Prince Katamado, and Olympia.

The stratified random sampling procedure which uses a quota for subsets was used on both the given lists of high and low performing grade nine pupils so that individuals in each group had equal chance of being selected. Every fourth pupil on the high and low achievers lists was selected for interview. However, in the event that a potential respondent refused to participate in the study, the next person on the list was selected. In an event of a respondent being absent, a special date was set aside and when on the rescheduled date the person could not be found, the sample frame was replaced with the next person on the list. A written consent was sought with district education authorities and school administration before commissioning the study.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

In order to collect data from the respondents, the study employed the following research instruments, semi structured interviews and questionnaires. The questionnaire and interview guide line tools were pre-tested on grade nine pupils in one basic school which was not part of the schools selected for the study. A few questions were slightly changed to bring out intended results.

3.5.1 Questionnaires for Pupils

A questionnaire (Appendix 1) was used to get some of the information from the pupils on their home environment. It contained information on the socio-demographic and socio-economic factors of the pupils. It also had questions on pupils' home environment, household rules, remedial classes and their parents' participation in their children's school activities.

3.5.2. Semi Structured Interview

According to Bless, and Achola, (1988), semi structured interviews are an effective method for obtaining information about attitudes, opinions, beliefs, feelings, and perception. Semi structured interview requires asking questions in ways that enable participants to express their feelings fully and honestly and it even allows for follow up questions. The semi structured interviews keep interaction focused. This method was used because it encouraged self-disclosure among participants in order to generate qualitative data. An interview guide (Appendix 2) was used to generate information of home environment and academic performance for grade nine high-and low-achieving pupils in Lusaka's urban government schools.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The collection of data was from April to May 2007. The researcher sought written permission (Appendix 3) from the Lusaka District Education Board Secretary to authorize data collection from the selected basic schools. At every basic school visited, the researcher had sought

permission from school managers to collect data. The managers were assured that data collected from their schools were for academic purposes and would be treated as confidential.

A list of high and low achieving pupils was obtained from class teachers through the career teachers. This was mainly because class teachers had knowledge of their pupils' academic work and individual needs.

Twelve (12) semi structured interviews were held with grade nine pupils in 5 basic schools of Lusaka District. All participants in semi structured interviews were first briefed by the researcher on the process and purpose of the research. Thereafter, dates and venues for conducting interviews were set. All semi structured interviews started on schedule with participants being assured of confidentiality and that no names were going to be used in the report. Permission to take notes during the interview was also sought. Interview guides with set questions were used to ensure that all the interviews were conducted using the same questions and the same order of administration. The guides were also used to ensure best use of the limited time available for conducting the survey. All interviews were conducted in English language and in certain cases where the pupils were not conversant with English, they were conducted in Nyanja. At the end of each interview the respondents were thanked for their time.

3.7 Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected through questionnaires were analysed using Chi- square. While chi-square of less than 0.001 indicated levels of significant association between the variables, chi-square of greater than 0.001 indicated no significant association. This data was presented in

forms of tables. On the other hand, qualitative data from the interviews were transcribed, coded, analysed and organised to reveal information. The collected information was later categorized in terms of themes set out in the objectives of the study. It was presented by describing observable variables and linking them to characteristics of the home environment. The triangulation technique, using qualitative and quantitative data was used in data analysis so as to test one source of data against the other. This was to ensure accuracy and improvement on the quality of data. It was done by comparing data collected through questionnaires with qualitative data collected through the interviews.

3.8 Problems Encountered During Data Collection

A number of problems were encountered during the data collection phase. Pupils in many schools were found to be busy preparing for their end-of-term tests. As a result, the researcher had to wait until pupils were free to participate in the study. The inadequate financial resources and delay in approving research protocol, reduced time to be spent conducting the study. Nevertheless these problems did not have any effects on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents research findings on characteristics of home environment for high-and low-achieving grade nine pupils in selected basic schools in Lusaka District. The presentation of the findings is done under the headings drawn from research objectives. It will be remembered that the study's objectives were to determine the characteristics of the home environment of the high and low achieving grade nine pupils and to also examine the characteristics that have the most positive and the most negative impact on the academic performance of the pupils. The headings are subdivided into factors related to: bio demographic and social demographic which consist of education, occupation, perception, remedial classes, household discipline and household environment. The headings also include participation in school activities and parental involvement in children's education.

4.1 Data Interpretation

Qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews was interpreted by considering the most significant categories and theme. The most significant categorised themes were those that represented the most occurring views. On the other hand, quantitative data from the questionnaires were analysed by applying both frequency and cross tabulation tables and this was as follows:

4.2.1 Socio demographic factors

The socio demographic factors show the social interaction of the respondents with their immediate families and neighbourhood. It includes measures like the number of people per household, the head of household, language used by pupils at home and their residential areas. Its effects on children's educational outcomes may be neutralised or strengthened by a number of background, family and individual characteristics. In light of this, one set of questions examined the respondents' socio demographic factors against their academic performance.

Table 1: Association between Socio-demographic Factors and Academic Performance

Number of people per household	Performance High		Performance Low		Total		P-value
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	N (%)	
1 – 6	25	(53.2)	22	(46.8)	47	(36.8)	0.878
7 and above	38	(53.5)	33	(46.5)	71	(60.2)	

Head of household	Performance High		Performance Low		Total		P-value
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	N (%)	
Both parents,	30	(56.6)	23	(43.4)	53	(64.4)	
Single parent	12	(54.6)	10	(45.4)	22	(35.6)	0.745
Others	21	(48.8)	22	(51.2)	43	(100)	

Language	Performance High		Performance Low		Total		P-value
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	
English only	7	(87.5)	1	(12.5)	8	(6.8)	
Vernacular	12	(29.3)	29	(70.7)	41	(58.5)	0.000
English and vernacular	44	(63.8)	25	(36.2)	69	(34.7)	

Residential area	Performance High		Performance Low		Total		P-value
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	N (%)	
Low density	9	(69.2)	4	(30.8)	13	(11.0)	
Medium density	34	(49.3)	35	(50.7)	69	(58.5)	<0.001
High density	20	(55.6)	16	(44.4)	36	(30.5)	

Table 1 shows the associations between demographic factors and the academic performance of the pupils. The results on the number of people in the household indicate that the majority (60.2%) of the pupils stayed in homes with more than six people. The majority (53.5%) of these were high achieving pupils.

In terms of the head of the household where the pupils came from, results in Table 1 indicates that, the largest proportion of the respondents (64.4%) had both parents as head of household with the majority of the respondents being the high achieving pupils (56.6%). With a p value of 0.745, head of household was not significantly related to academic performance.

Furthermore, table 1 on language denotes that 87.5% and 63.8% of the pupils who used English only and English and vernacular languages, respectively at home were high achieving pupils. It was found that 70% of the low achieving pupils used only vernacular languages at home. In other words, the majority of the high achieving pupils used English as the medium of communication at home, while the majority of the low achieving pupils used local languages. Language used at home was significantly associated with pupils' academic performance.

The respondents were also asked where they resided. While the high achieving pupils (69.2%) were the majority of those who came from low density areas, only 30.8% of the low achieving pupils came from low residential areas. The table also indicates that the highest number of respondents were among those coming from medium density areas (58.5%) with the minority (11%) coming from low density areas. Residential factor was significantly associated with the academic performance of the pupils ($p < 0.001$) with more pupils from low-density areas being high achievers.

Information from the interviews on the residential area of the respondents revealed that, of those who came from high, medium and low residential areas, the low achieving pupils were, 66.7%, 33.3% and 0% respectively, with the rest of each category being high achieving pupils. In this case it can be seen that the majority of the high achieving pupils come from both medium and low density areas while the majority of the low achievers come from high density areas.

4.2.2 Socio-economic factors

As earlier stated in the literature review, it is argued for and against that the educational success depends very strongly on the Socio Economic Status of one's parents. Measures of Socio-Economic Status include parent's achievement in education, wealth, and occupation status. The respondents were thus asked about their parents/guardians' occupational and educational status. The responses are contained in Tables 2 and 3 below.

Table 2: Association between Parents/guardians' Occupation and Performance

Male occupation	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low		n	%	
	n	%	n	%			
Employed	35	58.3	25	41.7	60	50.8	
Business	7	31.8	15	68.2	22	18.6	0.079
Unemployed	21	58.3	15	41.7	36	30.5	
Total	63		55		118	100	

Female occupation	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low		n	Cumulative	
	n	%	n	%		%	
Employed	23	51.1	22	48.9	45	38.1	
Business	16	59.3	11	40.7	27	22.9	0.781
Unemployed	24	58.3	22	47.8	46	39.0	
Total	63		55		118	100	

Table 2 shows that 50.8% of the respondents had male parent/guardians with white and blue-collar jobs and that 58.3% of these were high achievers with the rest being low achievers. The table also points out that while 58.3% of the high achieving pupils' male parent/guardians were unemployed, 41.7% of the low achieving pupils' male parents/guardians were unemployed. Given a p-value 0.079 for male parents'/guardians' occupation, male parent/guardian's occupation was not significantly associated with academic performance. While the majority of the low achieving pupils had their parents doing business, the majority of the high achieving pupils had parents/guardians in employment.

Table 2 shows that of the female parents/guardians' of high achieving pupils 51.1% were in employment, 59.3% were in business while 39% were unemployed. On one hand, 48.9% of the low achieving pupils had female parents/guardians in employment with 40.7% and 47.8% being in business and unemployed respectively. There was no significant relationship between female parent/guardian's occupation and the performance of their children at school (p=0.781).

Information from the interviews showed that while 80%, 50% and 25% of the high achieving pupils had their female parents/guardians in employment, in business and unemployed respectively, the low achieving pupils had 20%, 50% and 75% of their female parents/guardians in employment, in business and unemployed respectively. This information shows that there is a relationship between the employment status of parents and their children's academic performance.

Table 3: Association between Parents/guardians' Education and Academic Performance of Pupils

Female level of education	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low		n	Cumulative	
	n	%	n	%		%	
Primary to secondary	38	55.9	30	44.1	68	57.6	0.512
College	20	54.1	17	45.9	37	31.4	
University	5	38.5	8	61.5	13	11.0	

Male level of education	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low		n	%	
	n	%	n	%			
Primary to secondary	26	43.5	26	56.5	62	32.2	0.004
College	32	59.3	22	40.7	38	52.5	
University	11	61.1	7	38.9	18	15.3	

Table 3 above shows the levels of education attainment of female and male parents/guardians and their children's academic performance. The results show that, 57.6% of the female parents/guardians attained only primary or secondary education and that 11% of the female parents/guardians attained university education. About 61.5% of the low achieving pupils' female parents/guardians attained university education. Educational attainment of respondents' female parents/guardians was not significantly related to the academic performance of the pupils.

On the other hand, results from qualitative data (Interviews) on the educational level of female parents/guardians, for the low achieving pupils, were as follows; 100%, 66.7%, 18.2%, and

100% for primary, secondary, college and university respectively with the rest being for high achieving pupils in respective categories. These findings entail that the majority of the female parents who only attained primary education had low achieving pupils and that the majority of female parents/guardians with college education were for the high achieving pupils.

On the other hand, 52.5% of the respondents' male parents/guardians went up to college level. The respondents' male parents/guardians high educational attainment was significantly related with the high academic performance of the pupils (p=0.004). This entails that there was a significant relationship between education of the male parents/guardians and their children's performance. Furthermore, information from the qualitative data showed that, of the male parents/guardians who attended primary, secondary, college and university level of education, 100%, 100%, 18.2% and 80% were for the low achieving pupils respectively with the rest being for high achieving pupils respectively. This means that all the parents/guardians who only attained primary and secondary education had low achieving pupils while the majority of the parents/guardians (59.3%) with college education were for the high achieving pupils.

Table 4: Association between Parents/guardians' Perceptions of their Children's Performance and Academic Performance

Parents/guardians' perception of their children's performance	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low		n	%	
	n	%	n	%			
Good	54	62.8	32	37.2	86	73.2	
Fair	9	36.0	16	64.0	25	21.0	0.001
Bad	0	0.0	7	0.0	7	5.8	
Total	63		56		118	100	

35

When the pupils were asked to indicate how their parents/guardians perceived their academic performance, 73.2% (Table 4) of the respondents indicated that their parents/guardians perceived them as good academic achievers. Of those perceived as good academic achievers, 62.8% of them were high achievers. As shown in table 4 below, parents/guardians' perception of their children's academic performance was significantly associated with the high academic performance of the pupils (p=0.001). This shows that the majority of those who were perceived to be good were high performers and performed better than those expected by their parents to do badly.

Table: 5 Association between Extra Lessons and Performance

Attendance of extra lessons	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low		n	%	
	n	(%)	n	(%)			
Yes	13	(36.1)	23	(63.8)	36	(30.5)	
No	50	(61.0)	32	(39.0)	82	(69.5)	0.022
Total	63		55		118	100	

Initiator of taking extra lessons	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low		n	%)	
	n	(%)	n	(%)			
Oneself	6	(40.0)	9	(60.0)	15	(38.5)	
Teacher and parent/guardian	8	(33.3)	16	(66.9)	24	(61.5)	0.937
Total	14		25		39	(100)	

In Table 5, 69.5%, of the respondents were not taking remedial lessons. The majority (61%) of those who did not take up remedial lessons were the high achieving pupils. On the other hand,

36

63.9% of low achieving pupils were taking remedial classes. Pupils who did not attend extra lessons were more likely to be high achievers (p=0.022). Furthermore, 61.5% of those who took remedial lessons had their lessons initiated by either their teachers or their parents/guardians. However, no significant association was observed between initiator of taking extra lessons and academic performance (p=0.937).

4.2.4 Parent raising Child Factors

In as much as an individual's innate qualities are crucial to pupils' education success, how they are raised at home may have a bearing on their success. This raises the questions of whether; discipline in the home can help in enhancing this success. The pupils were therefore, asked to indicate who established household rules in their home and whether these rules were implemented or not. The responses of the pupils are shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Association between Parent raising Child factors and Academic Performance

Establisher of household rules	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		**Low**		**n**	**%**	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**			
Parents implement the rules	22	(52.2)	21	(48.8)	43	(36.4)	
Parents rarely implement the rules	20	(55.6)	16	(44.4)	36	(30.5)	0.925
Parents and children implement the rules	21	(53.8)	18	(46.2)	39	(33.1)	
Total	63		55		118	(100)	

Strict parent/guardian	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		**Low**		**N %**		
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**			
Strict	60	(55.1)	49	(45.9)	109	(92.4)	
Not strict	3	(33.3)	6	(66.7)	9	(7.6)	0.300
Total	63		55		118	(100)	

The results in Table 6 indicate that there was no statistically significant relationship between the establisher of household rules (p = 0.925) and strict parent/guardian (p=0.300) on one hand and academic performance on the other. More high performing respondents' parents/guardians established and implemented all the household rules with little or no discussion with their children. About 55.6% and 53.8% of high academic achieving respondent's parents/guardians rarely implemented the rules and both parents and children established rules. Additionally, the majority of high achieving pupils' parents/guardians (55.1%) were either very strict or strict in

Monitoring and punishing the respondents' inappropriate behaviour. On the other hand, majority of the low achieving pupils' parents/guardians (66.7%) were not strict in monitoring and punishing the respondents' inappropriate behaviour.

4.2.5 Home Environment

Pupils were asked a "yes" or "no" question whether or not there was a link between home environment and academic performance. They were also asked about the conduciveness of their home environment in fostering personal learning and study. The responses of pupils to these questions are contained in Table 7 below.

Table: 7 Associations between Home Environment and Academic Performance

Link between Home Environment and Academic Performance	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		**Low**		**n**	**(%)**	
	n	**(%)**	**n**	**(%)**			
Yes	15	(37.5)	25	(62.5)	40	(33.9)	
No	48	(61.5)	30	(38.5)	78	(66.1)	0.004
Total	63		55		118	(100)	

Atmosphere of home environment	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		**Low**		**n**	**(%)**	
	n	**%)**	**n**	**%)**			
Conducive to learning	56	(53.8)	48	(46.2)	104	(88.1)	
Not conducive to learning	7	(50.0)	7	(50.0)	14	(11.9)	0.988
Total	63		55		118	(100)	

Most effect	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		**Low**		**n**	**(%)**	
	n	**(%)**	**n**	**%**			
Communication about school and parental expectations	20	(35.1)	37	(64.9)	57	(48.6)	
Parenting style	7	(41.2)	10	(58.8)	17	(14.4)	0.000
Monitoring and controlling behaviour	36	(81.8)	8	(18.2)	44	(37.3)	
Total	63		55		118	(100)	

In response to the question that asked if there was a relationship between pupils' home environment and their academic performance, Table 7 shows that, 66.1% of the respondents indicated that, their home environment had no effect on their academic performance with the majority of them 61.5% being high achieving pupils. On the other hand the low achieving pupils (62.5%) were the majority of those respondents (33.9%) who indicated that their home environment had an effect on their academic performance. The question on of the conduciveness of the pupils' home environment for learning revealed that 88.1% of the respondents liked their home environment as shown in Table 7. Of the respondents who found their home environment conductive to learning, 53.8% of them were high achieving pupils with the rest being low achieving pupils.

On the conduciveness of home atmosphere for good academic performance, Table 7 shows that 64.9% of the low achieving pupils indicated that communication about school and parental expectation had the most positive effect on their academic performance. The high achieving pupils (81.8%) were the majority of those who indicated monitoring and controlling behaviour as having had the most positive effect on their academic performance. In Table 7 parenting style implied parents being authoritarian, permissive or authoritative. More low achievers (58.8%) than high achievers were mostly affected by parenting style.

4.2.6 Parent Participation Factors

As stated earlier, parental participation in children's education has shown to be a very important home characteristic that positively influences the academic performance of children. Nevertheless, the bulk of literature on parental participation is based on the western societies.

41

Pupils were therefore, asked questions on various types of parental participation to see to what extent it applied to the Zambian scenario. The pupils' responses to these questions are shown in Tables 8 to 12.

Table 8: Association between Parent Participation Factors and Academic Performance

Frequency of attending PTA Meetings	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low		n	(%)	
	n	(%)	n	(%)			
Often	30	(58.8)	21	(41.2)	51	(43.2)	
Sometimes	24	(47.1)	27	(52.9)	51	(43.2)	0.477
Never	9	(56.3)	7	(43.8)	16	(13.6)	
Total	63		55		118	(100)	

Frequency of attending Open Days	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low		n	(%)	
	n	(%)	n	(%)			
Often	46	(60.5)	30	(39.5)	76	(69.4)	
Sometimes	10	(33.3)	20	(66.7)	30	(25.4)	<0.001
Never	7	(58.3)	5	(41.7)	12	(10.2)	
Total	63		55		118	(100)	

The study's findings in Table 8 indicate that, there were more high achieving (58.8%) than low achieving pupils (41.2%) with parents/guardians who often attended PTA meetings. While attending PTA meetings were not significantly associated with academic performance, attending open days was significantly (p<0.001) associated with academic performance. Of all the respondents 69.4% had their parents/guardians often attending Open days and of these, 60.5% were high achievers.

42

It will be remembered that one of the arguments in this study was that parental involvement was a very important variable that positively influenced children's academic achievement. To this effect pupils were asked a number of different types of parent involvement, ranging from parents discussing home work with their children to parents/guardians' frequency of providing educational resources for children.

Table 9: Association between Parents/guardians' helping with Home Work and Academic Performance

Parents Discussing home work with children	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low		n	(%)	
	n	(%)	n	(%)			
Often	36	(51.4)	34	(48.6)	70	(59.3)	
Sometimes	25	(52.1)	23	(47.9)	48	(40.7)	0.906
Total	61		57		118	(100)	

Frequency of providing Resources	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low		n	(%)	
	n	(%)	n	(%)			
Often	53	(55.8)	42	(44.2)	95	(80.5)	
Sometimes	10	(43.4)	13	(56.6)	23	(19.5)	0.407
Total	63		55		118	(100)	

The pupils were also asked to what extent their parents/guardians discussed and helped them with their homework. The research findings in Table 9 show that, 51.4% of the high achieving pupils were often helped with their homework by their parents/guardians, more than the low achieving pupils. The table also shows that 80.5% of the pupils had their parents/guardians often

times providing them with necessary resources to do their homework. The majority of low achieving pupils than the high achieving pupils were rarely provided with resources for school. Furthermore, Table 9 shows that both, parents/guardians discussing and helping children with home work and the frequency of them providing resources to help them do their home work were not significantly associated with academic performance as the chi-square value (0.407) was greater than 0.001.

Table 10: Association between Parents/guardians' Communication with their Children and Academic Performance

Time spent on talking	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low		n	(%)	
	n	(%)	n	(%)			
Adequate	36	(69.2)	16	(30.8)	57	(48.3)	
Inadequate	27	(40.9)	39	(59.1)	61	(52.7)	0.004
Total	63		55		118	(100)	

Parents/guardians frequency of having discussions with teachers	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low				
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	
Often	20	(55.6)	16	(44.4)	36	(30.5)	
Sometimes	43	(52.4)	39	(47.6)	82	(69.5)	0.910
Total	63		55		118	(100)	

In Table 10, 52.7% of respondents indicated that they inadequately spent time with their parents/guardians talking on any issues. It also shows that 69.2% of the high achieving pupils

44

spent adequate time with their parents/guardians. Table 10 further shows that 69.5% of the pupils had their parents/guardians rarely or not having discussions with teachers on the performance of the pupils.

There was a significant association between time spent by parents/guardians and respondents, talking about other issues besides schoolwork with the academic performance of the children ($p=0.004$). However, no significant association between parents/guardians frequency of having discussions with teachers with academic performance of the pupils was observed ($p=0.910$).

Table 11: Association between monitoring how the Participants spent their Time and Academic Performance

Monitoring time spent on home work	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low		n	(%)	
	n	(%)	n	(%)			
Always	37	(52.1)	34	(47.8)	71	(60.7)	0.963
Rarely	25	(54.3)	21	(45.7)	56	(39.3)	
Total	62		55		117	(100)	

Monitoring time returning from school	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low		n	Cumulative	
	n	(%)	n	(%)		(%)	
Always	39	(56.5)	30	(43.5)	69	(58.5)	
Rarely	17	(51.5)	16	(48.5)	33	(27.9)	0.633
Never	7	(43.8)	9	(56.2)	16	(13.6)	
Total	63		55		118	(100)	

In Table 11, 60.7% of the respondents had their time spent on homework monitored. On the other hand, the table shows that 58.5% of the respondents had their parents/guardians often times monitored the times they came back from school. There was no significant relationship between monitoring the time that pupils came back from school and their subsequent academic performance.

Table 11 also shows that both respondents' parents/guardians monitoring the times they spent on homework and the times they returned home from school were not significantly associated with the academic performance of their children given $p=0.963$ and $p=0.633$, respectively being greater than 0.001.

Table 12: Association between monitoring times spent by Pupils after School and Academic Performance

Monitoring after school activities	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low		n	(%)	
	n	(%)	n	(%)			
Always	36	(55.4)	29	(44.6)	65	(55.1)	
Rarely	17	(58.6)	12	(41.4)	29	(24.6)	0.417
Never	10	(41.7)	14	(58.3)	24	(20.3)	
Total	63		55		118	(100)	

Monitoring time spent on viewing Television (TV)	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low		n	(%)	
	n	(%)		(%)			
Always	40	(74.1)	14	(25.9)	54	(45.8)	
Rarely	23	(35.9)	41	(64.1)	35	(54.2)	0.000
Total	63		55		118	(100)	

Activities spent most time on	Performance				Total		P-value
	High		Low		n	(%)	
	n	(%)	n	(%)			
Watching TV and playing	26	(49.1)	27	(50.9)	53	(45.0)	
Household chores	9	(36.0)	16	(64.0)	25	(21.2)	0.026
Doing home work	15	(61.5)	9	(37.5)	24	(20.3)	
Others	13	(81.3)	3	(18.7)	16	(13.7)	
Total	63		55		118	(100)	

Table 12 denotes that 54.2% of the respondents were rarely or never monitored on the time they spent watching TV. Of the respondents who were rarely or never monitored on the time they spent watching TV, 64.1% were low achieving pupils. Time spent on watching TV was

47

significantly associated with academic performance. Altogether, 55.1% of the respondents had their parents/guardians always monitor their after-school activities, and of these 55.4% were high achieving pupils. However, the results suggest there was no significant association between monitoring respondents after school activities and academic performance (p=0.417).

Table 12 also shows that, 44.9% of the respondents spent much of their time playing and watching TV. On the other hand, 20.3% of the respondents spent most of their time doing homework, and of these respondents, 61.5% were high achievers. The majority of pupils (61%) who spent more time on doing homework and other activities performed better than those who did not. On the other hand, majority of the pupils (64%) who spent more time on household work performed poorly in school. With p greater than (p = < 0.001) for activities most time spent on, Table 12, suggests that there was no significant association between activities most time spent on and the academic performance of the pupils.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

One of the objectives of the study was to explore the characteristics of home environment for high and low achieving grade nine pupils. The other objectives of the study were to investigate the characteristics of the home environment that have the most negative and positive impact on the academic achievement of grade nine pupils. In this chapter, the characteristics of home environment for high and low achieving grade nine pupils are discussed. Many characteristics of home environment determine the academic performance of pupils. The discussion is presented in three major sections according to objectives of the study.

5.1 Socio-Demographic Factors

The socio demographic factors include variables like household composition, size of household, residential area and common language used at home. By household composition we mean, the number of people and their sex. The knowledge on household composition is important when considering issues related to sex, size and assessment of the general SES for pupils.

5.1.1 Size of household

No significant difference was found between household composition and academic achievement of the pupils. Nevertheless, a larger proportion of high achieving pupils (53.5%) as compared to

that of low achieving pupils (46.5%) indicated that they resided in households of seven or more people. This finding is contrary, perhaps, to general expectation and to Kapambwe (1980), who states that in large families there is a possibility that some of the members of the family will not have adequate contact with their parents because there are a lot of children competing for attention. Pupils in large families are thought to be more likely to compete for parents' attention, which in turn might cause them not to concentrate in school thereby lowering their academic achievement than the pupils from small families. But the results of this study have shown the opposite.

These results may be due to the fact that most high achieving pupils stay in big houses leaving them with enough space to freely study and do their homework without many disturbances. But, the pupils from small families may have increased responsibilities such as childcare roles, domestic duties which impede the time available for school work as they are fewer hands to help, thereby, affecting their academic achievements.

5.1.2 Household composition

The pupils were also asked to indicate who they lived with during school days. There were more low achieving pupils than high achieving pupils who indicated that they lived with other people besides their biological parents (51.2%) and with single parents. This study has established that there is no significant association between the head of household and academic performance of pupils. The influence of family composition was found to have little association with educational performance. Contrary to findings in the study, Considine, and Zappala (2002), state that SES

50

may be linked to family structure. Quoting (Rich, 2000), Considine and Zappala (2002:33), argue that "on average sole parent families have lower levels of income, and are headed by parents with lower educational attainment who are less likely to be in the labour force, and as such children from these families are likely to have lower educational performance". It is further argued that other factors in sole parent families that are likely to adversely affect educational outcomes of children compared to those from two-parent families include: reduced contact between the child and non-custodial parent; the custodial parent having less time spent with children in terms of supervision of school-work and maintaining appropriate levels of discipline; the lack of an appropriate role model, and the nature of parent-child relationships in sole parent families may cause emotional and behavioural problems for the child. Nevertheless, the parents in this study could have taught their children coping strategies that limit the impact of financial hardship, low parent involvement and other risk factors and thereby have the pupils perform better than those from families with both parents. This finding may also be attributed to the factors inherent in the personality of the child.

5.1.3 Common language used at home

The results on the language pupils used while at home, showed that high achieving pupils used either only English or both English and vernacular more than low achieving pupils. There was a significant relationship between the language spoken at home and the academic performance of the pupils. This finding is in agreement with Etsey (2005) who states that the prevalence of the use of local language means that they would lack a lot of vocabulary in English, which would be needed to understand teachers' lessons and textbooks they read and that it affected their

assignments and exercises which were often in the English language. As the case in this current study, Etsey's findings also showed that the pupils' language use affected their academic performance.

5.1.4 Residential area

On the residential Area of the respondents, the study revealed that while most high achieving pupils come from low density areas, the majority of the low achieving pupils came from high density areas. The study also revealed a significant association between residential area and the academic performance of the pupils. This finding is in line with Sparkes (1999), cited in Considine and Zappala (2002), who states that lower educational attainment is associated with children living in public housing in contrast to those in private housing. This finding was attributed to overcrowding, poor access to resources and a lack of social networks. Findings on pupils' residential areas may be attributed to the reality that in neighbourhoods where the jobs that people do and the status they hold owe little to their education; it is natural for children as they grow older to regard school as a brief prelude to work rather than as a path to future opportunities. In turn this may cause pupils not to work hard at school and subsequently lead to poor performance.

Furthermore, Jensen and Seltzer (2000), in Considine, and Zappala (2002:23), state that neighbourhood effects had "an important influence on students' educational plan . . . to continue further post-secondary education, after controlling for a range of individual and family socio-economic characteristics." Measures of the neighbourhood included the level of neighbourhood

income, the unemployment rate, an index of educational attainment and the percentage employed in professional fields. However, this study was unable to identify the precise transmission mechanisms for such measures of neighbourhood.

5.2 Socio-Economic Factors

Considering that the social stratification theory emphasises that the social economic status plays a crucial role in the academic achievement of pupils, it was necessary to ask questions on the same. The questions here looked at the occupational and educational attainment of the parents/guardians against their children's academic performance. the findings are presented in 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 below.

5.2.1 Employment

This study has shown that the majority of high achieving pupils (51.1%) had female parents/guardians with white and blue collar jobs followed by those in business and unemployed. On the other hand, the majority of low achieving pupils (68.2%) had male parents/guardians in business. This study also found that more high achieving than low achieving pupils were staying with both parents.

According to Sui and Willims (1996), the employment status of mothers affects child supervision after school and the nature of parent-child activities during this time thereby affecting the academic performance of the children. Furthermore, Mark (1994), states that working is not a

predictor of negative outcomes and that working can have both positive and negative effects on student achievement. He further states that, regardless of whether they are single or married, mothers who work full-time have less time to spend with their children, a condition that may lower achievement and contribute to increases in behaviour problems at school. However, children from many single parent families received more benefit than harm from their working mothers.

5.2.2 Parents/guardians' Education

This study established that there is no significant association between education level attained by female parents and the academic performance of their children. But, male education level ($p= < 0.001$) was found to be significantly associated with the academic performance of the pupils. This study therefore shows that parents' education play an important role in strengthening children's education.

The study indicates that the majority (52.5%) of male parents/guardians had attained college level of education while in the case of female parents/guardians majority (57.6%) had attained at least primary and secondary school level of education. These results entail that male parents/guardian had higher education than female parents/guardians. The least percentage in both genders was in the University category.

Wang, Wildman, & Calhoun (1996) indicate that parents' education levels and their encouragement are strongly related in improving student achievement. According to Grissmer

(1994) in WEAC, 2005, parents' level of education was an important factor affecting student achievement.

The information on the educational levels for parents/guardians of respondents shows that both parents of high achieving pupils were more educated than those for low achieving pupils. The results further reveal that there is a significant relationship between the educational level of male parents/guardians and academic performance of the pupils. This shows that children who live in homes where the parents, particularly fathers, are better educated are more likely to perform better in school. This could be a result of the likelihood that men with higher educational attainment are more likely to be in the labour force, and have higher levels of income and thereby have more money to spend on their children's education. Consequently, children from such families would likely have higher educational achievement.

Halawah (2006) argues that, children who live in homes with parents who received little or no education are more likely to have shorter tenures in school and begin working at an early age especially where they do not show any academic promise. The underlying argument for this problem is the level of expendable family resources that children are often required to participate in accumulating resources for the family at an early age, especially for families living in poverty. Therefore the more time they have to spend contributing to the family's resource pool, the less time they have for school. Halawah (2006), further states that, families with less educated heads of households experienced greater periods of unemployment and less disposable income, hence decreasing the time children attending school in favour of working outside home to support the

family. This also contributed to frequent absenteeism from school which had an adverse effect on the academic performance of the pupils.

5.3 Home Environment

Since pupils' home environments is said to create the groundwork for their learning attitudes one would argue that depending on how the home is structured, one can adopt learning attitudes which might foster or inhibit academic achievement. Besides how the home environment is structured, how the pupils feel about their home environment might have a bearing on their academic performance. According to this study, the majority (62.5%) of low achieving pupils indicated that their home environment negatively affected their academic performance. Findings from interviews indicated that unlike low achievers, the high achievers liked their home environments because of being encouraged to work hard at school. This therefore shows that for higher achievers home environment had a positive effect on promoting their academic achievement.

5.3.1 Atmosphere of Home Environment

The atmosphere of home environment was described by majority (53.8%) of high achieving pupils as conductive for learning. In the case of those who did not like their home environment it was usually due to the noise in the neighbourhood. Since the low achieving pupils did not like their home environment, their desire to learn or study at home was reduced and this might have

resulted in their low academic performance. Through the interviews, the findings of this study also indicated that high achieving pupils had good relationship with their parents/guardians.

This study has also established a significant relationship between pupils' time spent discussing with parents/guardians and their academic performance. It has been established that high achieving pupils spent more time talking with their parents on various issues besides schoolwork than the low achievers did.

5.3.2 Parental Expectations for Children's Academic Achievement

What the children believe about themselves is a direct result of the expectancies given to them by parents, other adults, and teachers. According to Halawah (2006), evidence shows that teacher as well as parent expectations play an important role in a student's academic progress. It is in this vein that pupils were asked what they thought about their parents/guardians' perception and expectation of their academic performance.

This study suggests that parents/guardians' perception towards their children's academic performance may directly or indirectly shape children's perception of their academic competence. As opposed to low achieving pupils, the high achievers (62.8%) had parents/guardians who perceived them as higher academic achievers.

The study has shown that there was a significant association between parental expectation of children's academic achievement and the children's subsequent performance (p value = < 0.001).

It has also been established that none of the high academic achieving pupils were perceived to be bad in terms of academic performance. This could entail that the way parents perceive their children's academic performance can often be associated with their subsequent academic performance. Halawah (2006), states that, if parents of a student do not have education expectation, then the student is three times more likely to fall into the low than high achievement category.

5.3.3 Parents' Interactions with Pupils on School-Based Issues

Considering that literature usually shows that an expectation of children's achievement is important, it becomes important to know what type of expectation has the greatest impact on the pupils. Pupils were thus, asked what type of expectations had the greatest impact on their academic achievement. The study showed that communication about school and parental expectations (48.6%) plus monitoring and controlling behaviour (37.3%) were the major factors that affected academic achievement of the pupils. While the majority (64.9%) of low achieving pupils had communication about school and parental expectations greatly impacting their academic performance, these pupils' academic performance was not greatly impacted by the monitoring and controlling of behaviour.

Many aspects of communication interact in many ways including, parents having frequent and systematic discussions with their children regarding schoolwork, parents encouraging their children regarding schoolwork, and parents providing resources to help their children do schoolwork. This therefore makes sense for majority of the low achieving pupils to be most

affected by communication about school and parental expectations as they are more likely to be encouraged in these because of their performance in school. According to Fan and Chen (2001), high expectations communicated to students are associated with enhanced achievement. This finding therefore confirms the earlier one which stated that high achieving pupils were most impacted by high expectations of their parents/guardians of them to have high academic achievement that had the most effect on academic performance of children. This finding suggests that low and high achieving pupils were differently affected by these factors.

5.3.4 Household Rules and Parent's/Guardian's Strictness

These results indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship between the one established the rules in the home and the pupils' academic performance. This is in spite of high achievers' parents/guardians establishing and implementing all household rules with little or no discussion with them. The majority of low achieving pupils reported that they were rarely punished if they went against household rules. Consistence in punishing inappropriate behaviour is crucial in ensuring that there is maximum monitoring and controlling children's behaviour to ensure optimization of academic achievement. This could therefore explain why the low achieving pupils performed poorly.

Furthermore, the study showed that the majority (92.4%) of respondents indicated that their parents/guardians were either very strict or strict in monitoring and punishing their inappropriate behaviour. Of these respondents the majority were high achieving pupils. This could entail that

parent's strictness in monitoring children's behaviour positively affects their children's academic performance.

5.3.5 Parental Participation Factors and Academic Performance

As earlier stated, parents are children's first educators (Zhang and Carrasquillo, 1995). This entails that the very best parent-child activities are those that allow parents to support their children's endeavours. Parental involvement in school activities includes things like parents' attendance at school meetings, home work discussions, supervising home work assignment and discussing with teachers the academic performance of children.

Parents/guardians attendance at PTA meetings and open days increases communication between the home and school for the betterment of the child. They also assist the parents educationally as the primary educators of their children. It therefore becomes important to examine the relationship between Parents/guardians attendance at PTA meetings and open days and the pupils' academic performance.

The study shows that, the majority (54.2%) of parents/guardians very often attended open days more than Parent Teacher Association (PTAs) meetings. Majority (52.95%) of high performing pupils had their parents/guardians regularly attending PTA meetings and Open Days than the low achieving pupils. Similarly, it is important to note that this study has shown that parents of low achieving pupils had little involvement in the PTA when compared with the parents of high achieving pupils. The situation where parents are not involved does not create conducive teaching and learning environment for both teachers and pupils. The lack of parents'

involvement in the PTAs would entail that the school's problems as perceived by parents are unlikely to be attended to and leading to low academic performance.

Concerning homework discussions as one of the parental participation factors, pupils were also asked to what extent their parents/guardians discussed and helped them with homework. The findings showed that, parents/guardians discussed and helped children with homework. However, the frequency of providing resources to help them do their homework was not significantly associated with the academic performance of the pupils. Majority (80%) of the pupils had their parents/guardians provide necessary resources to do their homework. When parents show a strong interest in their children's schooling, they promote development of attitudes that are important to academic achievement more than the children's social class or income of the family can. This also includes higher grades and test scores, better attendance, positive attitudes and behaviour, and higher graduation rates. According to Henderson (1981), parents who show a strong interest in their children's schooling, develop more confidence about helping their children learn at home and more understanding of the school.

The majority of high achieving pupils reported that their parents/guardians spent time helping them with their homework. Finne (2006) suggests that parents' effectiveness in helping with homework may depend on their level of education. Furthermore, Epstein (1988) argued that helping the child with schoolwork and providing resources for skills development made a child realize the importance of education, which led to more responsible efforts in school and thereby having an effect on school performance. Furthermore, majority of respondents who had their parents/guardians monitor times spent on homework were high achieving pupils.

As for parents/guardians discussions with teachers, quantitative data from the questionnaire have shown that most high achieving pupils (55.6%) had their parents/guardians engaged in discussions with their teachers on issues related to their academic performance. Parents of high achieving pupils interacted more with their children's teachers than those of low achieving pupils. The interactions with teachers enabled parents to know what problems their children were encountering in school and what could be done to deal with them. It also put pupils on alert for fear that their parents would come to inquire on their performances in school. This was contrary to low achieving pupils' parents/guardians who were unlikely to know about what was happening in the schools regarding their performance. Consequently, they could not provide much guidance and help to make their children's performance improve.

5.3.6 Monitoring Time of Coming from School

According to MoE (1996: 42), "the amount of time that pupils spend in organization learning activities has a strong bearing on how much they learn and on their subsequent academic performance." Nevertheless, the time that pupils spend outside learning activities is also important as the time spent in school learning. This is because the time spent outside school helps in shaping the academic performance of the pupils. Among the extra mural activities discussed here are monitoring time of coming from school, activities time most spent, general monitoring of pupils after school activities and remedial classes.

In general, the study revealed that more low achieving pupils than high achieving pupils were mostly monitored on the time they came back home from school. This seemingly lower

percentage of high achievers rarely being monitored when they got home after school might mean that close monitoring, is done in families where pupils are not performing well. This might be a negative outcome of parents/guardians monitoring of an adolescent seeking his/her own independence which may simply be due to parent/guardian trying to help a student who needs help or is too playful.

5.3.7 After-School Activities

Although monitoring children's after school activities had no statistically significant association with academic performance, most pupils whose parents/guardians monitored their after-school activities performed better. The majority (55.4%) of those whose after-school activities were monitored were high achieving pupils.

The high achieving pupils spent less time watching TV and playing. However, they spent more time doing household chores and homework than low achieving pupils. In this regard, the amount of time pupils spent in organising learning activities and time spent outside has strong bearing on how much learning they did and their subsequent academic performance.

Furthermore the study revealed that, there was a significant relationship between monitoring of TV viewing and the academic achievement for pupils. Majority of pupils whose parents/guardians rarely monitored their watching TV had low academic performance. The means of monitoring was in the form of setting limits on viewing TV and amount of content. This finding was in line with Dorr and Rabin (1995), who stated that increased media usage was correlated with poorer social relations, fewer social interactions, lower reading scores and poorer

school achievement. This shows that there is a link between academic performance and watching TV.

5.3.8 Remedial Classes

This study indicates that majority (61%) of high achieving pupils did not attend extra lessons as compared to low achieving pupils. This shows that pupils in the low achievement category get more extra lessons than those in the high performance category. However, these results should not to be interpreted as indicating that attending extra lessons has little to offer in enhancing children's education. One potential reason for the weak relationship between attending extra lessons and students' academic performance as observed here is that attending extra lessons is more common among low achieving pupils because the pupils are not doing well academically in school in the first place. Thus this is the case; attending extra lessons in many homes may be due to poor academic performance of their children. These results therefore make sense to us in that low achieving students are in need of the most educational assistance.

This study further revealed that of those who attended extra lessons, the majority of them were encouraged to take up extra lessons by their parents. This therefore means that parents are the main initiators in the pupils taking up extra lessons.

5.4 Summary

The findings of this study have shown that there are more factors besides the socio-economic status of the pupils that are important determinants of academic performance. This shows that the

social structural theory has its own flaws when applied to academic performance. It does not looks at other factors besides social economic status, which contribute to pupils academic performance such as; quality of teachers, natural endowment and the school environment. Nevertheless, it helps to explain differential factors affecting academic performance.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter gives a conclusion and summary, of the study. It also makes some recommendations based on the findings. It is divided into three sections. In the first section, the chapter gives a brief review of the study including the findings. The second section discusses some recommendations of the study and the last section discusses suggestions for further studies.

6.1 Conclusion

This study has investigated the characteristics of home environment in relation to high and low achieving grade nine pupils in selected basic schools of Lusaka District. The study was based on the Social Stratification theory in Sociology. This theory is concerned with unequal distribution of things which are scarce but widely desired. It addresses the process of status attainment or social mobility whereby some or groups of persons come to receive more of the scarce resources than others (Grusky, 2005). The social stratification theory explains an association between social class and responsibility plus initiative taken by parents over their children's education. It also examines interest and support that is shown by parents over education, upbringing, time spent and attention devoted to children's development. This theory assumes that children from rich families are likely to perform better than those from poor families.

The semi structured questionnaire and semi structured interview guide were tools used to generate data. The tools were administered to 138 grade nine pupils in five selected basic schools in Lusaka District. The generated data were later analyzed using Chi-square test with the help of SPSS after categorization of various variables.

Results of this study show a number of outcomes about the relationship between characteristics of home environment and academic achievement. There was a significant relationship between common language used at home and academic achievement. There was also a significant relationship between male parent education and academic achievement. The residential area where pupils come from, parents' perception and expectation of their children's academic performance, home environment, parent-child communication about school, parenting style, monitoring and controlling of behaviour to optimise academic achievement, parent-child talk, and monitoring TV viewing were also found to be significantly associated with academic achievement. For high academic attainment to be achieved, pupils require favourable social circumstances at home.

6.1.2 Summary of the Findings

This study has shown the main medium of communication among high achieving pupils was either English or English mixed with local language, while low achieving pupils used local language as their medium of communication. This study has also shown that communication between school authorities and parents/guardians provides effective impact on improving children's academic performance. More high achieving than low achieving pupils came from

homes where their parents/guardians regularly communicated with the school authorities to discuss their children's academic performance. This research has revealed that most of the low achieving pupils came from medium density areas and that most of them were taken care of by other persons other than their own biological parents. Furthermore, most of the high achieving pupils came from either low or medium density areas and they were mostly taken care of by their biological parents.

With regards to activities that they spent most time on after school, most low achieving pupils reported that they spent most time doing household chores, while most high achieving pupils spent most of their time doing home work. In respect to employment, the majority of high achieving pupils had male parents/guardians employed in white and blue collar jobs while their female parents/guardians were engaged in private businesses. On the education levels, majority of high achieving pupils had parents/guardians whose levels went up to college. The finding on the education of the parents/guardians of respondents showed that most parents of low achieving pupils were not very educated as majority never went beyond secondary school education.

As for home environment characteristics it was found that low achieving grade nine pupils had parents with low perception and expectation of their children's academic performance. Further, these pupils felt that their homes where not conductive to learning, had little communications with parents about school work, and their parents did not control their after-school activities including monitoring the time spent watching TV. It can therefore be said that lack the above characteristics of the home environment contributed to low academic performance in school.

But, most high achieving pupils came from homes where their parents/guardians perceived and expected them to perform better. The study also found that most high achieving pupils liked their home environment and stated that it was quiet and conducive for studying. Furthermore, parent-child communication about school, parenting style, monitoring and controlling of behaviour to optimise academic achievement, parent-child talk, and monitoring TV viewing were found to be high among the high achieving pupils than was the case with the low achieving pupils.

While the majority of high achieving pupils found their home environment conductive to learning or studying, most low achieving pupils did not. The majority of the low achieving pupils also indicated that they disliked their home environment as it was too noisy which in turn affected their academic performance. In addition, it was established that the majority of the low achieving pupils were perceived by their parents as bad academic achievers while the high achieving pupils were considered as good achievers.

Further assessment on the home characteristics of the high and low achieving grade nine pupils showed that most high achieving pupils had parents/guardians who strictly monitored their children's behaviour, time of returning from school, time spent doing homework, time on after school activities and time spent on watching TV. It was also observed that most low achieving pupils' parents/guardians were not strict or rarely monitored the time children spent on after-school activities (playing and doing household chores), on watching TV, on home work and on time they came back home from school.

The involvement of parents/guardians in school activities has been proved effective in children's academic performance. This is because it provides parents/guardians with an opportunity to learn and appreciate school problems (faced by both teachers and pupils). Unlike most low achieving pupils, the majority of parents/guardians for high achieving pupils regularly attended PTA meetings and open school days. This study has found that such parents take active roles in discussing homework with their children and they willingly provided resources to school and children for facilitating teaching and learning process. In addition, such parents would willingly take time to discuss with teachers their children's academic performance plus other issues. The study further found that the majority of the parents/guardians of the low achieving pupils rarely attended Open days on a regular basis and that they rarely had regular discussion with teachers on the academic performance of their children.

The other objective of this study, besides determining the home characteristics of high and low achieving grade nine pupils, was also to examine the characteristics of the home environment that had most positive and negative impact on the academic performance of grade nine pupils in selected schools of Lusaka Urban District. The study found that parents/guardians monitoring and controlling their children's behaviour had the most positive impact on the academic performance of the pupils. Additionally, lack of parents/guardians monitoring and controlling their children's behaviour had the most negative impact on the academic performance of the pupils. In general, it can be concluded that lack of the factors which positively affected academic achievement, of the high achieving pupils most negatively affected the academic achievement of low achieving pupils.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions and findings and discussed above, the following recommendations are made to the parents/guardians, Ministry of Education and schools.

6.2.1   Parents

- Parents should not see intelligence as a fixed characteristic in order to avoid labelling their children based on their intelligence but rather that they should see it as ever changing to avoid bias about what their children will be able to achieve.

- Parents should monitor the after-school activities of their children and encourage those times spent on activities that would foster and encourage academic achievement.

- Since the study has shown the significance of parental involvement:
  i.   Parents should work with their children on homework
  ii.   They should talk to their children on school related factors
  iii. Parents should monitor and control pupils' behaviour so as to optimize their academic performance
  iv.   Parents should check pupils' academic progress.

6.2.2   Ministry of Education

- The Ministry of Education in conjunction with the Ministry of Child Youth and Sports Development may incorporate student services personnel like counselors, guidance teachers, psychologists and social workers, who would be more involved with character and emotional preparedness of children to learn.

- Besides Sociology of Education and Psychology of Education offered to teachers during training, the Ministry of Education should develop in- service programmes for teachers that would sensitize them on the impact of home environment factors on student academic achievement.

- The Ministry of Education should ensure that all schools have fully functional guidance and counselling services so as to provide necessary guidance to low achieving pupils coming from depraved homes.

6.2.3 Schools

- Schools should encourage parent involvement in their children's education by emphasizing the importance of PTA meetings, and Open Days.

- Schools should provide family intervention programmes through parent education. From time to time, schools should organise teacher-parent conferences to teach how to create a conductive home environment that would foster academic performance of pupils.

- Teachers in schools should try to understand the home environment of their pupils and come up with ways of helping those who come from less favourable home environment enhance academic performance by using strategies involving self worth in the classroom.

6.3 Areas for Further Studies

- In addition to using chi- square, a similar study could be done using other standardized tests so as to provide an opportunity for high-level data analysis among academic achievement and home environmental factors.

- Future studies could be done by measuring student academic achievement in addition to using teachers' perceptions for identifying student academic achievement.

- A longitudinal study involving more schools, grades and families across the nation would allow for comparisons of the effects of changing home environment over time relative to student achievement.

- Since this study laid emphasis on examining the relationship between home environment and academic performance of high and low achieving grade nine pupils in Lusaka Urban District, future studies may investigate how specific variables of home environment influence academic achievements of pupils in rural areas.

- Future studies may investigate how teachers can help make up for the impact of negative characteristics of the home environment on the academic achievement of pupils in school.

- It is important to carry out further research on how parents/guardians' education has an impact on the academic achievement of the pupils.

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Schools of Education

Department of educational, Psychology Sociology and Special Education (EPESS)

Graduate Studies

February, 2007

Dear respondent,

Ref: Characteristics of Home Environment of Grade Nine Pupils in Selected Schools of Lusaka Urban District.

I am Nthembe Mbewe a Post Graduate student at the University of Zambia conducting a study on the characteristics of the home environment of grade nine pupils in selected basic schools of Lusaka District.

You have been selected to participate in the study and I would be mist grateful if you spare your time to answer the questions in this questionnaire. Be assured that all the information will be treated in absolute confidence and solely used for the purpose of this research. No individual respondents will be identified in the final report.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Nthembe Mbewe

CHARACTERISTICS OF HOME ENVIRONMENT OF GRADE NINE PUPILS IN SELECTED SCHOOLS OF LUSAKA URBAN DISTRICT

Instructions

There is no right or wrong answer. Please tick were appropriate

Section 1

1. School...

2. Sex

   a) Male   [   ]

   b) Female [   ]

3. Age

   a) 10 years and below [   ]

   b) 11 – 13   [   ]

   c) 14 – 17   [   ]

   d) 18 years and above

4. Residential area ....

5. Number of people in the household...

6. Parent/guardian's occupation

   a) Male   [   ]

   b) Female   [   ]

7. Parent/Guardian educational level

   a) Male   Primary   [   ]   Secondary   [   ]

               College   [   ]   University [   ]

   b) Female   Primary   [   ]   Secondary   [   ]

               College   [   ]   University [   ]

8. What language do you speak at home?

   a) English only   [   ]

   b) Local language only [   ]

   c) English and local language [   ]

Section 2

9. Whom do you stay with at home during school days?

    a) Both parents [ ]

    b) Mother   [ ]

    c) Step parent   [ ]

    d) Aunt/ uncle   [ ]

    e) By myself   [ ]

    f) Other relatives [ ]

    g) Others (If others please specify) ……………………………………..............................

10. How do you think your parents/guardians view your academic performance?

    a) Very good   [ ]

    b) Good   [ ]

    c) Average   [ ]

    d) Bad   [ ]

    e) Very bad   [ ]

11. How often do your parents/guardians participate in the following activities since you were in grade six?

    i.   Attending PTA meetings:

    a) Very often   [ ]

    b) Often   [ ]

    c) Sometimes   [ ]

    d) Never   [ ]

    ii.   Attending the open day:

    a) Very often   [ ]

    b) Often   [ ]

    c) Sometimes   [ ]

    d) Never   [ ]

12. How often do your parents/guardians do the following (kindly indicate 1 for very often, 2 for often, 3 for sometimes and 4 for never):-

    a) Discuss with you regarding school work   [ ]

b) Encourage you with homework [ ]

c) Provide you with resources to help you do your school work [ ]

d) Discuss your performance with your teachers [ ]

13. Do you attend any extra lessons (if answer is no proceeded to question 15)?

a) Yes [ ]

b) No [ ]

14. If your answer to question 13 is yes whose initiative was it that you start the extra lessons?

a) Self [ ]

b) Teacher [ ]

c) Parents [ ]

d) Others (please specify...

15. How much time do you spend talking to your parents on any issue?

a) A lot of time [ ]

b) Sometimes [ ]

c) Never [ ]

16. Which of the following applies to your home (**please tick only once where appropriate**)?

a) Parents/guardians establish and implement all the household rules with little or no discussion with children [ ]

b) Parents/guardian establishes few if any rules and rarely punishes for inappropriate behaviour [ ]

c) Rules are commonly established with input from the children and going against the rules is met with consequences. [ ]

17. Does your home environment affect your academic performance?

a) Yes [ ]

b) No [ ]

18. Which **one** of these characteristics of home environment has **mostly** affected your academic performance?

a) Parents/guardians communication about school work [   ]

b) Parental expectations about school work   [   ]

c) Parents/guardians parenting style   [   ]

d) Parents/guardians' monitoring and controlling your behaviour to optimize academic achievement   [   ]

e) Others (please specify)..

19. Kindly indicate your feelings regarding your home environment?

a) Strongly like it   [   ]

b) Like it   [   ]

c) Dislike it   [   ]

d) Strongly dislike   [   ]

20. Kindly rank the following activities in the order of amount of time you spend on each of them (**with 1 as the most time spent on it and 6 as the least time spent on the activity)**

a) Watching TV   [   ]

b) Playing with friends [   ]

c) Attending church   [   ]

d) Household chores   [   ]

e) Doing homework   [   ]

f) Sleeping   [   ]

g) Others (specify)   [   ]

21. How strict are your parents/guardians in monitoring your behaviour?

a) Very strict   [   ]

b) Strict   [   ]

c) Somewhat strict   [   ]

d) Not strict   [   ]

22. To what extent does your parents/guardian monitor your time (kindly indicate 1 for very often, 2 for often, 3 for sometimes and 4 for rarely)?

a) Spent on homework   [   ]

b) Return home from school   [   ]

c) Spent on watching TV   [   ]

d) You do after school   [   ]

"Thank You Very Much for Your Cooperation"

APPENDIX 2: STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PUPILS

1. Name of the school ………………………………………………………………....…

2. Sex
   a) Male   [   ]
   b) Female [   ]

3. Residential area …………………………………………………………….......……

4. Number of people in the household………………………………………........……

5. Parent/guardian's occupation
   a) Male…………………………………………………………….......……
   b) Female………………………………………………………….......……

6. Parent/guardian educational level…………………………………….......……

7. What   role   has   your   father/male   guardian   played   in   your   education?
   ………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………

8. What   role   has   your   mother/female   guardian   played   in   your   education?
   ………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………………………………………………………………………………

9. How   would   you   describe   your   relationship   with   your   family   at   home?
   ………………………………………………………………………………………

....

....

10. How would you describe your home environment in terms of the following characteristics?

   a) Your parents/guardians communication about your school work:

      ....

      ....

      ....

   b) Parental expectations about your school:

      ....

      ....

      ....

   c) Your parents/guardians' monitoring and controlling your behaviour to optimize academic achievement:

      ....

      ....

      ....

11. What do you like about your home environment?

....

....

....

12. What do you dislike about your home environment?

....

....

....

13. How has your home environment contributed to your academic performance?

....

....

....

14. Do you ever have discussions with your parents/guardians regarding you and school work (**if answer is no go to question 16**)?
    a) Yes   [   ]
    b) No   [   ]

15. If yes to question 14, what do you discuss with your parents/guardians regarding your school work?

    ....

    ....

    ....

16. How often do you have these discussions on your school work with your parents/guardians?

    ....

    ....

    ....

17. In what ways do your parents/guardians encourage you with your school work?

    ....

    ....

    ....

18. Do your parents/guardians monitor the time you come home from school?

    ....

19. If ever you watch TV, what is your parents/guardian view about it?

....

....

....

20. Do your parents/guardians ever communicate their academic aspirations for you **(if answer is no to question 20 proceed to 22)**?

    a) Yes   [ ]

    b) No   [ ]

21. If yes to question 20, what are your parent/guardians' academic aspirations for you?

....

....

....

22. Do you have any household rules at your home?

    a) Yes   [ ]

    b) No   [ ]

23. If yes to question 22, who establishes the rules in your home?

....

24. What other characteristics of your home environment have had an effect on your academic performance?

....

....

....

25. Of all the characteristics of the home environment discussed above, communication with your parents/guardians about your school, your relationship with your family, discipline pattern of your parents/guardians, your parents/guardian supervision or controlling your behaviour, which one would you say has **mostly** impacted your academic performance?

....

....

....

End of Interview
"Thank You Very Much for Your Cooperation"

APPENDIX 3: LETTER OF AUTHORISATION

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Telephone: 291381	**PO Box 32379**
Telegram: UNZA, LUSAKA	**Lusaka, Zambia**
Telex: UNZALU ZA 44370	**Fax: +260-1-292702**

===

29ᵗʰ January 2007

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: FIELD WORK FOR M.ED STUDENTS

The bearer of this letter Mr./Ms. ..NTHEMBE...MBEWE.............:...
computer number ....5260000.75.............. is a duly registered student at the
University of Zambia, School of Education.

The student is taking a Masters Programme in Education. The Programme has a
fieldwork component which he/she has to complete.

We shall greatly appreciate if the necessary assistance is rendered to him/her.

Thanking you always.

Yours sincerely

P. C. Manchishi (Dr)
ASSISTANT DEAN (PG), EDUCATION

c.c. .   Dean, Education
         Director, DRGS

THE UNIVERSITY OF
ASSISTANT DEAN

1 6 FEB 2007

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89