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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENT'S SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN URBAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF BHUTAN

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ABSTRACT

The research aimed to explore the relationship between Parents' Socioeconomic Status (education level, income level and marital status) and the student academic performance in the urban primary schools of Bhutan. 408 urban student's parents were selected as sample through multistage random sampling method. One-way ANOVA statistics was employed to test for statistical significant differences among the observed sample means of student academic performance based on parent's socioeconomic status. The results indicated that there were statistical significant differences in student academic performance based on parent's income level; the student academic performance of the parents with high income is higher than those with middle and low income, while there were no statistical significant differences in the student academic performance based on parent's education level and marital status.

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INTRODUCTION

Parents are the first teacher of the child and if the child needs to learn positively in the school, they will need the full support of their parents. Numerous researches have showed that parent's socio-economic conditions such as marital status, education, and income played a vital role in the growth of the child's learning and educational achievements. Socioeconomic status is a construct that reflects one's access to collectively desired resources, be the material goods, money, power, friendship networks, healthcare, leisure time, or educational opportunities (Oakes and Rossi, 2003). In Bhutan, the status and quality of primary education have been assessed through the key determinants of retention, grade repetition and learners' academic achievements. The urban students outperformed semi-urban, rural and remote students in all cases. Alarmingly, mean test scores in literacy and numeracy are very low, and the "learning rate" is so slow that an extra year in each grade is required to reach the average competency for that grade (Education Sector Review commission, 2008). Therefore, this study targets to explore the relationship

between parent's socioeconomic status [marital status, education and income level] and student academic performance in the urban primary schools of Bhutan.

Literature Review

Children are the greatest assets of a nation. They are the source of socioeconomic development. The home and school is of vital importance in shaping their future. Although diverse factors such as school location, class size, school type, family structure, etc, are determinants of student academic performance, socioeconomic status is one key component which constitutes an important aspect to children's learning and academic performance. This paper therefore, assesses parent's socioeconomic conditions [marital status, education and income level and its influence on children's academic performance. According to Swap (1993), "the parents in parental involvement encompass "biological parents, step-parents, grandparents, primary caretakers, older siblings, aunts, and uncles" (p 16). "Regardless of income, ethnicity or background, students with involved parents are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, have better attitudes, behavior and attendance, and graduate and go onto additional education. Higher parental involvement is associated with higher educational expectations, enrollment in gifted and

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talented programs, and positive perceptions of school" (Henderson, 1988). Many researchers have found that parent involvement positively affects a student's academic achievement but low socioeconomic families are least likely to be involved in their students' education (Turney & Kao, 2009; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009; Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005). Akanle (2007) studied socio-economic factors influencing students' academic performance in Nigeria, he found that insufficient parental income, a family type and lack of funding by governments were factors influencing students' academic performance. The achievement of students was correlated with the socio-economic status level of parents because it hindered the individual in gaining access to sources and resources of learning (Eamon, 2005). Memons *et al.* (2010 as cited in Azhar, *et al.* 2013) concluded that the students whose parents are well educated perform better than those students whose parents are less educated. Further he stated that higher the income of family, better would be students' availability of resources and consequently better would be academic achievements. Karemera (2003 as cited in Mushtaq and Khan, 2012) found that students' performance is significantly correlated with satisfaction with academic environment and the facilities of library, computer lab and etc. in the institution. Dorji, (2005) who states that community with scattered settlement, low literacy rate, followed by poverty has left many Bhutanese parents without proper educational background to provide effective academic support and guidance towards their children's learning and education in the school. Poor parenting education has not only undermined parent's rights towards their children's education but also isolated themselves from many daily activities of the school. A study conducted by the centre for Bhutan studies showed that "the problem of dropouts, non-enrollment, poor performance in exams and lacks of interest in studying by the students are mainly due to the parent's educational background and family socio-economic conditions" (Youth in Bhutan: Education, Employment, Development, 2005). Many researchers have found that parent's socioeconomic status does have some influence on the student academic performance in the school.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to explore the relationship between Parents' Socioeconomic Status (education level, income level and marital status) and the student academic performance in the urban primary schools of Bhutan. Specifically, the research tries to answer the following three questions;

1. Is there any difference in the student academic performance based on parent's education level?
2. Is there any difference in the student academic performance based on parent's income level?
3. Is there any difference in the student academic performance based on parent's Marital Status?

Research Methodology

The procedures of the research were outlined under the following headings; source of data, statistical design, data collection and analysis.

A. Source of Data

The population consisted of the urban student's parents. Multistage random sampling method was used for randomizing the sample size for this study and the following processes were followed; At first stage, selecting of provinces (districts) were done by cluster sampling, At second stage, schools were selected from provinces (districts) by using stratified sampling method. The final stage was selecting parents by Quota sampling method. The total sample size of 408 was allocated proportionately among the selected 34 selected urban primary schools.

B. Statistical Design

One-way ANOVA statistics was employed to analyze the data. In order to proceed with the data analysis, variables were identified as follows:

Independent variables: Parent's Socioeconomic Status which includes Parent's Education level, Income level and Marital Status

Criterion variable: student academic performance

C. Data Collection and Data Analysis

The researcher collected data from 34 selected sample schools from 9 districts by distributing questionnaires to 408 urban school student's parents. For the student academic performance, the existing data for student academic result recorded by respective schools in average percentage was collected and used with approval from respective school principal. The data analysis was operated through SPSS program. The one-way ANOVA statistics was employed to explore the differences in academic performance based on parent's education level, income level and marital status.

Findings of the Study

1. To explore the differences in the student academic performance based on the parent's education level.

The one-way ANOVA of Student's Academic Performance based on Parent's Education Level produced F value = 1.049, which is not significant at the .05 level. It can be concluded that there are no differences in the student academic performance based on parent's education level. However, the data from summary table of descriptive statistics shows that the mean of academic performance of the students with the parents with PhD, ($\bar{X}=91.00$), Master Degree, ($\bar{X}=77.94$), Bachelor Degree, ($\bar{X}=76.88$), Diploma, ($\bar{X}=74.84$), and High School levels, ($\bar{X}=76.45$), tend to be evidently higher than that of those with Primary school level. ($\bar{X}=73.85$).

2. To explore the differences in the student academic performance based on the parent's income level.

The one-way ANOVA of student academic performance based on parent's income level produced F value = 5.970 at the significant level of .003. Therefore, it can be concluded that

there are differences in the student academic performance based on the parent's income level. Scheffe's method was employed as the Post Hoc multiple test to determine which pair of the means differ. The pair-wise follow-up analysis yielded the following results : the student academic performance of the parents with high income is higher than those with middle and low income with the mean difference as 6.37688 and 8.16042, respectively, with the significant level of both less than the .05. As for the pair of the parents with middle income and those with the low income, the difference in the student academic performance was not statistically significant.

3. To explore the differences in the student academic performance based on the parent's marital status.

The one-way ANOVA of the student academic performance based on parent's marital status produced F value =2.586 with significant level at .053. It can be concluded that there are no differences in the student academic performance based on parent's marital status. However, the data from summary table of descriptive statistics show that the mean of academic performance of the students whose parent's status is married, ($\bar{X} = 76.85$), Widowed ($\bar{X}=74.64$) and Single ($\bar{X}=77.72$), tends to be higher than that of the divorced ($\bar{X}=70.41$).

DISCUSSION

The results indicated that there were statistical significance differences in student academic performance based on parent's income level. The student academic performance of the parents with high income is higher than those with middle and low income. The study supports the findings of Ghazi *et al* (2013) who found positive significant relationship of total family income with the academic performance of the students. However, the study result revealed that there were no statistical significance differences in the student academic performance based on parent's education level. The finding is not in agreement with the findings of Alokhan *et al.* (2013) and Khan *et al.* (2015) who found that a significant difference between academic performance of students from parents with high educational background and students from parents with low educational background. The study result revealed that there were no statistical significance differences in the student academic performance based on parent's marital status. The finding contradicts the study of Penny (2001) who found that parents' marital status actually has effects on pupils' performance. She emphasized that children living with their stepmothers are targets of misdirected emotion and mistreatments while children from stable families tend to perform far better in schools.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The evidence reported in this research study supported the following recommendations:

1. Socioeconomic status reveals poverty as an important aspect determining academic performance of students which otherwise interprets poverty as an adversity controlling school effectiveness and student's performance. Government of Bhutan may deliberate

upon ways and means to curb low income issues and maneuver addressing economic imbalances. It also needs to be reconsidered that socioeconomic not only has adverse impact to varied situations but also holds unto the very basic root of education system.

2. The Ministry of Education may adopt mechanisms for the provision of necessary supports to students belonging to underprivileged parents. Mitigation, alternatives and response systems must be put in place to fill in gaps and shortcomings affecting effective education system.
3. The study found out the parent's income as important factor which can bring differences in academic performance; therefore, it is recommended that government should take some initiatives to raise the income level of people.

Suggestion for Future Studies

Similar research should be carried in schools including lower secondary, middle secondary and higher secondary schools of rural and urban Bhutan

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