

What Matters to Academic Performance: A Brief Review of Literature

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Abstract

This brief review of literature is conducted to highlight what matters to academic performance of the student in general. The review covered numerous researches conducted on factors and determinants of academic achievement with wide range in terms of context and condition but the main aim of this review was gaining insight of variables related to academic achievement of the student and due to the multifaceted factors affecting the academic performance the reviewed literature concentrated on four dimensions which are; social and demographic factors, institutional factors, instructional factors and student characteristics. The multitude factors affecting the academic performance of the students portrayed in this review might not limited to the four dimensions illustrated in this article but the selected studies for this review have highlighted the main factors that matters to academic performance of the student even though there is no consensus upon the exact factors that have decisive weight in this regard. However, the research related to student characteristics and traits especially academic background and learning skills have shown more impact on academic performance than other factors related to the school facilities and instructional methods. Even so, the impact of school environment such as resources available and facilities provided as well as the role of the teachers' teaching techniques and methods are undeniable.

Key words: Academic, performance, student, review, literature,

Introduction

Measuring of academic performance of students has been the centre of focus in the last decades due to the complexity of the factors contributing into the success of the teaching learning process. Students' academic success plays a vital role in the economic prosperity and social development of any society and reflects the quality of the education system that produces high skilled, knowledgeable and experienced graduates who will become effective leaders and hardworking manpower. There is a plenty of empirical research and scientific investigations that suggested students' academic performance depends on different socio-economic, psychological and institutional factors which are viewed by some researchers as inputs that produce the outcome which is the academic achievement in accordance to the educational productivity theory pioneered by Walberg (1984). It is obvious then, the importance of studying and probing the determinants that render students to excel in their academic discourse. Having in mind, the multiple factors that causes failure or success in the academic arena and its deep impact on the various fields of the social, economic and culture of the community, the researcher have assumed that the better the academic performance of the students the greater positive effect will have on their societies in their respective countries.

In this course, there are many factors that affect the academic performance of students which are but not limited to; student's motivation and individual characteristics, socioeconomic background, academic factors related to the institution such as learning facilities and materials in addition to the instructors'

characteristics, qualifications and teaching styles. Consequently, the diagnostic measures to ameliorate the situation will start with raising the main question of; what are the factors affecting the academic achievement of the students? The discovery of the causal factors of the high performance or the low performance of the students will contribute into the proper solutions enhancing the high achievement of the students and similarly fostering wide range of corrective procedures and efficient policies and vivid strategies into assuring the quality of the education and delivering high calibre of academic services.

Conceptualisation of academic performance

The measurement of academic performance as a symbol of school success can be traced way back from the Victorian period (Bell, 2013 quoted by Luke and Mavis, 2014). Since then, academic performance has been used to grade schools and most importantly to determine ones career paths. The ‘good schools’ are acclaimed to be those that are able groom the students well enough to achieve the set standards. This is measured by use of students’ academic performance both at school level and nationally. The variables "academic achievement" and "academic performance" are often used interchangeably. In most studies academic achievement or academic performance refers to how well a student is accomplishing his or her tasks and studies. In the context of this study, academic achievement refers to the extent to which students have achieved mastery of the courses they are exposed to in university. According to Okorie (2014) academic achievement can be measured in several ways for most of educational institutions use grading system an indicator of students’ academic achievement. Therefore, grades are certainly the most well-known indicator of academic achievement and thus grades are the student’s “score” for their classes and overall tenure. Even so, grading systems vary greatly by country and school; common scales include a percentage form 1-100, lettering systems from A-F, and grade point averages (GPA) from 0-4.0.

To ascertain the quantitative nature of measuring student’s achievement, Mutua (2015) elaborated that the most highly valued method of determining whether a successful completion has taken place for a learner is quantitative in nature. In other words, numbers (in the context of grading and testing) are used to indicate whether a student has been successful or unsuccessful in mastering academic content and skill. In most cases, according to Bruce and Neville (1979 quoted by Mutua, 2015) "accomplishment" is sometimes used in place of "achievement". The bottom line in academic achievement discourse is based on grades and test scores. Students may not be permitted to graduate from high school, for example, if they are unable to maintain a specific grade point average or percentage score or pass a high stakes graduation test. Some researchers like Steve (2000) as quoted by Mutua (2015) raised semantic arguments and contended that academic achievement is distinctive from academic performance in a sense that academic performance is defined as the observable or measurable behaviour of a person in a particular situation usually experimental situation. This means that performance measures the aspect of behaviour that can be observed at a specific period. But the academic achievement is cumulative and progressive. It is possible to learn a subject or academic course and yet perform poorly in it in respect to quantitative scores in tests and exams. Other factors, other than the learning process, have potential of influencing academic achievement on certain courses and subjects (Zenebe, 2015). In sum, the success of any educational institution is measured by the performance of its students in both academic and non-academic tests. This is combining both formative and summative assessments of student’s achievement not only in terms of test results and exam scores but overall performance of the students.

Factors Affecting Academic performance of the students.

In educational setting, excellent performance and high achievement of the students remains top priority of any school and learning institution therefore exploring factors contributing effectively into high quality of student performance have been enthusiastically investigated by educational researchers and learning

practitioners. However, as explained by Mohammad Manjur et al. (2014), most studies have tended to focus on investigating academic performance in general. Others examined factors impacting performance in individual courses such as; mathematics, English and sciences. Nevertheless, extant literature highlights a number of factors that affect students' characteristics and their environment, teacher characteristics and background, teaching style and materials. In addition, these variables are inside and outside school that affect students' quality of academic achievement. These factors may be termed as student factors, family factors, school factors and peer factors (Farooq et al, 2011).

Social and demographic factors affecting academic performance Socioeconomic status of student

Social aspects and demographic information of participants of any research especially in social and humanity science are considered very vital in the course of investigation. But due to enormous variables under the socio demographic category in educational research, studies have become widely disperse across myriad of variables include but not conclusive; age, gender, geographical belongingness, race, ethnicity, marital status, socioeconomic status (SES), parents' education level, parental profession, language, income and religious affiliations (Farooq et al., 2011). However, the socioeconomic status is of most researched and debated factor among educational professionals as significant factor contribute towards the academic performance of students. As argued by Adams (1996) cited in Farooq et al., (2011) socioeconomic status of learners affects the quality of their academic performance. Most of the experts posit that the low socioeconomic status has negative effect on the academic performance of students because the basic needs of students remain unfulfilled and hence, they do not perform better academically.

It is further elaborated by Beaumont-Walters and Soyibo (2001) that several past studies have reported inconclusive findings on the links among many independent variables such as gender, grade level, school location, school-type, student-type and socioeconomic background (SEB)) and differences in high school students' performance on specific science subjects. For example, regarding gender differences in science, many studies have reported that males generally outperformed females in science and mathematics. That student performance is very much dependent on (socio economic back ground) as per their statement, "High school students' level of performance is with statistically significant differences, linked to their gender, grade level, school location, school type, student type and socio-economic background.

Considine and Zappala (2002) conducted empirical research on 3000 students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds to estimate the extent of socioeconomic, family, individual and contextual factors on school educational performance, the results obtained using binomial logistic regression techniques indicated that gender, unexplained absences, parental educational attainment, housing type, ethnicity and student age are all statistically significant variables and predictors of academic performance (Considine and Zappala, 2002). In contrast, family structure, the main source of family income and geographical location do not significantly predict outcomes in school performance once other factors are controlled for. This is corroborated with findings of the study done by Hijazi Syed Tahir et a.l, (2006) and in addition quoted that some of the researchers (Goldman, N., Haney, W., and Koffler, S., 1988, Pallas, A., Natriello, G., McDill, E., 1989, Levin, H., 1986) have tried to explain the link between student's achievements, economic circumstances and the risk of becoming a drop-out that proved to be positive.

Influence of parent's education on student academic performance

Family is the first circle of the community which has much influence on students as children as well as grown up. However, in this study the social factor is specifically meant the educational level of the parents and their involvement in following up and monitoring of their children's performance even in postsecondary level. The significance of the parents' education effect on students' overall academic achievement is reported in the study done by Farooq et al, (2011). This study involved 600 students in Lahore, Pakistan (300 male and 300 female). The study investigated a series of factors including among other the parents'

education and its effect has on students' academic performance. The research concluded that parents' education level has significant impact on students' academic achievement. Interestingly, they have accentuated that parents' education means more than their occupation in relation to their children's performance at school. Similarly, Mazharul Islam (2014) stated that familial factors such as parental education and occupational level, family background and environment, parental support and aspiration, and socio-economic status of family are the important group of factors determining the academic performance of students. It is also substantiated by the study of Krashen (2005) which concluded that students whose parents are educated score higher on standardized tests than those whose parents were not educated. Educated parents can better communicate with their children regarding the schoolwork, activities and the information being taught at school because they can better assist their children in their work and participate at school.

Some researchers examined separately the educational level of either father or mother to investigate parents' educations among the factors influence on the students' academic achievement. This is done by M Mazharul Islam (2014) in a study titled "factors influencing the academic performance of undergraduate students in Sultan Qaboos University in Oman". The result of the study concluded that father's education (at least secondary level showed significant and positive association with achieving higher CGPA. That is, students whose fathers have at least secondary or higher level of education tend to have higher academic achievement. This finding is consistent with many other studies on the effects of family socioeconomic status (SES) on educational outcomes of children. Moreover, Amativa et al., (2010) investigated the effects of the parent's education on elementary and secondary school students who are more attached to their parent's guidance and overseeing. Their study has revealed that parent's education have significant impact on student's academic achievement. An educated parent can take better care for their child and guide to choose the better field of studies.

In similar study conducted by Hijazi and Naqfi (2006), they further elaborated that mothers age and education and its effect on students' academic achievement. They have concluded that mother's education is significantly correlated with academic achievement of the students. The study also revealed that mother's age is important factor as young mothers can easily handle their children compared to aged mothers. However, the above mentioned studies that concluded the significance influence of the parent education on student academic achievement are confronted with other studies that reported opposite result like the study conducted by Ogunshola and Adewale (2012) on impact of parental status on academic performance of the students in selected schools in Nigeria, they have concluded that Parental socio-economic statuses and parental educational background did not have significance effect on the academic performance of the students. This might be attributed into the context they have conducted the research. However, it has raised the query of studying more different variables influence the academic achievement of the respective students.

But, in a research paper done by Diaz (2003) on students of four secondary schools in Almeria City in Spain, to investigate the influence of the parental academic level on the student's academic performance, he demonstrated conflicting result as students whose fathers have high level of education are those with high achievement, while mothers level of study did not show any significant correlation with academic success of the students. Diaz (2003) further explained that the influence of the family educational climate is defined by the amount and the form of assistance that children obtain from the family; this is determined by some familial characteristics like the vibrant communication, effective relationships, values and attitudes within the family.

Impact of parental involvement on academic performance

The influence of parent involvement on academic success has not only been noted among researchers, but also among policy makers who have integrated efforts aimed at increasing parent involvement into broader

educational policy initiatives. Parental involvement is defined in various ways in the literature and according to Epstein's (1990, 1995, cited in Chowa et al., 2013) typology of parental involvement includes six categories: basic parenting, facilitating learning at home, communicating with the school, volunteering at the school, participating in school decision making, and collaborating with the community.

Numerous studies, mostly from developed countries, have shown that parents are more likely to be involved with their children's education at home than in school. Research also has demonstrated that a positive relationship exists between at-home parental involvement and a range of school-related outcomes, including academic achievement, school engagement, and socio emotional adjustment (Chowa et al., 2013). As reported in the study of Mazharul Islam, (2014) students with high level of parental involvement with their education were found to have 2 times higher odds than the students with low level of involvement. This is in line with the result of study conducted by of Chowa et al., (2013) that revealed parental involvement at-home and in-school is statistically significant predictors of youth academic performance. But the effect of in-school parental involvement on students' academic performance differs based on the parent's gender (Nyarko, 2011 cited in Chowa et al., and 2013). A mother's in-school involvement has a significant and positive influence on academic performance, but a father's in-school involvement does not have a statistically significant impact on academic performance. This is also supported by Zenebe (2015) who concluded that there is strong association between the academic achievement of student and parent involvement.

Parent involvement is more explicit in child's early education as revealed by the David R. et al., (2010) that parent involvement during early stage of child learning is consistently found to be positively associated with a child's academic performance. Specifically, children whose parents are more involved in their education have higher levels of academic performance than children whose parents are involved to a lesser degree. Additionally, this study have revealed that increased parent involvement, defined as the teacher's perception of the positive attitude parents have toward their child's education, teacher, and school, was significantly related to increased academic performance, measured by both a standardized achievement test and teacher ratings of the child's classroom academic performance. This is supported by Luke and Mavis (2014) who elaborates further by saying that lack of parental involvement, is one of the factors contributing to student's low performance.

Parental involvement level varies among parents with respect to the characteristics of the parent such as; mother of young children, educated or uneducated parents, father's involvement, their economic status, family background, and social environment. It is also crucial to consider the age of the children whereby parental involvement with children from early age has been found to equate with better outcomes specially in building their personalities parents are primary guides to them, children try to copy them and considered them that they are always role model so parents can shape their life as they can. (Zenebe, 2015).

Sex of the student and academic performance

The relationship between gender and the academic achievement of students has been an issue of discussion among the educational practitioners and researchers. According to Eshetu (2015) gender difference in attitudes and behaviours as well as differential course taking and biological differences between the sexes may all be instrumental in giving rise to gender differences in achievement. It is, therefore, important to understand the factors underlying this gender gap in academic achievement. Even though, various studies investigated the influence of gender have on academic achievement, but the findings are not conclusive. However, Some studies (Farooq et al, 2011) have found a gap between the achievement of boys and girls, with girls showing better performance than boys in the subjects of mathematics and English as well as cumulatively. It is also identified by Mazharul Islam (2014) that gender of student is a significant determinant of academic performance.

Furthermore, some researchers argue that girls receive higher grades than boys because they exert more effort, work harder, and their academic culture is more study oriented than boys. Woodfield and Earl-Novell (2006 cited in Jayanthi, et al., 2014) observed after analysing more than a million graduating students that female student did better than male students. They attributed this partly to female students being more academically responsible and thus less likely to be absent from lessons. The findings show that girls had better average achievement scores than boys is consistent with the literature (Chambers and Schreiber 2004; Sammons 1995; Van Houtte 2004; OECD 2004 cited in Farooq et al, 2011). The result of the study conducted by Mohammad Manjur Alam et al. (2014) also reveals that age, gender, past academic track, medium of education and absence in the classes have also influenced the academic performances of a student.

On the other hand, Raychaudhuri, et al (2010) in their study have inversely showed that boys are performing better than girls, and by this result disproved the prevalent assumption that girls perform better than the boys. This is also supported by the result of study conducted by Eshetu (2015) that showed male students performed better than females and the results were statistically significant. However, another study conducted by Akessa and Dhufera (2015) demonstrated that there is no association between student's achievement and sex of students. This is consistent with Mlambo (2011) who concluded in his study that gender, age, learning preferences, and entry qualifications did not cause any significant variation in the academic performance of students.

As quoted by Jayanthi, et al. (2014) Research done by Borde (1998) showed that gender did not play a role in academic performance. Another study by Meece and Jones (1996) also revealed that gender differences did not influence students' standardized science test scores. However, Haist et al., (2000, also quoted by Jayanthi, et al., 2014) showed that men performed better than women in certain settings while women outperformed men in other settings. A study by Hedges and Newell (1999) showed male students outperformed female students in science, but in reading and writing female students did much better. However, educational statistics have indicated that female students are outperforming their male counterparts at all levels of the education system and attaining higher qualifications.

In sum, most studies reviewed accentuated the difference between male and female students in academic performance while they have the same exposure to learning experience with equal potential of gaining knowledge. By contrast, the prevalence of gender disparity in the developing world in many aspects of life have made girls more vulnerable to be deprived of having basic education equal to that of boys. Therefore, in many countries the basic question is whether girls get their basic rights of education rather than bridging the gap and attaining parity level.

Age factor and Academic performance

Human being passes through age stages in the life circle and each stage has its unique experiences even though education is lifelong learning process. In this regard, many researchers carried out a variety of studies inquiring factors influencing students' academic achievement, and age has become a conspicuous demographic factor affects the academic gain of the students. According to Mlambo (2011) the issue of student age and recent changes in educational policies around the world have led to an increase in the number of mature-age admissions in educational institutions. While a large proportion of undergraduate students are still 19-year-olds, the ages of students in classes are now more variable than 10 to 15 years ago.

According to the findings of Ali S. et al. (2013) that age, father/guardian social economic status and daily study hours significantly contribute the academic performance of graduate students. This result is also confirmed by study of Diaz (2003) that age as an important factor in explaining the academic accomplishment of the students. Diaz further elaborated that as student get older the scores observed for academic environment, academic motivation and social support perceived by the student decreased. Some researchers (Trueman & Hartley, 1996; Richardson, 1994 cited in Mlambo, 2011) have differentiated the

performance between students of younger age and mature age but the definition of a mature student varies by country with 21-, 22- and 25-year-old students being classified as mature students in the United Kingdom, United States of America and Australia, respectively. Mature students are thought to lack basic skills required for effective study or to be impaired by age-related intellectual deficits. However, when compared to the younger students, the academic performance of mature students is as good, if not better.

According to Lake and Boyd (2015) there is an age relationship for both a declining propensity for surface learning and an increasing propensity towards deep learning in the context of Australian post-secondary students. It was argued that older students are more likely to learn concepts at university at a deeper level than their younger counterparts. Similarly, Gow and Kember (1990, cited in Lake and Boyd, 2015) highlighted that older students are less likely to adopt a surface approach to learning and more likely to implement a deep approach compared to younger students. Such studies thus supported the idea that age is an important factor in determining what approach a student will take towards their learning. However, the findings of Lake and Boyd (2015) revealed that younger students and older students' groups exhibit similar patterns in the change in learning approach, namely that the surface learning approach score declines through time, and that the deep learning approach score increases through time. Likewise, Mlambo (2011) obtained results shows that the academic performance of mature students did not differ from that of younger students.

This is in line with the findings of Richardson (1994 cited in Mlambo (2011) who reported that the academic performance of mature students is as good, if not better than younger students in most settings. As long as the mature students are admitted into study programmes for which they possess the basic competencies, then their performance will not be worse than that of their younger peers. Indeed, Richardson (1994) concludes that mature students seek a deeper meaning towards their academic work and were less likely to adopt a surface approach or reproducing orientation like the younger students.

Institutional factors affecting academic performance Learning resources and facilities

The availability of learning resources and facility in educational institution have major impact on the student's academic performance. The first impression of the student is the school environment both physically and academically in terms of resources available and facilities and services in place. Therefore, students who lived in environment that is conducive to learning and provided ample study space and opportunities for growth and interaction tend to have an easier time adjusting than students who live in other environment. There are two main activities which form students' satisfaction on campus. These include academic and non-academic. The academic factors include students' satisfaction with learning activities, environment, facilities, teaching methods etc, while the non-academic factors include co-curricular activities such as sporting, student clubs or social gathering, and religious and spiritual activities.

There are also independent factors that can affect student satisfaction based on services offered by the school. These include quality of teaching, student research and experimental facilities, library book collections and services, campus infrastructure, canteen facilities, space for group discussions, sport programmes, ICT (PC and Internet) facilities etc (Adeniyi, W. and Adeniyi, A., 2017:224). In similar manner, Ogbogu (2014) posited that institutional resources and facilities have significant impact on students' performance. This study cited that Darling-Hammond and Synder (2001, cited in Ogbogu, 2014) claimed that a reduction in class-size could enhance learning, while availability of adequate research equipment and teaching materials could significantly improve students' performance. They also maintained that student-teacher ratio, physical resources, equipment and teaching aids have significant effect on academic achievements. In the same way, Devadoss and Foltz (1996, cited in Ogbogu,2014) opined that a physical environment with improved facilities provide comfort, security, better understanding of courses and can be dramatic in terms of increased learning and performance.

Extracurricular activities and academic performance

Students' academic success can be measured in different ways; among them is involvement in activities out of the classroom. This originates from that education has broader concept of developing the students' mental capacities as well as physical ability in order to help both mind and body to be in better condition. Henceforth, extracurricular activities are essential component of any academic curriculum of any educational institution. According to Saleem R. (2008) extracurricular activities, as the name implies, are those, not directly related with the prescribed curriculum and include sports, athletics, scouting, various hobbies, summer trips, literary societies, dramatics, debates, student organisations etc. Whereas it is believed that unless balancing both the curricular and extracurricular activities is done the very purpose of education would be left unrealized.

It is further argued by Bartkus et al. (2012, pg. 698 quoted in SEOW et al, 2014) that extracurricular activities as academic or non-academic activities are conducted under the auspices of the school but occur outside of normal classroom time. Working outside of the classroom with diverse groups of individuals allows students to gain more self-confidence, autonomy, and appreciation for others' differences and similarities. Marsh and Kleitman (2002, cited in Bashir et al, 2012) tested whether participation in co-curricular activities influences academic outcomes even when the effects of a student's ability, school, personal and family characteristics, and numerous other factors are controlled. They found that joining more co-curricular activities and spending more time participating in them is associated with higher grades, more difficult courses selected, more time spent on homework, more colleges applied to, a higher likelihood of starting and finishing college, and a higher final degree earned, even when other factors are controlled. Extracurricular activities have a significant effect on the academic achievement as revealed by the study of Bashir et al. (2012) which is also supported by the study of Ahmad M et al., (2015) who stated that students participating in extracurricular activities generally benefit from having better examination results, higher self-concept, higher standardized test scores and educational attainment. Students often learned skills such as teamwork and leadership from college club activities while decreasing the likelihood of different problem behaviours.

According to Reeves (2008 cited in Nikki Wilson, 2009) students who took part in three or four extracurricular activities during the academic year had dramatically better grades than those who participated in no extracurricular activities at all. However, Reeves himself disputed aforementioned findings as he has noted possible negative consequences of extracurricular activities. One of those raised counterargument is that parents and teachers might fear students may lose their focus on academics when they become too busy with out-of-school activities. The study further contended that attending too many rehearsals, practices, and meetings may cut into homework time and as students get overscheduled, they might be spreading themselves too thin, which may lead to spending less time studying and preparing for class. Trying to convince with counterargument the researcher explained that extracurricular activities that are too time-consuming can be perceived as an interference with academic success, and because pressures from parents and the students themselves, this can be used as an excuse to avoid extracurricular activities. But this counterargument lacks solid ground because most of literature reviewed supported the benefits of the extracurricular activities for the students' academic success and some studies emphasized that involvement in extracurricular activities strengthens the ties of students to the school they are enrolled in. Therefore, and according to Baker (2008, quoted in Marie Correa et al, 2015) it is important that academic institutions enhance such activities for retention purposes, when students are engaged and feel some type of connection with the school; they are more likely stay in the same institution.

Instructional factors affecting academic performance

The factors impacting the academic achievement of the students are categorised as academic factors and non-academic factors. Among the academic related factors found are academic factors which included

instructional methods and materials, the effectiveness of the instructors based on their qualifications and experiences, academic advising and contacts between instructor and student outside the lecture hall.

Teacher's role

Teachers and instructors have an important influence on students' academic achievement, and they also play a crucial role in educational attainment because the instructors is ultimately responsible for translating policy into action and principles based on practice during interaction with the students. Both teaching and learning depends on teachers: no wonder an effective teacher has been conceptualised as one who produces desired results in the course of his duty as a teacher (Agharuwhe and Nkechi, 2009). As explained by Dayad, 2000 (cited in Alos et al., 2015) mentioned that good teachers are constantly on the alert for methods and instructional materials that will make learning meaningful. With the wise selection and use of a variety of instructional materials or audio-visual materials, experiences may be provided to develop understanding. In similar fashion, Akpo and Jita (2013) investigated the extent to which teachers' inputs (teaching experience, academic qualification, subject specialization and gender) influence students' academic achievement. The findings from the correlation analysis confirmed that teachers' experience, academic qualification, and subject specialisation had a moderate positive and significant relationship with students' academic achievement. Additionally, Anastasia (2015) pointed out that teachers with long experience use better classroom management approaches and adequate teaching methods that encourage student's autonomy and reduce custodial control. Thus taking responsibility for student learning needs, managing classroom problems and keeping students on task. Students always have high expectations of their instructors. As such it is critical that instructors are able to show students, they are approachable, enthusiastic, positive, knowledgeable (about content and technology), organized, consistent, friendly, quick to respond, and strong teaching skills. (Beth & Rosalie, 2016:24).

Academic counselling

Academic counselling and advising or is an essential component of the academic support for students for the future career and professional development. Hence, and according to Kanos and Isaac (2016) academic advising should be done particularly at institutions of higher learning to reduce cases of student dropouts and to maintain a good pass rate but it has to be done properly. Throughout their study programme students need to be advised, supported, guided, supervised and counselled where necessary. Accordingly, academic advising is viewed as the process of assisting students to realize the maximum educational benefits to them, by helping them to better understand themselves and to learn to use the resources of the institution to meet their special educational needs and aspirations.

In this regard, according to Sayyid Ahmed and Rawi (1995 cited in Banat, 2015) academic advising is defined as, " a process which aims to help students discover their capabilities and potentials in order to help them make decisions related to their study program, selection of major study courses, and to assist them in overcoming difficulties which might obstruct the students' academic or study progress" Based on this definition, academic advising plays a fundamental role in the student's university life beginning from the moment he is admitted to the university until the time he has graduated. Moreover, as explained by Muola and Migosi (2012) who carried out a survey study on 920 undergraduate students in Nigeria, academic advising is a dynamic relationship between a student and an advisor with a shared responsibility for a coherent education plan that incorporates personal, social, academic and career considerations. It focuses on helping students identify life goals, acquire skills and attitudes that promote intellectual growth, and become academically successful. It is also stressed by Sindabi (2007) that main purpose of academic advising programme according to is to assist students in the development of meaningful educational and career goals. Therefore, academic advisors who are instructors and lecturers themselves assist students in developing educational plans consistent with their life goals. They provide information about academic

progress and degree requirements and carefully review students' academic and educational needs, performance, and challenges.

Additionally, quality academic advising can promote student engagement by initially and continuously serving as this point of connection as well as engaging with students, advisors can also encourage student involvement with powerful learning opportunities both in and out of the classroom. The advising process can help students to identify personal strengths and interests related to their educational and career goals (Adena D. et al., 2013). In general, Academic advisors play crucial role to help students fill out study plan, follow student's academic performance, help student to select courses, provide accurate information about teaching options and available services, and solve student's problems especially academic ones in addition to other tasks (Banat, 2015:99). Therefore, Academic advisors can interpret institutional expectations and convey them to students in practical terms that illuminate paths to degree completion, thereby meeting student and institutional goals. Adena D. et al. (2013) argue that academic advising impacts multiple factors that contribute to student success and identified specific areas for targeted interventions. In similar study of Muola and Migosi (2012) concluded that majority of students have pressing academic needs that need to be attended to through a comprehensive and effective academic advising programme. This study also revealed that academic advising needs for male and female students are not varied; more females tend to seek advising services. It also reported that there is need of academic advising on time management, study skills, finance, academic ability, personality types and anxiety/depression. Other areas include academic and school related problems, overcoming fear about taking examinations.

Language of instruction

Academic success of students depends on various variables including a good command of language of instruction. Many studies have established that students who are more proficient in the instruction language are on average more successful. Students whose language proficiency levels are not adequate have difficulty in grasping the subject matters (Civan and Coşkun, 2016). This is because according to Sotco and Stephen (2015) students who had the exposure to language of instruction were more likely to understand better the materials they interacted with during the teaching and learning process than those whose background in the language of instruction was poor. And consequently, students who had an exposure to language of instruction in their secondary school prior to joining university were better placed to perform well at tertiary level than those who had not.

The relationship between language proficiency and academic success is well documented and good number of research has been conducted in this field. For instance, Sotco and Stephen (2015) investigated the influence of students' backgrounds in the language of instruction on secondary school academic performance. Their findings were as follows: First, students whose medium of instruction at primary school level was English performed better in form one annual examination than their counterparts who had used Swahili and the difference was statistically significant. Secondly, students who had used English as the medium of instruction at primary school level, performed better in form two national examinations than those who had used Swahili and the difference was also statistically significant, in a two-tailed test. It was thus, concluded that the language of instruction used by students at primary school level influenced significantly students' academic performance at secondary school level. Language barrier according to Luke and Mavis (2014) greatly affects students' academic performance in schools for many students enter the classroom not fluent in the languages of instruction which are used for testing students' mastery of subject content and used in the examinations and therefore student fail to express it in the language of the instruction even though the student might understand the concepts in their mother tongue and eventually the student is rated a low achiever because of the language constraint.

In similar way, Ballantine and Rivera (2014 cited in Civan and Coşkun, 2016) examined the performance of International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) candidates who took examinations

in a language other than their native one. They found that students who took the exams in a non-native language (the majority for whom the school courses were also conducted in a non-native language) were more successful than others. In comparative study Civan and Coşkun, (2016) investigated the influence of medium of instruction language (Turkish and English) on the academic success of the students. Their result suggests that instruction in English significantly and negatively affects the academic success of the majority of students. This is in line with the previous studies in the literature which have shown different negative aspects of instruction in students' non-native languages.

Teaching methods

The selection of appropriate Instructional methods or teaching styles for the learners with different backgrounds has substantial impact on their academic achievement. According to Jarvis (2006) instructional methods are about techniques and approaches of imparting of knowledge, transmission of information, ideas and delivery of skills. Some literature uses models of teaching or teaching styles and defined it as teaching strategies to accomplish particular instructional goals. Models differ from general instructional methods in that models are designed to achieve specific objectives (Eggen and Kauchak, 2001). It is further elaborated by Henson (1996) that, today's educationists recognize the existence of multiple instructional methods such as; lecture method, inquiry-based learning, and problem-based learning, cooperative learning and so forth. The advancement of theories of learning led to the introduction of a variety of teaching methods to accommodate the diversified needs of the learners (McNeil and Wiles, 1990).

Moreover, teaching is applied to purposeful activities of teachers that occurred in learners through the interaction between the teacher and the learner. Indeed, learning is the purpose of teaching that is the means of achieving this purpose. In other words, deliberate and thoughtful control of learners' experiences to influence their learning means teaching. Therefore, teaching requires utilization of strategies designed to direct learners to achieve educational expectations (Soltani and Motamedi 2014). It is further emphasised by Dosch and Zidon (2014) that high percentage of students repeating an academic course indicates a mismatch between college instruction and students' academic needs. In addition, the current educational system works hard to keep the traditional ideals and "one-size-fits-all" methods in place rather than employing more learner-centred approaches. However, any given instructional method is the result of different combination of teaching strategies. Thus, some instructional methods are primarily based on instructor-centred approach, and some are based on learner-centred approach.

Teacher-centred approach

In the teacher-centred method, most of the time, the teacher or lecturer is the centre of attention and focus of instructional activities by employing the lecture method. In this approach the students listen to the lectures presented by the instructor, observe the demonstration and follow directions given by the instructor, answer inquiries asked by the instructor and practice the drills laid out by the lecturer (Lang et al., 1995). Under this method, students simply obtain information from the teacher without building their engagement level with the subject being taught. The method is least practical, more theoretical and memorizing. It does not apply activity-based learning to encourage students to learn real life problems based on applied knowledge (Ganyaupfu, 2013). Traditional lecture style is considered one of the best known method of teacher-centred approach whereby learners deemed mere receivers of experience and knowledge imparted by the teacher that consequently lead to dependency on memorization rather than constructed knowledge combined instructor's experiences and learner's efforts. However, in some contemporary studies lecturing is portrayed as ineffective instructional method. This argument is based that lecturing creates passive, non-thinking learners who are exposed to information but are not given the opportunity of organizing information, uncovering problems and creating solutions to them (Johnson and Mighten, 2005).

Nevertheless, the lecture as a method of instruction has a number of advantages; first, it covers a large amount of material in a short time. Second, it is suitable for almost any group size. Third, lecture method can be used with both beginners and the advanced learners (Davies, 1981). A good lecture can be efficient instructional method of communicating basic facts, concepts, principals, generalisations, points of view and arguments about a particular area of knowledge. Lecture can also be usefully combined with other techniques, such as discussion, visual, demonstrations or question-and-answer sessions (Lang et al., 1995). This traditional way of teaching remains vigorously applied in teaching-learning process despite of emerging alternative method of student-centred that put more emphasis on learner's role in knowledge attainment.

Student-centred approach

In student-centred method, also called learner-centred, the students interact with each other as a learning process. Students are encouraged to enquire, discover and cooperate in their learning. It is outlined by Lang et al, (1995) that, this approach is based on the premise that, as learners mature, they need to take increasing responsibility for seeking and discovering knowledge for themselves, and to draw conclusions from their learning experience. This teaching method is regarded more effective since it does not centralize the flow of knowledge from the lecturer to the student. It also motivates goal-orientated behaviour among students; hence most teachers today apply the student-centred teaching method to promote interest, analytical research, critical thinking and enjoyment among students. This indicate that student-centred method is very effective in improving student achievement (Ganyaupfu, 2013). It is stated by Yap W. et al., (2016) that learner-centred education entails teaching-learning process take place in many forms so that students have the opportunity to optimum level of learning, and it is through doing tailoring programs to meet these needs that learning and motivation are enhanced. When students are allowed to have their own control on the learning materials and learning pace at the same times, the students are experiencing a change in the learning process.

Based on discussion related to effectiveness of any given method, some studies opted to integrated approach like the study conducted by Ganyaupfu (2013) that concluded combining both teacher-centred and student-centred teaching methods in teaching learners is the most effective approach that produces best student results. This is also supported by the finding of Wiggins (1987, cited in Ganyaupfu, 2013) who reported that interaction between the teacher and students during the teaching and learning process encourages the students to search for knowledge rather than the lecturer monopolizing the transmission of information to the learners. However, it is difficult in one study to be all-inclusive of instructional methods and simultaneously arrive at conclusive finding. Therefore, most of researchers resort to experimental or longitudinal design in order to determine comparatively the effect of one or two teaching method. As such, studies compare traditional methods like lecture style with non-traditional method.

Comparative analysis of teaching approaches

The main aim of teaching-learning process is to bring about desirable changes in learners so as to achieve the desired outcome. However, the effective teacher has to apply most relevant teaching methods that lead to best results at any educational level. In the conventional way of teaching, many teaching practitioners widely applied teacher-centred methods to impart knowledge to learner comparative to student-centred methods. Until today, questions about the effectiveness of teaching methods on student learning have consistently raised considerable interest in the thematic field of educational research. Moreover, research on teaching and learning constantly endeavour to examine the extent to which different teaching methods enhance growth in student learning. (Ganyaupfu, 2013).

In this regard, findings of empirical study carried out by Eze T.I. et al., (2016) on effects of problem-based teaching methods on student's academic performance revealed that students taught financial

accounting using Problem Based Teaching Method performed better with higher post-test scores than those taught using lecture teaching method. The participants in the study were assigned within sections to two treatment groups. One group was problem-based instructional group receiving the problem-based instructional strategy, and the other group was lecture-based instructional group receiving the instructor-led direct instruction. The findings revealed that problem-based group reported a significantly higher level of academic achievement than the traditional lecture-based group.

According to Duch (1995 cited in Nafees et al., 2012) defined problem-based instructional strategy that challenges students to “learn to learn”, working cooperatively in groups to seek solutions to real world problems. These problems are used to engage student’s curiosity and initiate learning the subject matter. Problem-based instructional strategy prepares students to think critically and analytically, and to find and use appropriate learning resources. Moreover, Nafees et al., (2012) concluded that the results of the study are encouraging, and suggest that it is possible for students in a problem-based instructional strategy to perform better than the students in a conventional, lecture-based instructional strategy on academic achievement. In similar design of comparison, Oviawe (2010) investigated the effects of the cooperative learning. It is concluded that cooperative learning methods are better instructional methods/techniques than the conventional teaching method for teaching Building Technology in Polytechnics of which learners accomplish understanding through the social interaction which occurs in the classroom. This finding concurred with Khazaei A. et al. (2015) examined the effects of cooperative teaching method on students' academic achievement in two school subject courses, namely Geography, and History & Civic Education. The research method undertaken here was of the experimental design with pre-test and post-test procedures. The results showed that, compared with traditional approach, Cooperative Learning method increased students' academic achievement in both Geography, and History & Civic Education subject’s courses.

Moreover, the research of Kristak L. et al., (2014) reported on results of non-traditional teaching of basic courses of Physics in the first year of study. They used interactive methods which is modern approach which was developed at the Institute of Physics at the University of Dortmund. This study revealed that traditional method regardless the lecturer leads only to a limited increase in students’ knowledge (the highest achieved normalised gain was 14%). This fact was proven with partial, overall evaluation of the didactic tests (aimed at remembering, understanding, specific and non-specific transfer) as well as with evaluation of conceptual test. Similarly, Kibet K. et al., (2016) conducted a study to find out if there was difference on student achievement in fluid flow physics when taught using Composite Instructional Method and Conventional instructional method. Results indicated that students taught by composite instructional method outperformed their counterparts taught conventionally. Therefore, composite instructional method is superior to conventional method. It improves performance in fluid flow physics.

In comparative study Omwirhiren and Ibrahim (2016) investigated the effect of two instructional methods which are Demonstration and Lecture on senior secondary school students’ learning outcomes in chemistry. The result of this study has added yet empirical evidence to the library of data on the efficacy of the demonstration instructional strategy in the teaching and learning of chemistry. The experimental group produced higher mean achievement scores than the control group taught chemistry bonding using the traditional methods.

Overall, these comparative studies emphasized the effect of non-traditional method on academic achievement of students compared to traditional method of teaching. However, the interaction between the lecturer and students, whereas students are actively involved into individual stages of the teaching and learning process and actively participate in solving of the dealt problems what gives immediate feedback to the lecturer and he/she can immediately respond to incorrectly understood concepts, or misconceptions. Henceforth, with the use of interactive methods it is possible to achieve significantly better results considering students’ knowledge, increases demonstration of the curriculum, increases students’ attentions,

and it forces them to work and think independently and it helps to reduce misconceptions gained during previous study.

Student characteristics and academic performance The impact of learning habit

Learning skills and student characteristics refer to how students deal with their studies and manage their courses and subjects in order to accomplish different tasks required for academic program. Thus, application of effective study skills and use of learning strategies is associated with academic success of the students. However, some students lack fundamental practices of good study habit as they do not attend classes, do not take down notes, and do not do their assignments, do not read their books or make use of the library. These attitudes may negatively affect their academic performances (Abisola and Kudirat, 2017). By definition and according to Suresh (2015) study habits is the systematic and regular activities such as; efficient use of time and preparedness skills applied by the learner to improve learning experience. It is further explained by Bhat and Khandai (2016) that meaning of habit in general is just a behaviour that is repeated until it is automatic accustomed by the person. It becomes something that is done on a scheduled, regular and planned basis that is not relegated to a second place or optional place in one's life. It is simply done, no reservations, no excuses, and no exceptions. Therefore, study habits are the ways that we study regularly and repeatedly that is formed during school's years. Additionally, study habits can be beneficial and good to help student to attain high grades – or habit might be destructive and bad enough that put down the students' performances and make get poor grades. It is further mentioned by Bhat and Khandai (2016) that good study habits include being organized, keeping good notes and reading textbook, listening in class, and working every day. Bad study habits include skipping class, not doing work, watching too much TV or playing video games instead of studying, and losing work. Without good study habits, a student cannot succeed.

According to Khurshid et al., (2012) study habits is very vital to student's life because it plays a critical role in their academic success. For studying, students should utilize various techniques in order to ensure good results. In this regard, siahi and Maiyo (2015) concluded that the academic achievements of the students having good and poor study habits differ significantly and the students having good study habits achieve higher than the students having poor study habits. It is obvious then, good study skills and habits are essential for students' successful academic performance for high achieving college students have better study skills than low achieving students in areas of time management, study techniques, and attitudes toward learning. Accordingly, training in study skills significantly influence retention of at-risk college students.

In general time is the essence for all walks of life but specifically skilful management of time by the learners would be strongly predictive of success in university. It seems obvious that students who waste their time and always delay their academic tasks tend to have lower performance and consequently susceptible to be struggling or dropout. Accordingly. Nonis & Hudson (2010) elaborated that meaning of study is to buy out the time and dedicate self to the application and the task of study is to become engrossed in a process of learning, practice, enlightenment education of one's self. Therefore, the study habits can be derived from the above as buying out a dedicated scheduled and uninterrupted time to apply one's self to the task of learning. In a related study Mazharul Islam (2014) reported that time spent in study, particularly time spent more than 14 hours per week, showed significant positive effect on achieving very good to outstanding results. Some researchers like Miguel and Ksenia (2015) researchers found that high performing students don't put all subjects in one study session but they study at consistent times of the day/week and have specific goals for study sessions as they never procrastinate a study session but start with the most difficult subject first, they review notes before starting an assignment, avoid being disturb during study sessions, use study groups effectively (to study), review notes, schoolwork and other materials over the weekend and don't cheat in exams. Additionally, according to Stelnicki and Nordstokke (2015) poor academic skills (e.g., not attending class and procrastinating), and distraction were the most salient factors that kept undergraduate students from reaching their goals, with general stress noted by the majority of the participants.

Previous background and academic performance

The students' previous educational background has got also a great deal of attention in educational research, and it is generally assumed that the students who showed better or higher performance in the starting classes of their studies also performed better in future academic years at degree level (Ali, et al., 2013). High school grades and scholastic measures are recognized by many researchers as the most reliable predictors of academic achievement and college persistence. A report on higher education performance, which was produced by the University of Minnesota in 2007, stated that the most reliable predictor of student success in college is the academic preparation of students in high school.

In specific study of Brazilian experience, Alam, et al., (2014) referred to a paper in Education Economics in 2011 published by Guimar and Sampaio on family background and students' achievement on a university entrance examination. This paper describes Brazilian experience and considers personal characteristics such as age, gender, race, religion, family income, parents' education and family size, school attended, tutoring classes, among others. Some researchers like Stewart S. et al., (2015) have found high school grades to be stronger predictors of college academic achievement than any other factors. This study cited Astin, 1997 who analysed data on 52,898 students attending 365 baccalaureate institutions using average high school grades to generate a regression formula to estimate institutional expected retention rates. Findings from this national longitudinal retention study revealed that high school grades are viable predictors of college persistence.

Moreover, Kyoshaba (2009) conceptualized former school background, as location of the former school (urban or rural); ownership of former school (public or private) academic status of the former school and financial status of the former school is linked to academic performance of students. That is the type of school a student attends is likely to contribute to their academic performance of the student in future. Students from high-class schools are likely to perform well due to the fact that they attended those schools. In this regard, Mlambo (2011) described that learning is a cumulative process, thus a student recruited with higher entry requirements will be well prepared for the course material compared to a student admitted based on the bare minimum qualifications. It is important for educators to have an idea of how well- or ill prepared admitted students are based on their qualifications. As a result, it is important to identify students who might need extra attention based on level of prior competencies upon admission.

In accordance with Staffolani and Bratti, (2002) cited in Ali et al., (2013) observed that "the measurement of students' previous educational outcomes are the most important indicators of students future achievement, this refers that as the higher previous appearance, better the student's academic performance in future endeavours. Moreover, Staffolani and Bratti, (2002) elaborated more on students' previous educational outcomes as the most important indicators of student's future achievement; this refers that the higher the previous appearance, the better will the student academic performance in future endeavours. This is concurred with Mazharul Islam (2014) who reported in his study findings that high school GPA score strongly linked to university Grade Point Average and thereby students who entered in the university with better scores in their high school exams (securing 90% or above marks in 12th grade) were found to be more than 4 times likely to achieve a higher grade in undergraduate level. In similar manner, Alam, et al., (2014) concluded that age, gender, past academic track, medium of education, school/college location and absence/presence in the classes have influenced the academic performances of a student. Among these variables most important variable for all the faculties turned out to be past academic result variable. This indicates that students with good past academic result are doing better in this university. This is also corroborated with study of Mehari and Ayalew (2016) which reported that university entrance exam result has positive effect on student's academic, which is a student with better university entrance exam result more successful than student with low university entrance exam result. A result confirmed by

Anderson, Benjamin and Fuss (1994 cited in Mehari and Ayalew, 2016) who found that students who performed well in high school also performed better in college.

These findings are solid enough due to the fact that students who had previously performed well continue to do so because they have a strong potential to easily catch up with university work and they are motivated to do so. This implies that university admission point is important variable in determining student's college performance and it is significantly and positively related to academic performance of student's Cumulative Grade Point Average (Yigermal, 2017). However, it is also observed that many of the researchers contested these findings like Reddy and Talcott (2006; cited in Ali et al., 2013) who disagree with these conclusions that future academic gains are resolute by preceding performance. In their research on the relationship between previous academic performance and subsequent achievement at university level, they found that students learning or studying at graduate level and the score secured did not predict any academic achievement at university level.

It is also supported by result of the study of Oregon State University (2003; cited in Ali et al., 2013) on graduate admissions that normal measures of educational potential and academic performance such as high school GPA (Grade Point Average) scores showed only 30% of the deviation in initial or starting (first) year at college. This finding is in line with Mlambo (2011) who concluded that there was no significant differences in academic performance between students due to differences in their admission criteria based on their previous academic performance. Similar conclusion is being made by a study done by Mapuranga et al., (2015) none of the participating students mentioned entry academic qualifications / points as one of the determinants of their academic performance and completion of their degree programmes at Great Zimbabwe University. Rather, they felt that university systems, the general macro-economic environment, student disposition and funding were the major determinants of performance and completion of programmes at Great Zimbabwe University. This does not mean that academic entry standards have no bearing on performance. Their impact is very minimal when compared to these other factors. They further stated that a follow-up discussion with some of the respondents revealed that students with high grades at entry point are not the ones who graduate with first class at the end of the programme. A multitude of other related factors have more impact on university students' academic performance and completion of programmes than their high school results or past performance.

In order to narrow down the influence of the previous background, some studies have examined the impact of individual subject like Mathematics, English and Science has on student academic achievement in some specific courses like Engineering and accounting. For instance, a study conducted by Asirifi et al., (2015) concluded that the students' educational background of mathematics has effect on their performance in Engineering Mathematics, and also on the class of award obtained. It is also important to note that these conflicting findings on the impact of student's background on academic achievement reflect the need of more research employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches. However, it is quite hard in social science including education to reach consensus on certain issues but by doing more research contributes to narrow existing gaps and much closer to certainty within still dominant relativity.

Conclusion

This brief review of literature of factors pertinent to academic performance of the student is done to put forward a wide range of variables that have influence on the academic success of the learner. These factors have fallen into four main categories which are namely, Social and demographic factors, institutional factors, instructional factors and student traits and background. Most of studies reviewed were empirical research conducted on certain educational settings and specific context in social and cultural aspects as well as policies and practices. However, the findings of the reviewed literature have great deal of implications on educational research to explore determinants of student achievement in academic career.

The multitude factors affecting the academic performance of the students portrayed in this review might not limited to the four dimensions illustrated in this article but the selected studies for this review have highlighted the main factors that matters to academic performance of the student even though there is no consensus upon the exact factors that have decisive weight in this regard. However, the research related to student characteristics and traits especially academic background and learning skills have shown more impact on academic performance than other factors related to the school facilities and instructional methods. Even so, the impact of school environment such as resources available and facilities provided as well as the role of the teachers' teaching techniques and methods are undeniable. As result, educational institutions should maintain regular assessment and constant evaluation of factors affecting academic performance of the students with due considerations to the individual, social and instructional aspects of teaching learning process.

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