

# Students' Attitude and Perceptions on Teachers' Comments: Does it associate with their Interest on Particular Subjects? A Case of Morogoro Municipality

MSEMO, Emanuel Mbazi<sup>1\*</sup>, EDWARD, Mariafelista Massawe<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Lecturer, Department of Mathematics, Informatics and Computational Sciences, Solomon Mahlangu College of Science and Education, Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania

<sup>2</sup>Department of Education, Solomon Mahlangu College of Science and Education, Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania  
\*Corresponding author

**Abstract:** - This study explored the relationship between students' attitude and perception towards teachers' comments and their interest on particular subjects. The study was conducted as a case study of Morogoro municipal in Tanzania, and employed a cross sectional design with a sample of size n=127 students from two schools. Schools in Morogoro municipal were clustered into two clusters (old schools and newly ward secondary schools) and one school from each cluster was randomly selected. Respondents were chosen within a cluster using simple random sampling. Information on study variables was obtained using questionnaire and to establish the relationship, a chi square test of association was performed. Results showed a significant relationship between students' attitude and perception towards teachers' comments and their interest on particular subjects. Choice of students on whether to engage on a particular subject depends on how they approach and interpret the feedback given by teachers. This suggests that, it is important to create a condusive means of communicating feedback to students so as to achieve a learning environment that ignite and sustain student interests to subjects for greater achievements and performances.

**Keywords:** Students' attitude and perception, Teachers' comments, choice, interests

## I. INTRODUCTION

In achieving life goals, human beings need to make choices among alternatives available for a better utilization of scarce resources. Mostly, people tend to choose things that are of interest or that they perceive that they are of interest to them. It is widely believed that education should ignite interest and pave a way towards making wise carrier choices. According to [2], interest can be described as preference to engage in some types of activities rather than others. [4] Explains that, being interested in something can mean that we care about it, that it is important to us, and that we have (mostly) positive feelings towards it, and provided a thoroughly literature review to show that interest plays a major role in learning and academic achievement.

In their study, [2] pinpointed that students will ideally choose subjects that suit their interests and that it is crucial for the schools to provides them with environment that will easy their choices. Teachers being instrumental in facilitating teaching and learning in schools needs to interact with students in a manner that create inner interests within students. [3] Explains major sources of variance in students' achievement being students themselves, home, administration, peer effects, schools and teachers. Of these major sources, teachers account for 30% of the variability in students' achievement. The mode of communication between teacher's and student's weather it is verbal or non verbal is of great significance especially in the teaching and learning process. It is expected that a teacher who develops a friendly teaching atmosphere will motivate students to engage in the subject even if they find it challenging [2].

In evaluating the effect of teachers' written feedback provided to students' homework [1] pinpointed findings by [5] that there is a large effect associated with the feedback treatment, which accounted for 24% of the variance in final achievement. Students who received comments performed significantly better than those who received grades. Therefore, it is much fruitfully to create friendly teaching environment that will startup and maintain students' interests in particular subjects. Teachers play a major role in influencing students' achievement as pinpointed by [3], hence a need to create friendly and condusive mode of communication between teachers and students. This study intended to argue how students' perceptions and attitudes towards feedback given by subjects' teachers influence their interests on these particular subjects.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research design

This study was established to explore and understand how perception and attitude relates to students interests on

particular subjects. The study employed a case study design for government secondary schools in Morogoro municipal. A cross-sectional quantitative research approach was used in studying the relationship between the study variables [7]. A questionnaire with likert scale questions was used as a tool of data collection. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated in which a Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the reliability: 0.762 for perception items and 0.731 for attitude items.

### 2.2 Study area, Participants and Selection procedures

Morogoro Municipal government secondary schools were clustered into two clusters, those with strong establishments (here called old schools) and those with less strong establishments (here called ward secondary schools). From the two clusters, a random selection of one school from each cluster was done. Two schools namely Kilakala secondary school and Kingalu secondary school were chosen from old secondary schools and ward secondary schools respectively. From Kingalu secondary school, 67 students were randomly selected from a list of students available and from Kilakala secondary school, 60 students were randomly selected from a list of students available, making a total of 127 respondents for the study.

### 2.3 Data processing and analysis

Attitudes and perceptions of the students on teachers' comments were assessed by considering likert scale questions with five responses. Responses were weighted according to the degree of correctness. Correct response was given bigger weight down to the incorrect responses. Responses for each respondent were summed to obtain a total value that would be used as an indicator of the degree of attitude and perception. From a total values obtained from each respondent, median was used to find cut off point that will be used to categorize the respondents. Median as a measure of central tendency is chosen as it is less affected by extreme values. Values above and including the median were termed as either correct perception or positive attitude and those below the median were categorized as either wrong perception or negative attitude.

Respondents were asked to identify one subject that they were mostly interested with, and from a total sample, a variable subject of interest with nine categories of subjects was created.

Collected information was coded, tabulated and analyzed using statistical software (SAS) to obtain descriptive and a chi-square test of association was used to explore how attitudes and perceptions on teachers' comments were related to students' interests on particular subjects.

The study used a case study, and in such the results applies only in cases that are similar to the studied population, and cannot be generalized to cases that are less similar to the considered population [6].

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 3.1 Demographic characteristics

This subsection explored age and sex characteristics of the respondents. From table 1, It was revealed that of the 127 respondents from two schools, 40 (31.5%) were males and 87 (68.5%) were females. Of the 127 respondents, 53 (41.7%) were aged between 13 and 15 years of age and 74 (58.5%) were of age between 16 and 18 years old. Of the 53 respondents aged between 13 and 15 years of age, 13 (24.5%) were males and 40 (75.5%) were females. Of the 74 respondents of age between 16 and 18 years, 27 (36.5%) were males and 47 (63.5%) were females. Age and sex showed no significant relationship. One of the schools selected is a co-education and the other is a single sex, and [8] argues that school influence in a choice of a subject varies between the two types of schools. Likewise [9] explains a greater variability in subjects preferences among older students indicating that choice is influenced by age.

Table 1: Age and sex characteristics of the respondents

Sex of a respondent	Respondents' age	
	13-15(%)	16-18(%)
Male	13(24.5)	27(36.5)
Female	40(75.5)	47(63.5)

Source: Survey data (2017)

### 3.2 Students' Attitude towards teachers comments

A chi square test of association was used to check whether a relationship exist between students subjects of interests and his/her attitude towards teachers comments. Students' subject of interest was cross tabulated with attitude to find frequency of students falling for each cell (see Table 2). A two way contingency table satisfied the assumption in that the expected value for each cell was greater than five to ensure valid inferences. A chi square value of 17.7457 with P-value of 0.0232 indicated a significant relationship between the variables at 5% level of significance. That is, an interest on particular subjects depends on students' attitude towards comments given by respective subject teachers. Table 2 indicate that of the 127 respondents surveyed, 71 (55.9%) showed positive attitude towards teachers' comments and the remaining 56 (44.1%) showed negative attitude towards comments given by teachers. The results indicate that variability's in interests for particular subjects depends on how these students perceive the comments. Teachers intends to provide feedback to students for a particular matter in a course of learning, but then the way students acts towards these feedback alter their preferences on whether to engage more or less.

Table 2: Associations between students' attitude towards teachers' comments and their interests on particular subjects

SUBJECTS OF INTERESTS	ATTITUDES		Chi-square value (P-value)
	NEGATIVE (%)	POSITIVE (%)	
	Mathematics	4(3.1)	
Physics	7(5.5)	6(4.7)	
Biology	6(4.7)	10(7.9)	
Chemistry	5(3.9)	8(6.3)	
English	9(7.1)	5(3.9)	
Kiswahili	4(3.2)	10(7.9)	
Civics	10(7.9)	3(2.4)	
Geography	8(6.3)	5(3.9)	
History	3(2.4)	10(7.9)	
Total	56(44.1)	71(55.9)	

Source: Field data (2017)

\*\*\* significant at 5%

3.3 Students' Perception towards teachers comments

A chi square test of association was used to check whether a relationship exist between students subjects of interests and his/her way of perceiving teachers' comments. Two ways cross tabulation was used to categorically distribute the respondents (see Table 3). The resulting cells had expected value greater than five suggesting that the model can return valid inferences. Results shows that, of the 127 students surveyed, 74 (58.2%) perceived the comments positively and the remaining 53 (41.8%) indicated a wrong perception towards the comments. A chi square test value of 17.8403 with a P-value of 0.0225 indicated a significant association between students' perception and interests on particular subjects. This result indicates that the way students interpret the feedback given by teachers associate significantly with their interest on particular subjects. This suggests that an improved way of communication between teachers and students can ignite interests and in turn influence learning and performance.

Table 3: Associations between students' Perceptions towards teachers' comments and their interests on particular subjects

SUBJECTS OF INTERESTS	PERCEPTIONS		Chi-square value (P-value)
	WRONG (%)	CORRECT (%)	
	Mathematics	6(4.7)	
Physics	10(7.9)	6(4.7)	
Biology	3(2.4)	10(7.9)	
Chemistry	4(3.1)	9(7.1)	
English	9(7.1)	5(3.9)	
Kiswahili	2(1.6)	11(8.7)	
Civics	8(6.3)	5(3.9)	

Geography	8(6.3)	7(5.5)	<b>(0.0225**)</b>
History	3(2.4)	12(9.4)	
Total	53(41.8)	74(58.2)	

Source: Field data (2017)

\*\*\* significant at 5%

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The results from this study pointed that students' attitude and perceptions towards teachers' comments have a significant relationship with their interest on particular subjects. However it should be noted that the significant association noted does not mean that the variables are causing each other, only that the way a student interpret and acts towards the comments given by the teachers relate to how they choose to engage in particular subjects. In this view, since comments are meant to provide feedback to the students, teachers need to take into account the way they communicate the feedback to students. Kind of language used to give feedback and simplicity of the language should be considered to ensure a condusive learning environment.

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