The Causes of Students' Failure in the High School Examination in Hargeisa, Somaliland

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Abstract: This study investigates the causes of students' failure in high school examinations in Hargeisa, Somaliland. Utilizing a descriptive cross-sectional research design, data were gathered from 142 respondents through structured questionnaires. The research focused on identifying key factors that contribute to poor academic performance, including student-related factors such as discipline and truancy, teacher-related factors like teaching quality and classroom attendance, and school-related factors including administration quality and availability of physical facilities. The findings indicate that while student- and teacher-related factors had a moderate impact, school-related factors played a more significant role in influencing exam performance. Specific causes of failure include inadequate preparation time, high stress levels, poor study habits, and lack of access to educational resources. Statistical analyses, including Chi-square, ANOVA, and regression tests, were used to explore relationships between socio-economic background and performance, identifying school-related factors as the strongest predictor of academic success. The study recommends improving school infrastructure, enhancing teacher training, and increasing access to learning materials to reduce failure rates.

Keywords: Student failure, High school examinations, Hargeisa, Somaliland, Academic performance, School-related factors, Teacher-related factors, Educational resources.

Cite this article:

1. Introduction

Background:

High school examinations in Somaliland are crucial milestones in students' academic journeys, serving as gateways to higher education and future career opportunities. The results of these examinations significantly influence students' educational trajectories, shaping their future prospects. In recent years, a concerning trend of high failure rates has been observed in the high school examinations in Hargeisa, Somaliland. These poor results not only affect the students and their families but also impact the broader educational and economic landscape. Addressing the causes of these failures is essential to improving the quality of education in the region. (Adams & Smith, 2019).

Several factors contribute to the high failure rates, including inadequate preparation, lack of access to educational resources, poor teaching methods, and school infrastructure challenges. While some students face personal and socio-economic barriers, others encounter institutional problems, such as ineffective school administration and outdated curricula. Understanding the root causes of these failures is critical for developing targeted interventions that can improve student outcomes and reduce the failure rates in high school examinations. (Haji & Mohamed, 2022).

Problem Statement:

The high failure rates in high school examinations in Hargeisa represent a significant challenge for students, educators, and policymakers. These failures lead to lost opportunities for students, including limited access to higher education and reduced chances for better employment prospects. Despite the critical role that high school examinations play in shaping students' futures, there is limited research on the specific causes of failure in Somaliland. The need to investigate and address this issue is urgent, as continued poor performance not only hampers individual progress but also undermines national development efforts. Understanding the underlying factors—whether related to students, teachers, or schools—is essential to formulating effective policies and strategies that can improve educational outcomes in Hargeisa.

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Objectives:
The overall objective of this study is to explore the causes of students' failure in high school examinations in Hargeisa, Somaliland. Specifically, the study aims to:

Identify the student-related factors contributing to failure in high school examinations in Hargeisa.

Evaluate the teacher-related factors that contribute to students' failure in high school examinations.

Analyze the school-related factors influencing students' failure in high school examinations.

Research Questions:
To achieve the objectives, the following research questions guide the study:

What are the student-related factors contributing to students' failure in high school examinations in Hargeisa, Somaliland?

What teacher-related factors contribute to students' failure in high school examinations?

What school-related factors cause students' failure in high school examinations?

Significance of the Study:
This study is of great importance to various educational stakeholders, including policymakers, teachers, parents, and researchers. For policymakers, the findings of this research can inform the development of strategies aimed at improving the educational system in Somaliland, particularly in reducing high school failure rates. Teachers and school administrators can benefit from understanding the factors affecting student performance, allowing them to make informed adjustments to teaching practices and school management. For parents, this study provides insights into how they can support their children's education more effectively. Additionally, the study can serve as a foundation for further research, encouraging other scholars to explore additional factors affecting educational outcomes in Somaliland.

2. Literature Review

Student-related Factors:
Previous research highlights that student behavior, motivation, and study habits play significant roles in determining academic performance. Studies by Aremu & Sokan (2013) indicate that poor study habits, emotional issues, lack of interest in school programs, and low motivation significantly contribute to poor academic performance . Further studies show that factors like absenteeism, truancy, low cognitive ability, and psychological challenges such as exam anxiety exacerbate students' struggles to succeed academically . Additionally, students with poor time management skills and inadequate exam preparation tend to underperform in their academic pursuits.

Teacher-related Factors:
The quality of teaching, instructional methods, and teacher attendance directly impact student outcomes. Research by Asikhia (2010) underscores that ineffective teaching methods, teachers' inability to complete the syllabus, and poor classroom attendance are significant contributors to students' poor performance in high school examinations . Ajayi & Ekundayo (2010) further emphasize the negative effects of poor teacher-student interaction and lack of encouragement on student success . These factors, combined with a lack of teaching resources and outdated instructional methods, further weaken student engagement and performance.

School-related Factors:
School infrastructure, administrative quality, and available resources play a crucial role in academic success. Well-equipped schools with appropriate resources, such as libraries, laboratories, and classrooms, have consistently shown better student performance. Additionally, the quality of school leadership and administration is integral to academic outcomes. Schools that lack proper leadership, have ineffective disciplinary systems, or are poorly managed experience higher failure rates. Regular school inspections and accountability systems can improve these factors, fostering a more effective learning environment. (Smith, 2018; Jones & Brown, 2020).

Empirical Studies:
Global and local studies reveal systemic issues contributing to high failure rates in examinations, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Poverty, overcrowded classrooms, and under qualified teachers are common challenges across the region . In Somaliland, similar trends are evident, with studies indicating that inadequate school infrastructure, limited educational resources, and lack of trained teachers contribute to students' poor performance. While global research often focuses on improving teacher quality and curriculum relevance, studies in Somaliland emphasize the need for additional resources and better school management to address the high failure rates. (Adams & Smith, 2019; Johnson et al., 2020).

3. Methodology/Research Approach

3.1 Research Design:
This study employed a descriptive cross-sectional research design to explore the causes of high school students' failure in Hargeisa, Somaliland. This design was chosen because it allows for the collection and analysis of data from a broad population at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of factors influencing academic performance. The cross-sectional nature of the study made it easier to gather data efficiently and analyze the relationships between various factors contributing to exam failure.

3.2 Study Population:
The study population consisted of high school students, teachers, and school administrators in Hargeisa. A total of 220 participants were involved in the study, including 200 students, 10 teachers, and 10 school administrators from both public and private high schools. These participants were selected to represent the key stakeholders in the educational process, as their perspectives and experiences provided insights into the factors affecting students' academic outcomes.

3.3 Sampling Technique:
A simple random sampling method was used to select the schools and participants for the study. Ten schools were randomly chosen from a list provided by the Ministry of Education, consisting of both public and private institutions. From each school, a random selection of students, teachers, and administrators was conducted. This sampling method ensured that every participant had an equal chance of being selected, minimizing bias and ensuring a representative sample.

3.4 Data Collection Methods:
Primary and secondary data collection methods were used to gather the necessary information for this study. The primary data was

collected through structured questionnaires distributed to students, teachers, and school administrators. The questionnaires consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions designed to gather information about the factors contributing to student failure in

3.5 Data Analysis:

The collected data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means were used to summarize the data and describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Chi-square tests were employed to assess the relationships between categorical variables, while ANOVA was used to compare mean scores across different demographic groups. Additionally, correlation and regression analyses were conducted to explore the relationships between variables such as socio-economic background, school resources, and academic performance. The statistical analyses helped identify significant predictors of student failure and provided a foundation for the study's findings and recommendations.

3.6 Ethical Considerations:

The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of all participants. Before data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were assured that their identities would remain anonymous. The research proposal was reviewed and approved by the Beder International University's Research Ethics Committee, ensuring that the study complied with ethical standards. Additionally, participants were informed that their involvement in the study was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time without penalty.

4. Results/Findings

Gender Distribution: Fairly balanced between males (53%) and females (47%).

Resource Access: 56% lack adequate study materials, a potential key factor in failure.

Socio-economic Background: Predominantly middle-income (57%), with notable numbers from low-income (16%) and high-income (27%) backgrounds.

The demographic data shows a relatively balanced distribution of male and female respondents, with a notable portion having access to study materials. However, a considerable percentage of students lack these resources, which is a crucial finding. The socio-economic background of students shows a predominance of middle-income families, which may influence their access to educational resources and overall academic performance.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

	Variable	Categorical	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Sex	Male	75	53%
		Female	67	47%
2.	Study materials and resources	Yes	62	44%
		No	80	56%
3.	Socio-economic background	Low-income	23	16%
		Middle-income	81	57%
		High-income	38	27%

4.1 Student-related Factors

Mean Scores: Overall mean score of 1.8169 indicating moderate impact.

Key Issues: Lack of textbooks and reference materials (2.0704) and truancy (1.8380) are major concerns.

Table 2 Analysis:

Student Readiness: Low readiness and resource availability are critical issues.

Truancy: Significant factor affecting academic performance.

The analysis of student-related factors highlights that issues such as discipline, truancy, and lack of readiness are prevalent. The mean scores indicate that truancy and lack of readiness are more pronounced issues compared to the availability of textbooks. This suggests that interventions should focus on improving student engagement and readiness for learning. The relatively high mean score for the use of English as an instructional language indicates that language barriers might contribute to student difficulties, especially in non-English speaking regions.

Table 2: Student-related Factors Contributing to Failure

No	Item	Mean score
1.	Discipline of students	1.5493
2.	Truancy of students	1.8380
3.	Lack of readiness of students in learning	1.9296
4.	The use of English as instructional language from primary school	1.6972
5.	Availability of enough text books and reference books	2.0704
	Overall mean score	1.8169

Teacher-related Factors:

Mean Scores: Overall mean score of 2.1718, indicating moderate to high impact.

Key Issues: Poor teaching methods (2.0493) and low teacher quality (1.9930) are significant concerns.

Table 3 Analysis:

Teacher Support: Variability in support and availability of help needs improvement.

Teacher-related factors show a significant impact on student performance. The data suggests that low-quality teaching and poor methods are prominent issues, with mean scores indicating that these factors are critical in student failure. The results point to the necessity for improved teacher training and support. Teachers' availability for individual help also shows variability, suggesting that schools need to ensure consistent support for students.

Table 3: Teacher-related Factors Causing Student Failure

NO	Item	Mean score
1.	Quality of teachers in subjects is low	1.9930
2.	Poor teaching methods indifferent subjects	2.0493
3.	Poor classroom attendance by teachers	2.0352
4.	You receive support and encouragement from your teachers	2.4859
5.	Teachers are available for individual help or clarification outside of class hours.	2.2958
	Overall mean score	2.1718

4.1.1 School related factors

Table 4: *Objective Three: To assess school-related factors causing students' failure in the high school examination in Hargeisa, Somaliland*

School-related Factors

Mean Scores: Overall mean score of 2.0732, indicating moderate impact.

Key Issues: Poor school administration (2.0915) and lack of physical facilities (1.8451) are notable.

Table 4 Analysis:

School Administration and Facilities: Critical areas for improvement.

Counseling Services: Needs consistency and effectiveness.

The school-related factors reveal concerns about school administration, infrastructure, and support services. The mean scores highlight issues with school administration and infrastructure as critical areas needing attention. Lack of effective school inspection and poor entry marks further exacerbate the problem. Addressing these issues could improve the overall learning environment and student performance.

Table 4: School-related Factors Causing Student Failure

NO	Item	Mean score
1.	Poor school administration	2.0915
2.	Poor entry marks in Form One and Three	1.9507
3.	Lack of effective school inspection	1.9930
4.	Lack of availability of physical facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, library, administration block and teachers houses	1.8451
5.	Counseling services are available in my school.	2.4859
	Overall mean score	2.0732

Causes of Students' Failure

Mean Scores: Overall mean score of 1.7959, highlighting several contributing factors.

Key Issues: Insufficient time for exam preparation (2.0070) and lack of access to educational resources (1.8521) are major concerns.

The table presents key factors contributing to student failure, ranked by their mean scores based on survey data. Insufficient time allocated for exam preparation emerges as the highest-rated cause, with a mean score of 2.0070. This highlights the significant impact of inadequate preparation time on students' academic performance, signaling a potential need for better time management strategies or adjustments to academic schedules. High levels of stress and anxiety among students follow with a mean score of 1.6972, reflecting the psychological and emotional pressures that hinder academic success. Addressing this may require interventions like counseling services, stress management workshops, or a more supportive academic environment.

Inadequate study habits and time management skills, with a mean score of 1.6690, also play a crucial role, indicating the need for programs to improve students' organizational skills and study techniques. The lack of motivation and interest in subjects (mean score: 1.7535) suggests that some students are disengaged, possibly due to curriculum design or teaching methods. Enhancing the relevance and engagement of subjects could help address this issue. Finally, the lack of access to quality educational resources (mean score: 1.8521) highlights the negative impact of insufficient textbooks and reference materials on student outcomes.

Overall, with a mean score of 1.7959, the data shows that while all these factors moderately contribute to student failure, inadequate exam preparation time and lack of resources are the most pressing concerns. This calls for comprehensive strategies to tackle both academic and non-academic challenges faced by students.

Table 5: Causes of Students' Failure

NO	Item	Mean score
1.	Insufficient time allocated for exam preparation	2.0070
2.	High levels of stress and anxiety among students	1.6972
3.	Inadequate study habits and time management skills of students.	1.6690
4.	Lack of motivation and interest in the subjects being taught.	1.7535
5.	Lack of access to quality educational resources (e.g., textbooks, reference materials).	1.8521
	Overall mean score	1.7959

- **Grade Range**: Scores from 23 to 380, with a mean of 235.21.

- **Standard Deviation**: 78.806 indicates variability.

- **Performance Levels**: Highlights the need for better preparation and support.

Table 6 Analysis:

an overview of the students' performance in the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination, where all 142 students failed to meet the passing grade of 400 out of 1000. The minimum grade recorded was 23, while the maximum was 380, meaning that even the highest-performing student did not pass the exam. The mean grade of 235.21 further underscores the overall poor performance, with the majority of students scoring far below the required pass mark. The standard deviation of 78.806 indicates some variation in performance, but it does not change the fact that all students failed. The overall mean score of 1.6564 reinforces this outcome, suggesting that significant challenges exist in student preparedness, instructional quality, or access to educational resources. This collective failure highlights an urgent need for intervention, such as improved teaching methods, enhanced study resources, and additional support to help students succeed in future examinations.

Table 6: Students' Grades in the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
What is your cumulative grade in in the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination?	142	23	380	235.21	78.806
Valid N (listwise)	142				
Overall mean score					1.6564

Chi-square Test:

Socio-economic Background vs. Access to Study Materials: Significant association ($p < 0.001$) suggesting disparities in resource access.

The chi-square tests and ANOVA results provide a deeper understanding of the relationships between various factors. The chi-square test for socio-economic background versus access to study materials shows a significant association, indicating that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to have access to study materials.

Table 7: Chi-Square Test - Socio-economic Background vs. Access to Study Materials

Variables	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
How would you describe your socio-economic background	27.301[a]	4	.000
Do you have access to study materials and resources at home	29.423	4	.000
	2.467	1	.116
	142		

This table shows the Pearson correlation coefficients between student-related factors, teacher-related factors, school-related factors, and grade performance.

The correlation between student-related factors and grade performance (r = 0.056) indicates a weak positive relationship. Although there is some influence of student-related factors on performance, it is minimal. This suggests that personal attributes such as study habits or motivation have a limited direct effect on academic results within this dataset.

The relationship between teacher-related factors and grade performance (r = 0.017) is even weaker, showing a negligible influence. This could imply that, while teachers play an essential role in the learning process, other factors may be more influential in this particular context.

In contrast, school-related factors demonstrate a slightly stronger correlation with grade performance (r = 0.164), although still weak. This finding suggests that the school environment, including resources and infrastructure, has a small but present impact on students' grades.

The interrelationships between the variables are more significant:

Student-related factors are moderately correlated with teacher-related factors (r = 0.284**), indicating that teacher characteristics, such as their teaching style or engagement, somewhat influence student behavior or attitudes.

Teacher-related factors also show a moderate correlation with school-related factors (r = 0.394**), suggesting that a supportive school environment positively affects teachers' performance and effectiveness.

The strongest correlation is between student-related factors and school-related factors (r = 0.516**), highlighting that the school environment has a substantial impact on students' characteristics, which might indirectly affect their academic outcomes.

In conclusion, the analysis reveals weak direct relationships between the variables and grade performance. However, the significant interrelationships between student, teacher, and school-related factors emphasize the need for a comprehensive approach that considers the combined effects of these factors on academic achievement.

This table presents the results of a multiple regression analysis exploring the impact of student-related factors, teacher-related factors, and school-related factors on students' grade performance in the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination.

Table 8: Correlation Analysis - Relationships Between Variables

Correlations

		grade performance	student-related factors	teacher-related factor	school related factors
Students Grade performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.056	.017	.164
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.509	.844	.051
	N	142	142	142	142
student-related factors	Pearson Correlation	.056	1	.284**	.516**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.509		.001	.000
	N	142	142	142	142
teacher-related factor	Pearson Correlation	.017	.284**	1	.394**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.844	.001		.000
	N	142	142	142	142
school related factors	Pearson Correlation	.164	.516**	.394**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.051	.000	.000	
	N	142	142	142	142

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Constant: The constant term is 211.177 with a standard error of 28.231, and it is statistically significant (t = 7.480, p < 0.001). This value represents the predicted grade performance when all predictor variables are set to zero.

Student-Related Factors: The unstandardized coefficient for student-related factors is -0.515 with a standard error of 1.523. The standardized coefficient (Beta) is -0.033, and the t-value is -0.338 with a significance level of 0.736. This indicates that student-related factors do not have a significant impact on grade performance, as the effect is both weak and statistically insignificant.

Teacher-Related Factors: The unstandardized coefficient for teacher-related factors is -1.287 with a standard error of 2.206. The standardized coefficient (Beta) is -0.053, and the t-value is -0.583 with a significance level of 0.561. This suggests that teacher-related factors also do not significantly influence grade performance, as indicated by the lack of statistical significance.

School-Related Factors: The unstandardized coefficient for school-related factors is 4.444 with a standard error of 2.257. The standardized coefficient (Beta) is 0.202, and the t-value is 1.969 with a significance level of 0.051. Although this is close to the conventional cutoff for

significance ($p < 0.05$), it is not quite significant. This suggests that school-related factors have a moderate effect on grade performance, potentially influencing it in a positive direction, but further research is needed to confirm this finding.

Dependent Variable: Students' grade performance in the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination.

Table 9: Regression Analysis

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	211.177	28.231		7.480	.000
	student-related factors	-.515	1.523	-.033	-.338	.736
	teacher-related factor	-1.287	2.206	-.053	-.583	.561
	school related factors	4.444	2.257	.202	1.969	.051

a. Dependent Variable: students grade performance in in the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination

Discussion of Results

The analysis of the data from the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination highlights critical factors influencing student performance. Table 5 reveals that insufficient exam preparation time, high stress levels, inadequate study habits, lack of motivation, and poor access to educational resources are prominent causes of student failure. Among these, insufficient preparation time (Mean Score: 2.0070) and lack of resources (Mean Score: 1.8521) have the highest impact, indicating that students are significantly affected by these issues.

Table 6 provides an overview of students' grades, with an overall mean grade of 235.21 and a standard deviation of 78.806. Given that grades below 400 are considered failing, this suggests that a substantial proportion of students are underperforming. The data underscores the need for interventions aimed at improving academic support and resource availability.

Correlation analysis (Table 9) indicates weak relationships between student-related and teacher-related factors with grade performance, but a notable positive correlation between school-related factors and grade performance. This suggests that improvements in school facilities and resources might have a more pronounced effect on academic outcomes.

Regression analysis reveals that school-related factors have a marginally significant positive impact on student performance (Beta = 0.202, p = 0.051), whereas student-related and teacher-related factors do not significantly affect performance. This highlights the importance of focusing on enhancing school environments to improve student grades.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The study indicates that the primary causes of student failure include insufficient time for exam preparation and lack of educational resources. The analysis also shows that while school-related factors have a positive influence on student performance, student-related and teacher-related factors do not significantly impact outcomes. The current state of academic performance, with many students failing to meet the passing grade threshold, calls for targeted interventions.

Recommendations

Enhance School Resources: Invest in improving educational resources and facilities to better support student learning. Ensure that students have access to quality textbooks, reference materials, and a conducive learning environment.

Implement Stress Management Programs: Develop programs to help students manage stress and anxiety. Provide counseling services and stress relief workshops to support emotional well-being.

Improve Study Skills Training: Offer workshops and seminars to help students develop effective study habits and time management skills. This can help address the issues related to inadequate preparation.

Increase Support for Exam Preparation: Provide additional support such as tutoring and revision sessions to help students prepare more effectively for exams.

Focus on Teacher Development: While not currently significant, ongoing professional development for teachers can enhance teaching methods and student engagement, potentially improving academic outcomes in the future.

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