

Influence of Divorce on Student's Academic Achievement in Public Secondary Schools in Nyandarua Central Sub- County, Kenya

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Abstract: Academic performance in Nyandarua Central sub-county has been dwindling for more than a decade now with no tangible cause got so far. Several educationists have been unable to unearth what ails it, mainly targeting teaching methods and improving them through Strengthening mathematics and science Education initiative, (SMASE), with no improvement and have left it to persist, prompting the locals to feel obliged to search for solutions to their problem. This study therefore sought to establish the influence of divorce on student's academic achievement in public secondary schools in Nyandarua Central sub- county, Kenya. The study was governed by Joyce Epstein's theory of parental involvement in children's academic achievement. The study used mixed methodology and concurrent triangulation design in data collection and analysis, by first clustering the twenty schools into day and boarding schools which have unique manifestation of extraneous causes and of non-performance in academics. The target population was secondary school students in public schools in this sub county are 12,800 of whom those that experience conflict at home number 4,661 and 960 parents and 600 teachers out of whom the sample was 270 students, 180 teachers and 240 parents. Data on performance was collected from progressive performance records of end term examinations, while information on family conflict was gathered using questionnaires for students, teachers and parents and interview schedules for clarity and to increase response rate by busy respondents. Validity was done by the expert in the department and research. Reliability of the instruments was done by piloting and test re-test administered Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha of 0.73 was realized. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively by graphs, percentages, frequencies. The packages for social sciences (SPSS 22), whereas qualitative data was analyzed thematically, it was presented in narrative form. The results of this research showed an existence very high percentage 60% of administrators agreed family set up influences academic achievement. The mean number of siblings of the respondents was 8.49 with a standard deviation of 1.37 siblings. A cumulative percentage of 91.0% of the respondents had up to 4 siblings. This implies most families have at most 6 members. The study concluded that the strong parental involvement is essential for educational progress and success. Consent of the respondents was sought. Based on the findings of the study the study recommended that: the society should strengthen family unit to reduce conflicts that pose challenges to pupil's academic efforts. Parents should closely follow up children's schools routines and coordinate with teachers, healthy dialogue, motivate and advice children on studies.

Keywords: Divorce, Academic, Achievement, Public Secondary Schools, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Generally, academic achievement is influenced by a number of factors as was stipulated by Collins [1] that some are intrinsic like the inherited intelligence quotient, others extrinsic including the family one is borne into, the value they place on academic attainment hence support its pursuit and create an enabling environment for learning. Globally renown counselor like Krisztina [2] writing for Travistock Centre for

Couple Relationships in United Kingdom appreciated rapid change in family landscape with emergence of single parents, divorced, separated and those who never form any meaningful couple relations frequenting the centre voluntarily or on referral for skills on improved parenting. Kenya is grappling with similar family status changes, and the old assumption that children would belong to extended African families now seem not to work, as emphasis on nuclear family prevail. Equally,

World Bank [3] observed that family cohesion is linked to better physical, emotional and educational wellbeing among children and adolescents, especially parent-child and mother-father bonding which improves problem solving abilities, social and self-efficacy.

Regionally, very little has been done on family conflict's impact on academic achievement, instead focusing on Western understanding of African conflict and its impact on developed countries due to influx of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers as per Corbin[4] in acquainting practitioners with skills to handle the immigrants. However, it's worth noting the rapid change in African family setting from extended to nuclear and, just like in the west, emergence of matriarchal as patriarchal and intact families disintegrate. This is of most concern as many studies portray two parents, intact family as the best structure and necessary to raise children with higher level of well-being, more so the relationship with the father. The work of Motsamai, Lynette and Corene [5] in South Africa and Fentiman, Hall and Bundy [6] in Ghana agrees conflict is a major obstacle to the development of education yet has limited literature hence the need for more research and wider understanding, saying it all emanates from society and family, affecting schools and compromising quality education for all, EFA and MDGs attainment. Another study done by Igbinsosa [7] in Nigeria observed that environment in which a student comes from greatly influences his/her performance in school especially broken family which affects emotional, personality and academic achievement [8].

In Kenya, education has been assumed to be a major tool of development, fighting poverty and even hunger, hence all the education commissions of enquiry set up after Kenya's independence focused on its refinement to keep pace with global change for relevance like Koech Commission of 2000 advocating for totally integrated quality education and training, and session paper No. 1 of 2005 asking for development of a national training strategy for TIVET and ensure they are funded and equipped by 2008 as well as achieving fifty per cent literacy by 2010 among others according to Rono [9]. This was supposed to be free and compulsory, as per the basic education act as observed by the same author, meaning every parent is expected to fulfill this mandate. As such, the first entity to ensure quality education is achieved is the family, assumed to be a haven of peace, love, tranquility and happiness as per Nancy [10]. This is confirmed by Otieno [11] who observed that parents have a role to play in their children's academic progress. This means that before parents point a finger to the government on performance they need to question their creation of an enabling environment towards this attainment and their children's dream realization. At this sub county for instance, parent's support towards education is wanting with a low turn up for AGMs, high rate of family conflicts indicated by separation and divorce, as

academic grades delve lower each year from the enviable top position of the 1980s to a pathetic second last position in the 2015 KCSE results of the earlier central province as per education watch, by Iripa [8]. Even of more concern is the fact that the good grades are from the few national schools in the county and private schools in the sub-county, meaning they are not from original Nyandarua offspring and the county will eventually have no contributors to national decision making unless something is done fast to arrest this situation.

However, the much-desired grades are a product of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, some beyond control of the administrator. This research attempts to explore the extent to which family contributes to non-realization of the much-desired quality grades to make educators more informed of what to improve on, and to expect. Specifically, it narrows down to extrinsic factor of family conflict which has for long been assumed to be inconsequential in school and latent on school performance, marriage being between two adults (parents) affair only. This study has been prompted by the fact that despite ending syllabuses early, performance is still poor in this area, a far cry from the superb 1980s as per academic analysis of this county, 2014.

This sub county is also marred with the emergence of social ills like crime, cultism, radicalization, rape, homicide, infanticide, pedophiles suicides and broken families manifested as divorce, separation, absent parent(s) or even couples present but riddled with fights/violence and mistrust, all pointing to bitterness, shattered dreams and retaliatory tendencies towards the society. It may also be due to lack of proper socialization formally or informally of individuals within the family. Equally, there is a remarkable change in family set up from patriarchal to matriarchal and orphan insurgence cannot go unnoticed.

Equally, Rono [9] researching on the role of parenting on attrition found it to play a significant role and recommended further research on reasons for the high prevalence of pupil transfer and establishing means of improving parental participation in activities that minimize attrition within Subukia among others. This research therefore focuses on bridging this gap he found to exist.

Statement of the Problem

In Kenya, the government continues funding education heavily, allocating a big portion of its budget, more than 14% to this sector. Several bills are passed to better it like the basic education bill 2014, the higher education loans board amendment bill 2015 and the basic education bill of 2012 that called for the realignment of the education sector to the constitution among others, while others are pending in parliament such as one to have secondary education totally free, the

reproductive health care bill and interjectory government directives on school administrators not to withhold certificates of indebted candidates and several other attempts to uplift education.

This sub-county still continues to post poor grades; in fact, it was second last in the last 2014 K.C.S.E in the entire Nyandarua County. Most students join secondary schools here with good grades (over 50% or 250 marks) but end up getting a dismal D grade or less (wastage grades as per DQASO, accounting for 52% in 2014 K.C.S.E), frustrating all the efforts put in place by all stake holders. On the other hand social ills are on the rise like incest, pedophiles, bestiality and alcoholism among others that don't depict a learned society. So, it is a concern to stakeholders why exposure to formal education doesn't portray developed morals or even translate to expected good grades. Efforts have been made by county education officers especially on teaching methodologies via SMASE with no tangible difference, calling for a different approach to end this status quo. This study sought to find out to what extent family conflicts contributed to this scenario which if not reversed will negate all these government efforts and retard developments of this region that requires learned persons.

Influence of Divorce on Academic Achievement

Corbin [4] said that children from divorced parents performed poorly especially in mathematics and English in the immediate aftermath of divorce. Later, he says boys are more affected but girls seem to cope and don't seem to be influenced by it. A group of pediatrics researching on children's health [12] in Canada and Motsamai *et al.* [5] in South Africa also observed a similar trend that as the couple gains equilibrium after divorce, children suffer painful feelings with a significant number having prolonged symptomology related to the divorce including internalized and externalized problems characterized by suppressed polite hostility amongst all ages their reactions depending on developmental stage. Emotional behavior, they say include regress, anxiety, depression irritable, demanding and non-compliance all of which compromise school performance and affect social relationships with peers or partners later in life [13].

The work of Ann [14] studying suicidal tendencies among youth in Nyandarua found that dysfunctional families lead to depression, alcohol and substance abuse, suicidal emotional instability, low self-esteem, irresponsible sexual behavior and recommends teachers to find out at risk students and help them out as the education system in Kenya continue to emphasize academic-exam orientation at the expense of pertinent aspects of the student's life. She quotes Mbera, Tuitoek and Yambo [15] saying teachers often deal punitively with truancy without studying its cause creating low self-esteem and depression amongst students. Hence this study seeks to address these two serious concerns

by finding out how each of the common family conflicts or causes of dysfunctions influences academic for effective recognition and advice.

A more serious effect of dysfunctional family and divorce was revealed by a 2012 study on alcohol consumption in central region by a group of researchers quoting Yambo [16] and Iripa [8] who observed that it wrecks the abuser and those he should cater for, becoming absent and denying children emotional support, making especially boys emotionally stunted and girls rebellious which may be replicated with such boys becoming addicts themselves and girls marrying addicts [17].

METHODOLOGY

This study is mixed in nature, whereby data collected will be described in words (qualitatively) and numerically (quantitatively) unless on performance index and when decoded. The researcher wishes to adopt survey design which, according to Kothari [18] emphasizes full analysis on a limited number of events or conditions and inter relations without changing them. In this case, learners in an institution will be studied in details on their family and academic achievement, so is narrow in scope determining their interrelatedness with family background or influence to their final academic score. Mixed method according to Fanenkel and Wallen [19] provides the researcher with many design choices which involve a range of sequential and concurrent strategies.

Target Population

The target population, which is described by Graveter and Forzanno [20] as a group of individuals sharing some characteristics of interest to the researcher in this case secondary school students in public schools in this sub county are 12,800 of whom those that experience conflict at home number 4,661 and 960 parents plus 600 teachers out of whom a sample will be sought.

Sample size and sampling procedure

The sample size for this study was 200 respondents comprised of fifteen teachers in guidance and counseling or administrative office, three from each school and ten parents who confess to experience conflict in the family the rest being students.

It is impossible to study the entire population of secondary schools in the sub-county in question hence random sampling of the twenty schools will be done after their stratification into homogenous clusters of say girls, boys, sample of about five of each category to get a representation of the county and even the national outlook of student and factors influencing their performance. A size of 10 to 35 percent sample was used which is manageable and representative of the whole population with the relevant characteristics. Kathuri and Pal [21] proposes purposeful sampling as

researcher’s judgment used to select respondents who best meet purpose of the study. This is where by population is first stratified before random sampling. Preliminary data showed a whopping range of 67 per cent of boarders to 80 per cent day scholars as experiencing the various forms of family conflict. Taking average 70 as affected out of which a 20 per sample was used in the research, this translates to single streams 24 respondents, double 48 and three streamed schools 72. This comprises the type of school strata in this sub-county. Taking two double stream out of 8, one single out of 5 and one three streamed out of 3 plus one with a student population of two hundred, the total

sample size becomes two hundred respondents, five administrators and twenty parents.

Kathuri and Pal [21] recommended the formula below to help estimate sample size S needed relative to a population size N for a specified confidence level say 95 associated with chi square statistic for one degree of freedom, and designated degree of accuracy of 0.05 that is negligible, as,

$$S = \frac{X^2 N p(q)}{d^2 (N-1) + X^2 p(q)}$$

That was used to derive in table 1 in used to select the sample below.

Sample category	target population	Sample size	% of population category
Students	4,661	144	14
Teachers	20	15	75
Parents	96010	1.5	
Totals	5,641	169	90.5

Research Instruments

Both closed and open questionnaires were used, which the researcher personally took to the different respondents including students, discipline masters, guidance and counseling teachers or class teachers to parents, in attempt to improve rate of response. Questionnaire has several merits according to Kothari [18] such as low cost for such a large and widely spread and geographical orientation, lacking in biasness of interviewer and allowing respondents ample time to give well-thought our answers, as well as being most convenient for respondents who are not easily approachable. However, clarification and follow up will be done using.

Interview schedule guide- for administrators

With pre-determined questions derived from the same questionnaire to reflect desired objectives will be used for some responses that are ambiguous or absent respondents who are too busy to spare time for writing especially administrators. Interview according to Kothari [18] gives interviewer freedom to decide manner and sequence in which to ask the questions, explore reasons and motives especially to close end questions. It also helps clarify ambiguous areas. It’s faster and collects more information, in greater depth, and by researchers own skill, can overcome resistance if any of the respondents, making it yield an almost perfect sample of the general population.

Validity

The instruments of data collection were tested for validity using experts especially supervisors and colleagues on the researcher’s own institution who are sampled purposefully from different classes. Borg and Gall [22] states that validity is demonstrated when the questionnaire or interview instruments seem to ask the right questions frame in the least obvious way. It means

the questions are designed to ensure the same response from the respondents. He further avers that validity is crucial as it indicates the degree to which the instrument measures what is supposed to. This was ensured by colleagues and review of these instruments by my supervisor and language experts in my work station.

Reliability

On the other hand, reliability of the instruments means they yield consistent results after repeated trials, according to Mugenda and Mugenda [23]. In assessing reliability, they advocate for test-retest, equivalent form, split half and internal consistency. Reliability and internal consistency here was established through testing and retesting by piloting. Otherwise Cronbach’s reliability coefficient can equally help to ascertain reliability where items have choices [24] and were used as well, with a Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient close to 1 being assumed to be sufficient.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher first sought permission for data collection from ministry of education personnel to prove results collected were to purely be used for educational reasons. This was made easier from introductory letter offered to the researcher by Mount Kenya University, School of post graduate studies to ascertain researcher is their student at the level of data collection and analysis. From here, researcher will forward the letter to the national council for science and technology and innovation (NACOSTI), before obtaining permission from Nyandarua county and sub county staffing office or quality assurance office then administration of the sampled school who assigned a teacher to help the researcher around their institutions, giving the questionnaire and arranging for interviews. The researcher made follow up immediately for

responses to avoid lapses and loss. An ideal chance will be sought when to give survey questionnaires to improve rate of return as per Fanenkel and Wallen [19].

Ethical Consideration

The research process respected both human right and legal propensity in the following ways. This study sought to uphold dignity and rights of all respondents by explaining to them that information got was of research use only and so no identity should be given by the respondents. Moreover, it respects every one’s view so all responses are correct. There was no coercion and if one wished not to take part, they were at will to do so. In getting the necessary permission, the researcher avoided being at loggerhead with any authority. Ethics also involved respecting other people’s work to avoid plagiarism by recognizing them for any borrowed text in my write up. Student respondents under 18 years could not consent to this study so permission was sought from adults in their life like parents/guardians or teachers.

FINDINGS

A very high percentage 60% of administrators agreed family set up influences academic achievement. The mean number of siblings of the respondents was 8.49 with a standard deviation of 1.37 siblings. A cumulative percentage of 91.0% of the respondents had up to 4 siblings. This implies most families have at most 6 members (two parents and 4 siblings). According to ArcGis [25], nationally, the average household size is 4.4 people per household in Kenya. Similarly, these results are also consistent with KNBS [26] that found an average household size of 5.1. Family size has an influence on financial constraint and so education access and often relates to certain types of conflicts, like fewer children are associated to urban life marked by divorce.

Most of the student respondents indicated that they had both parents with respect to their family set-up as shown in Table 2.

Table-2: Respondents’ family set-up

Family set-up	Frequency	Percent
With both parents.	97	81.0%
Single parent.	17	14.0%
Orphaned.	6	5.0%
Totals	120	100.0%

Source: Field Data (2016)

Majority (81.0%) of the students had both parents in their family (table 3). however, 14.0% were from single parent families while 5.0% were orphaned. Those under divorce or separation agreed that they have no time to follow up homework or performance of their children, as they feel overwhelmed with responsibilities and when called over discipline issues are surprised that their children are strangers to them. Many seek the help of their aged parents or dump their children there as they seek livelihood. The more responsible ones carried their daughters with them due to the horrifying incest fears though they face predicament of possible girl abuse by their own new partners.

Mbera *et al.* [15] agreed that family conflict affected financial resources hence fees first and foremost then comes the emotional deprivation and physical needs from shelter, as they relocate, food and clothing. There’s also lack of someone to confide or share responsibilities with and lost dignity. A very small number said instead of the physical and emotional abuse that they encountered in a complete family, divorce/separation was a better option but quick to point out their wish that the spouse changed for the better instead of divorce. Only a small number said the students worked harder (to earn acceptance from either parents or in solidarity with the divorced parents, especially boys left with their mothers).

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that the strong parental involvement is essential for educational progress and success. It lessens the gap in achievement between children from high and low income families respectively and is an important component of academically and socially effective schools.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study the study recommended that: the society should strengthen family unit to reduce conflicts that pose challenges to pupil’s academic efforts. Parents should closely follow up children’s schools routines and coordinate with teachers, healthy dialogue, motivate and advice children on studies. The government on the other hand should increase the funding/money allocation for free education.

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