

Influence of family structure on students' self-acceptance in public secondary schools in Kiambu County, Kenya

Graceann Wanjiru Kimaru¹, Mwaura Kimani², Newton Mukolwe³

¹ Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Psychology, Maasai Mara University, Narok, Kenya

^{2,3} Lecturer, Department of Education Foundation and Psychology Maasai Mara University, Narok, Kenya

Abstract

Globally, urbanization, industrialization, globalization, changing cultural trends and the social metric shift of the late 20th century has led to profound change in family patterns worldwide over the last five decades. The trends indicate that the number of children living in two parent families is declining sharply. On the other hand, the trend shows that the number of children living in single parent families is on the increase. These trends in the family structure have major implications on the psychosocial factors and academic performance of children. Poor academic performance, increase in psychosocial problems such as drug abuse, school arson and strikes, bullying, early sexual debut, teen pregnancy, suicidal thoughts and suicide, and examination malpractices among secondary school students is becoming a major challenge in Kenya. These problems are linked to psychosocial distress caused partly by family structures. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of family structure on students' academic performance and self-acceptance. The study was grounded on Maslow's Hierarchy of need's and Social cognitive theories. Survey research design was adopted for the study. Purposive sampling, stratified random sampling and simple random sampling designs were used accordingly to select 385 form four students. These sampling procedures yielded 194 boys and 191 girls for the study. A self-administered questionnaire containing sub-scales on self-acceptance, interpersonal relationships and social integration and score sheets for the 2017 form four Kenya national examination were used for data collection. This questionnaire was initially piloted to assert its validity and reliability. The hypotheses on the influence of family structure on academic performance, self-acceptance, interpersonal relationships and social integration were tested using Kruskal Wallis H test (one-way ANOVA on ranks). On the other hand, the hypothesis on gender and school type differences in the dependent variables were tested by Independent Samples t-Test. All the tests were carried out at 0.05 level of significance. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used in tabulation of variables, generation of appropriate frequency percentages and calculating the relevant statistics. The study findings indicate that majority of students had low self-acceptance levels. Family structure was found to influence self-acceptance significantly. The findings of study are expected to be of importance to educators, teachers and parents in understanding the influence of family structure on students' academic performance and psychosocial factors and how to improve the psychosocial wellbeing and academic performance of students from the various family structures.

Keywords: family structure, students' self-acceptance, secondary schools, Kiambu, Kenya

Introduction

Psycho social implies the dynamic relationship between psychological processes (mind, thoughts, emotions, feeling and behavior) and social processes (interaction and relationship with others, environment, cultures and traditions, rules and tasks) and the fact that each continually interacts with and influences the other.

Social factors include social acceptance, interpersonal relations, social integration, social organization, social contribution and social coherence (Keyes 1998). This paper focused on self-acceptance only because when self-acceptance (psychological factor) is disturbed, interpersonal relationships (social factor) are likely to be upset (Magnuson and Lawrence 2009) ^[5].

Family structure refers to the number of parents living with a child as in single or two parents and their marital status (as in whether married, divorced, widowed, remarried or never married). A person's psychosocial development is influenced by among other factors family structure (Gilborn, Brakarsh, Dube, Jemison, Kluckkow & Snider, 2006). Family structure acts as a pointer of potential caretakers and

indicate certain characteristics or quality of the child's family life. Family structure provides a sense of belonging, security and stability that is necessary for psychosocial development of a child (Roska & Potter, 2011; Cavanagh & Fomby, 2012) ^[9].

Ryff (1988) defines self- acceptance as an individual's attitude about him/herself. It is the capacity to acknowledge and accept multiple characteristics of self, including good and bad qualities and the feeling about past life (Ryff 1989) ^[10]. Self-acceptance affects one's thought, one's world interpretation, confidence and self-image. Self-acceptance is the potential to achieve goals, therefore low self-acceptance can lead to failure (Baron & Byrne, 1991). Students with low self-acceptance may therefore never actualize in the personal growth and even in academic areas. It is necessary then for teachers, parents and educators to ascertain levels of students' self-acceptance so to assist them in exploiting their potentials fully.

High levels of perceived economic, human and social support from families by children is associated with higher levels of self- acceptance. However, different types of

families have been found to offer different amounts of social support (Akin & Ceyhan, 2005) ^[1], with single parent families contributing the least amounts (Amato and Keith, 1991) thus affecting the self-acceptance development of children in those homes.

Empirical evidence has given mixed findings on the influence of family structure on self-acceptance. Nevertheless, due to industrialization, urbanization, globalization and the social metric shift of the 20th century, family patterns are rapidly changing with the numbers of single parent families rising while the number of two parent families is dropping drastically (Social and Demographic Trends, 2013). It is estimated that 23.4% of families in Kiambu County are headed by single mothers. (Kenya Population Situation Analysis, 2013). Kiambu County represents empirically the various phenomena of interest in the current study. The academic performance of students in national examinations in Kiambu County is comparatively low in relation to other counties in the central region. For instance, in 2015 KCSE results the county ranked last in central region. Hypotheses of the study was there is no significant influence of family structure on student's self-acceptance in public secondary schools in Kiambu, Kenya. The study findings are expected to be of use to students, teachers, parents, counselors and other stakeholders in the Education sector in Kenya. Further, the findings are expected to help schools improve long-term academic, behavioral, social and emotional wellbeing for students and families through more applicable and practical approaches.

Family structure and self- acceptance

Alex (2015) study still further revealed a significant difference in self-acceptance between males and females, which was found at $t_{cal} = 2.712$, $df = 358$. These results were similar to those of Kalantarkousheh (2012) who investigated gender differences in self- acceptance of university students in Iran.

A substantial amount of research has examined the influence of family structure on the self-concept of children, however there is so far no consensus on findings. All through the early decades to 1990s, a majority of empirical studies on family structure (mainly divorce) and self-concept of children indicates that children in single parent families have lower self- esteem than children in two parent families (Young & Parish, 1977; berg & Kelly, 1979; Parish, Parish, Dostal, & Parish. 1981; Kinard & Reinherz, 1984; Demo and Acock, 1988; Amato & Keith, 1991; Nazir Riaz, 1991) while other studies have indicated no difference in self-concept of children by family structures (Kalter, Neil, Riemer, Brickman & Chen, 1985; Parish, 1981). Further still, other studies have reported positive outcomes such as greater feelings of efficacy and an internal locus of control for children in single parent families (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1974; Weiss, 1979).

Research Methodology

Research Design and scope

This study adopted survey research design. Survey means gathering of a sample of data or opinions considered to be representative of a whole group or population. The description of the population as a whole is inferred by the results obtained from the sample. In this study, survey research design was employed in order to enable the

researcher to adequately get information from a sample in order to describe the population under study. Kumar (2011) observed that survey research design is the most appropriate for obtaining self- reported opinions, attitudes, beliefs and values.

The study was conducted in only public secondary schools in Kiambu County, Kenya. For the purpose of this study, only form four students who had registered for the 2017 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE) in Kiambu County were involved in the study.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

The study utilized both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Probability methods are free from bias; however, they present a risk of missing important sub-groups and thus lack of complete representation of the target population. Probability methods were therefore combined with non-probability methods. Non-probability sampling is used when the researcher is interested in representativeness of concepts in their varying forms. The aim is for the sample to be theoretically representative of the study population by maximizing the scope or range of variation of the study. Specifically, the study used stratified simple random and purposive sampling techniques.

Research Instruments

The researcher used a self-report questionnaire for the students to collect data on psychosocial factors. Kenya National Examination print outs was used to collect data on students' academic performance. They are easy to analyze since they are in an immediate usable form (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999) ^[7].

Reliability of the Instruments

Data Collection Procedures

Upon acquiring a research permit, the researcher obtained authorization to conduct research in the schools from the Kiambu County Director of Education and County Commissioner. The principals of the sampled schools were requested to give the necessary assistance during data collection.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire sub-scales were scored, the data was validated, edited (to determine representativeness and completeness), and then coded for statistical analysis by the computer using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Quantitative analysis by use of descriptive and inferential statistics were applied. Descriptive statistics-frequencies, percentages, modes, range, mean and standard deviation were used to describe and summarize the data with reference to levels of academic performance, self-acceptance, interpersonal relationships, social integration and distribution of demographic variables (gender, age, type of school attended and area of residence). Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used in tabulation of variables, generation of appropriate frequency percentages and calculating the relevant statistics. Data was presented through figures and tables.

The results of analyses were presented in form of figures and tables. The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significance level using Kruskal-Wallis H Test (One Way Anova on Ranks) to test if family structure has influence on student's self-acceptance levels in public secondary schools

in Kiambu, Kenya.

Findings and discussion

All the 385 questionnaires that were administered were returned and all met minimum entry condition for further analysis in this study. This represented a 100% questionnaire return rate.

Distribution of Respondents by Family Structure and Self-Acceptance

Family structure was operationalized as the number and marital status of parents a student lives with, that is, single (never married, divorced and widowed) or both parents (married or remarried).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Participants Self-acceptance

Variable	N	Percent	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness
Family Structure Single Parent	193	50.1	98.00	18.00	67.23	15.18	-.570
Both Parents	192	49.9	100.00	35.00	77.58	13.47	-.714
Sub Total	385	100.0	100.00	18.00	72.40	15.24	-.632
Never Married	135	35.1	98.00	29.00	69.93	12.90	-.541
Married	177	46.0	100.00	29.00	76.46	14.58	-.740
Divorced	31	8.1	92.00	18.00	63.42	15.04	-.946
Widowed	33	8.6	98.00	24.00	66.73	20.60	-.386
Remarried	9	2.3	98.00	64.00	81.44	11.51	-.278
Gender							
Male	194	50.4	98.00	18.00	72.45	15.72	-.672
Female	191	49.6	100.00	24.00	72.36	14.78	-.587
School Type							
Girls only	98	25.5	100.00	24.00	74.46	15.83	-.909
Boys only	74	19.2	98.00	38.00	77.43	14.55	-.659
Mixed Boys and Girls	213	55.3	98.00	18.00	69.71	14.66	-.587
Boarding	172	44.7	100.00	24.00	75.83	15.34	-.839
Day	203	52.7	98.00	18.00	69.64	14.80	-.589
Mixed day and Boarding	10	2.6	85.00	53.00	69.50	10.86	-.113
Sub Total	385	100.0	100.00	18.00	72.40	15.24	-.632

The sample self-acceptance mean score was 72.40 and the standard deviation was 15.24. The distribution of the students' self-acceptance score was largely and negatively skewed as indicated by coefficient of skewness (-0.632). This shows that the mean score was less than the median, implying that more than half of the participants rated themselves above 72.40 on this scale.

The self-acceptance mean score for male and female respondents was 72.45 and 72.36 respectively. This implies that boys and girls faired almost the same on self-acceptance.

The respondents' self-acceptance score was further used to categorize the respondents into three hierarchical groups/levels (low, moderate and high) for comparison purposes. The cut-off scores for levels low, moderate and high were 0-61, 62-83 and 84-100 respectively. The distribution of respondents across the three levels is shown in Table 4.2

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Levels of Self-acceptance

Family Structure	Self-Acceptance Levels			Total
	High	Low	Moderate	
Single Parent	27(7.0)	70(18.2)	96(24.9)	193(50.1)
Both Parents	82(21.3)	30(7.8)	80(20.8)	192(49.9)
Sub-Total	109(28.3)	100(26.0)	176(45.7)	385(100.0)
Never Married	21(5.5)	39(10.1)	75(19.5)	135(35.1)
Married	72(18.7)	32(8.3)	73(19.0)	177(46.0)
Divorced	2(0.5)	17(4.4)	12(3.1)	31(8.1)
Widowed	9(2.3)	12(3.1)	12(3.1)	33(8.6)
Remarried	5(1.3)	0(0.0)	4(1.0)	9(2.3)
Sub Total	109(28.3)	100(26.0)	176(45.7)	385(100.0)

More boys (29.9%) than girls (26.7%) experienced high level of self-acceptance. From single parent families, girls performed poorer on self-acceptance than boys with only

6.3% and 7.7% respectively reporting high levels of self-acceptance. The same trend was observed for the respondents in both parent families where 20.4% of girls and 22.2% of boys reported high self-acceptance.

Kruskal Wallis Test Analysis for difference in the Self - Acceptance Scores between Family Structures

Table 3

Descriptions			Test Statistic ^{a,b}		
Family Structure	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
Single Parent	193	154.08			
Both Parents	192	232.12	47.39	1	.000
Total	385				
Never Married	135	169.31			
Married	177	224.54			
Divorced	31	126.26	36.928	4	.000
Widowed	33	165.03			
Remarried	9	260.50			
Total	385				

*P< 0.005 a. Krusal-Wallis Test b. Grouping Variable: Family Structure

There was a statistically significant difference in self-acceptance scores between single and both parent family structures, $\chi^2 (1) = 47.4$, $p = .000$ with a mean rank self-acceptance of 154.08 for single parent family structure and 232.12 for both parents family structure. There was also a statistically significant difference in self-acceptance scores between the family structure subsets, $\chi^2 (4) = 36.93$, $P = .000$ with a mean rank self-acceptance score of 169.31 for Never married families, 224.54 for Married families, 126.26 for Divorce families, 165.03 for Widowed families and 260.50 for Remarried families. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Similar results are reported by Alex (2015), Wałęcka-

Matyja (2014), Alami et al (2014), Mabizu et al (2014), Ahiaoma (2013), Azuka-Obieke (2013), Falana et al (2012) and Szczęśna (2005). They all reported that single parent family structure had a negative influence on development and levels of students' self-acceptance and self-esteem. The implication of this finding is that students in single parent families, irrespective of the pathway to single parenting will develop low self-acceptance and self-esteem throughout their life course.

Studies by Kinga et al (2014) ^[3] and Mst. Shaila Scraj (2004) found no statistically significant influence of family structure on secondary school students' self-acceptance levels while Mandara and Murray (2000) ^[4] reported mixed results.

Conclusion

The findings reveal that despite cultural differences and study backgrounds, single parenting influences self-acceptance development negatively. However, these studies linked the negative effect to mainly inadequate family resources and poor parenting practices such as poor parent-child relationships, low parental involvement, disorderly and unnurturing home oftenly associated with single parenting.

It can be concluded that in relation to the dependent variable of self-acceptance there is significant difference among the students in the two family structures (two parent and single parent families) as well as the five family subsets (married, remarried, never married, divorced and widowed children families) and that the influence is moderated by factors such as type of school attended.

Family policy overlaps critically with education policy. Strengthening the intact family structure may lead to improvements in individual student outcomes as well as the Kenyan education system as a whole.

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