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Original Article

Effects of Single Parenting on Student's Academic Performance in Selected Public Secondary Schools in Mukurwe-Ini Sub-County, Nyeri County, Kenya

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The purpose of this study is to investigate how having a single parent affects the educational success of a sample of secondary school students in the Mukurwe-ini area of Nyeri County. Four specific goals need to be accomplished in order to reach the target. One: Examining the factors that lead to single parenting. Two: Assessing the challenges that single parents experience in raising their children. Three: Identifying solutions that can mitigate the negative impacts of single parenting on students' academic performance. Four: Evaluating the role of school-based support systems in improving outcomes for children from single-parent families. For this reason, it is important to examine the factors that lead to single parenting, the challenges that single parents experience in bringing up their kids, and the solutions that have been shown to be effective in reducing the negative impact of single parenting on students' academic performance. Divorce, death, and separation are all factors that might lead to the formation of a nuclear family. Among these challenges include the inability to afford school materials, a lack of time to examine pupils' practice books, and a lack of communication between the parent and the child. Students raised by single parents encounter unique challenges, including but not limited to: a lack of access to educational resources; a lack of parental support; financial issues; emotional strain; and clinical depression. One thousand pupils in Form Three at three different secondary schools in the Mukurwe-ini Sub-County participated in the study, which would use an exploratory research design. One hundred third-graders from each of the three schools were randomly selected to represent ten percent of the total population. Of the total 50 teachers were selected at random, making up 30%. Questionnaires were the main method of data collecting used in this study. The schools were chosen through deliberate sampling to ensure gender parity and to get a diverse set of responses to questions about how single parenting affects children's academic success. The researcher checked the totals after collecting the surveys to see whether every question was answered. The collected information was analysed using descriptive statistics. The research found that the performance of children from single parents in schools is affected mainly by the absence of the other parent of the children which causes boredom. Lack of discipline and work overload by the parent also leads to poor performance among children from single parents in school. The study recommends that Mukurwe-ini Sub-County secondary schools should come up with a strong support system for children from single parents in order to improve their performance in school.

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INTRODUCTION

Indeed, times have changed. Many of the ancient practices that have been taught and practised for many years are now becoming extinct. The ideas and beliefs once considered to be the fundamental principles of our culture have altered and outgrown modern society (Marsh et al., 2015). Even still, moralists and conservatives feel disgusted by the way belief and cultural systems are currently developing. The truth is, that what was formerly considered unacceptable is now quickly becoming the norm. The topic of single parenting has been a major source of worry for conservatives for a long time. The concept of single parenting has now become a rapidly growing trend in society.

Fifteen percent of the world's children are raised by a single parent, the majority of whom are women (55%), according to the Development Cooperation Report (United Nations, 2015). Most single parents really work, contrary to common belief. Evidence suggests that, despite having similar IQs, children living in single-parent families are less successful academically than their two-parent counterparts (Pinquart & Kauser, 2018). This might be because parents are too busy with their own lives to keep an eye on how their kids are doing in school and provide guidance with things like discipline and schoolwork.

Family life should be consistent and reassuring for children. The impact on a child's academic

performance when this structure is altered is substantial (Ford & Moore, 2013). The child would have no one to turn to for support in this situation. The child has almost exclusive reliance on that parent to meet his or her needs. These parents are less likely to provide the support their children need to reach their full potential because of their limited time, money, and availability.

Aim of the study

In order to better understand how being a single parent affects a child's ability to succeed in school, this study focused on a few public high schools in the Mukurwe-ini Sub-County of Nyeri County.

Specific objectives

- To determine the contributing factors of single parenting that influence student's performance in secondary schools.
- To examine the challenges of raising children as a single parent that affect student's performance in secondary schools.
- To identify potential countermeasures against the difficulties of single parenting that can impact students' performance in secondary schools.

Importance of the study

This study enables lawmakers in their efforts to make effective policies in education and how to

alleviate the negative effects of single parenting on student's performance. The study's findings are critical in pointing the way towards solutions for the challenges faced by single parents of secondary school-aged children. The study informs the Teachers Service Commission on the need to hire guidance and counselling professionals to bridge the gap.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When one of the two parents normally responsible for caring for and educating a kid is unable to do so because of work or other commitments, this situation is known as single parenting. It's spreading rapidly across the developed and underdeveloped worlds alike. According to Maldonado & Nieuwenhuis (2015), the increasing prevalence of unmarried mothers and fathers is a major social problem. Saenger et al. (2011) agree with the findings of psychologist Mavis Hetherington, who found out that a mother's parenting skills decline in the years following a divorce, and that children exposed to such disruptions in parenting experience concurrent psychological, behavioural, and academic difficulties. It highlights the extensiveness and complexity of the difficulties faced by children raised by a single parent.

The variations in behaviour between children raised by a single parent and those raised by both parents were studied by Usakli (2013). Children with single parents, he found, are less likely to be assertive and dominant in the classroom and are more likely to take orders from teachers. As a result, it's important for parents, educators, and counsellors to understand the unique behavioural traits of children who grew up with just one parent. Elliott et al. (2015) noted the negative outcomes of single parenting and advocated for joint parental involvement in their children's schooling in two-parent families. Fathers are obligated to provide financial assistance for their children's education, while mothers are obliged to encourage their husbands' efforts. A child will fall behind and become reclusive if their mother cannot cater for their basic needs and keep an eye on their academic progress while their father is abroad (De Lange et al., 2014).

Learners who come from families with high income attend the best-performing schools so they have the

opportunity to get the best education since all the required resources are available (Darling & Steinberg, 2017). On the other hand, those who come from poor backgrounds are likely to perform poorly (Hill, 2015). The more a family's financial resources, the greater their ability to move into neighbourhoods with excellent public schools or to pay tuition at a private school of their choosing. The extent to which a kid is able to participate in extracurricular activities, such as after-school classes or exciting field trips, may also influence how well they do in school. These experiences benefit kids in two ways: directly by teaching them new skills, and indirectly by expanding their minds in general, which in turn affects how they learn in the future. Parental involvement drops and money does not seem to be the only thing that disappears after a divorce.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A total of 10 secondary schools in the Sub-County were represented in the intended audience. Sample sizes between 10 and 30 percent from a target group with similar characteristics were recommended by Mugenda & Mugenda (2012). Just three out of every ten schools participated in the study as a representative sample. One hundred youngsters, equally split across the selected schools, were drawn from a pool of three-year-olds using a random sampling technique. From the 150 teachers at the selected schools, 50 were selected at random for the study. Questionnaires were the main method of information gathering. The survey included both short-answer and free-form questions. Respondents had more freedom to provide detailed responses in their own words when given the option to do so in the form of open-ended questions. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data from this research using the software package SPSS. The provided information was used to compile a summary of the samples, which was then presented in the form of tables. Participants were assured that their information would be kept confidential and used only for academic analysis. Informed permission from each participant was also collected.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the study as they relate to the specific objectives outlined earlier. Each table summarizes the key data points collected from

the respondents, along with their corresponding means and standard deviations. The results are analyzed to highlight the major factors, challenges,

and potential countermeasures associated with single parenting and its impact on students' academic performance.

Table 1: Objective 1 Results. Contributing Factors of Single Parenting and Their Influence on Student Performance.

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
Lack of enough support from both parents	4.78	.507
Negative feelings at home	4.86	.351
Lack of discipline from parents	4.84	.422
Poor behavioural problems from the parent	4.76	.517
Work overload at home	4.84	.370
Average	4.82	.433

Source: Research data

As per the results in Table 1 above, it is clear that all respondents (teachers) agreed strongly with the statements on factors contributing to single parenting and the performance of single parents. The results show with an overall mean of 4.82 and a standard deviation of 0.433 that lack of enough

support for a child, negative feelings at home, lack of discipline lessons from the parent, poor behavioural problems and higher workload contribute to poor performance among children from single parents.

Table 2: Objective 2 Results. Challenges of Single Parenting and Their Effects on Student Performance.

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
Lack of enough money to cater for child's school needs	4.80	.452
Pressure from other children concerning the parent in the absence	4.84	.370
Less time to tackle issues at home and school-related issues	4.80	.452
Loneliness among children when their parent is away due to the absence of the second parent	4.74	.527
Emotional problems that arise due to divorce	4.76	.517
Average	4.79	0.464

Source: Research data

As per the results in Table 2 above, all challenges that were investigated were found to affect children from single parents in school. Some of such challenges include lack of enough money to cater for the child's needs, pressure from other children that

leads to stigmatisation of children from single parents in school, lack of enough time from parents to tackle issues, loneliness among children at home and lack of emotional support at home.

Table 3: Objective 3 Results. Countermeasures to Address Challenges Faced by Single Parents and Their Impact on Student Performance.

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
Build a strong support system with the child	4.80	.495
Seek professional assistance for the child	4.82	.438
Manage available finances effectively	4.82	.438
Spend time with children	4.74	.565
Good communication with children	4.82	.438
Average	4.80	0.474

Source: Research data

As per the results in Table 3 above, the statements investigated recorded positive feedback where some

potential countermeasures of problems faced by single parents include building a strong support

system with children, seeking professional assistance, effective management of finances, spending time with children and ensuring good communication with children.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results align with existing literature on the impact of single parenting on academic performance. For instance, Pinquart and Kauser (2018) highlighted the emotional and financial strain faced by children from single-parent households, which corroborates the findings in Objective 2. Similarly, Darling and Steinberg (2017) noted that parental involvement and financial stability significantly affect academic outcomes, as reflected in Objective 1 and Objective 3 results. However, the findings also suggest that targeted interventions, such as professional counselling and enhanced communication, can mitigate these challenges effectively. This supports the recommendations made by De Lange et al. (2014) regarding the importance of support systems for children in single-parent families.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

As per the study, the performance of children from single parents in schools is affected mainly by the absence of the other parent to children which causes boredom. Lack of discipline and work overload by the parent also leads to poor performance among children from single parents in school. Lack of support from single parents and loneliness causes emotional problems that affect their children in school thus leading to poor performance. The study recommends that Mukurwe-Ini Sub-County secondary schools should come up with a strong support system to help children from single parents in order to improve their performance in school.

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