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INFLUENCE OF PARENTS' SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS ON PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN'S SOCIO-EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOUR AND LEARNING PERFORMANCE IN DAGORETTI CONSTITUENCY, NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA.

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ABSTRACT

Parental factors and particularly their socio-economic status influence their children's growth and development. This is reflected in various studies both globally and regionally. Socio-economic status of parents for example may determine timely or otherwise delayed provision of children's basic needs. In addition parental socio-economic status may dictate the social interaction pattern within the family. This may lead to inhibited social emotional traits which in turn negatively influence learning performance. Unmet needs result in marked deficits in the realization of developmental milestones and learning performance. Despite this knowledge, studies in this area are scanty and those available are replete with constraints Kenyans face concerning employment, shelter issues and parenting among others. In view of the limitation, the paper seeks to examine to what extent parental socio-economic status influenced the socio- emotional behavior of preschool children and how this in turn affected their learning performance in Dagoretti Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. Intervention strategies used by parents to enhance their children's socio-emotional behavior and learning performance were also under focus. The personality development theory by Erikson (1963) was used to guide the descriptive survey study. The study sample size was: fifteen (30%) of 50 pre-schools attached to primary schools; 30 (26%) teachers out of approximately 80; (30%) pupils or 12 per school out of 1,500; and similarly 180 (15%) or 12 per school out of 1,200 parents. Interview guides for teachers, questionnaires for parents and observation checklists for children were used to collect data. This was after a pilot study in 2 pre-schools with 8 teachers, five parents and their children. Validity of the research tools was ascertained by strictly adhering to the study objectives while reliability was established by use of the split half technique at 0.7 co-efficient. Data analysis for qualitative data was done thematically while quantitative data was analyzed descriptively using means, frequencies and percentages. For inferential data, T test was used to test whether there were differences between parental factors and children's socio-emotional behavior and learning performance in pre-schools. It is anticipated that the results from this study may benefit existing early childhood education centers in evaluating their programs. Children of parents who are too occupied in their economic commitments may benefit from socio-emotional support in preschool which may also boost their learning performance. Similarly, parental support may make them identify more closely with the socio-emotional needs of their children and possibly come up with innovations in dealing with their children and hence their learning performance since these two variables relate closely.

Key Words: Parental Factors; Socio-emotional Behavior; Learning Performance

1. INTRODUCTION

Parents and the immediate family play an important role in rearing their children. Parents determine many basic issues regarding the child since children are fully dependent on them in every aspect. Among other key issues, parents choose the area and school on behalf of the child. They mould the child socially and provide role models for them. The child's socio-emotional behavior and learning performance are closely related to the parent's dictates. It is therefore important that parents are present wholly to support the overall development of their children. The support offered (Goncu 1999) determines children's growth and development in many areas including self-esteem and confidence.

Poor environments have been reported as responsible for low levels of cognitive and psychosocial developments. Investment in the early years of life has dramatic effects on socio-emotional status of children and their economic standing in later years of life as UNESCO, (2005) reported

In Kenya, issues of childhood care in respect to socio-emotional aspects are complex due to the rural and urban nature of the economy. World Bank Development Indicators (2004) reveal that predominantly, the Kenyan population is rural with 65% of the total inhabitants living in rural areas. In another study conducted by Njenga and Kabiru

(2001), weather changes and other circumstances are a cause trigger for urban migration. Due to the influx, unemployment, poverty and overcrowding have become characteristics of such living areas as Swedener, Kabiru and Njenga, (2000) further observed. A survey conducted locally revealed that children in many poverty-stricken homes suffer a myriad of problems which affect their holistic well-being. Chawla (2002) also notes that, psychosocial development among other domains of growth largely related to poverty or low socio-economic status as an attributable behavior on observation.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the influence of parents' social economic status on pre-school children's socio-emotional behavior and learning performance.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Operationally this study defines Socio- Economic Status as the social standard of parents with children in pre-schools based on their pa capita monthly income: (Ksh. 0-20,000 considered low, Ksh. 21-50,000 medium and Ksh. 51,000+ high. Economic independence is a prerequisite for family security and stability. Chalwa (2002) observes that where the breadwinner experiences shifting economic dependence, the family is subject to stress and injury of self-esteem. As such, the parents feel a sense of loss and emotionally they may be unable to secure the rest of the family due to constant worry. Low social economic status is a pointer to the poor living environments and inadequate provision of basic needs becomes a problem as McLoyd, (1998): Klerma, (1991) McLeod and Shanahan (1993) state. At times access to government and health services is not possible due to the limited options available. Pre-school children fail to get the right stimulation socially when the home environment changes or when parents lose jobs or get into divorce. Furthermore, the socialization process is interrupted when the parental union is severed in one way or another. Abrupt changes within the family can be detrimental to the child's socio-emotional well-being and consequently in their learning performance. This happens especially because some of the changes are sudden, hence not anticipated. Volling et al., (2002) further explains that stressed parents are psychologically unstable; they exhibit the inability to connect with their pre-school going child, hence negatively influencing the socio emotional behaviour. Parents are therefore not able to maintain a healthy social interaction with their children due to their own emotional instability unsteadiness resulting from socio-economic inadequacies. At times disagreements in the family lead to separation and consequently changes in residence. This implies or dictates a change in as far as schooling is concerned. Low socio-economic status is a recipe for inadequate social stimulation by parents which may lead to undesired socio- emotional behaviour in their children. This in turn affects the pre-school children's participation in school, consequently influencing their performance in schooling tasks negatively. A family's poor emotional profile as correctly stated by Adams and Monica (2010), may lead to failed provision of secure, warm attachment and care for the child. Children in emotionally deprived environments may be anxious and withdrawn. This may in turn influence their socio-emotional well-being and learning performance. Children in deprived livelihoods have many wants since they have limited options. They have to forego even the most basic needs like food, shelter and clothing. At times children from such households skip the basic health requirement such as immunization nutritional deficiencies notwithstanding. The inadequate supply of basic needs leads to deficits in socio-emotional behavior which impacts negatively on their learning performance. Due to the complex interrelations, such situations jeopardize children's holistic well-being; their health is at a great risk, their socialization, their nurturance and adjustments when it comes to transition from home to school. The range of unmet and inadequately met needs takes a toll on the socio-emotional behavior and learning performance. Studies to unveil these interrelations within the location under study are scanty. Yet studies in other similar environments both internationally in the region reveal a deep relationship between parental socio-emotional behavior and learning performance. This paper is based has pointed out Parental socio-economic status as a key factor because it determines the provision of basic needs. It is unfortunate that in most cases mothers are mostly affected by poverty more than men are as stated by Adams and Monica (2010),

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As Kothari (2004) proposes, the descriptive research design was employed using the survey method. The design was applicable given that most of the responses were descriptively supplied through questionnaires, interviews and observation schedules. The descriptive survey method was also preferred since it facilitated collecting data large amounts of information, in a short period of time.

Multistage sampling technique was used to come up with an appropriate study sample starting with Dagoretti Constituency in Nairobi County, Kenya being purposively selected as the study locale while 15 (30%) pre-schools: out of the 50 targeted were randomly selected by rotary. Thirty (26%) teachers (2 teachers per pre-school) were purposively selected. As for children, 180 (30%) or 12 of them per school out of the total 1,500, were randomly

selected and similarly 180 (15%) parents or 12 per school out of 1,200, were purposively selected by virtue of their children having been sampled.

For data analysis, qualitative data were analyzed thematically based on topics derived from study objective and information presented using narratives as Cochran & Patton (2002) advice. Quantitative data on the other hand was analyzed using descriptive statistics namely means, percentages as well as frequencies and consequently, findings presented using frequency tables and pie chart. For inferential data, T test was used to test whether or not there were significant differences between parents' socio-economic status and the level of preschool children's socio-emotional behavior and learning performance at 0.05 level.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study objective was to find out the extent to which parents' socio-economic status influences level of pre-school children's socio-emotional behavior and learning performance. The responses obtained from participating teachers were rated using a Four point Likert scale where they were asked to state to what extent they were convinced that parents' social economic status influenced pre-school children's socio-emotional behavior and learning performance in the under listed statements in Table 1.

Table 1: Influence of Parents' Socio-economic Status on Children's Socio-emotional Behaviour and learning performance

Parents' Socio-economic Status	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Parent's economic independence is important for children's/ family stability and security.	0	0	0	0	3	10	27	90
Low parental income leads to poor living environments and inadequate provision of basic needs.	0	0	0	0	1	3.3	29	93.7
Parents' financial problems bring conflicts in many families.	0	0	0	0	2	6.6	28	93.3
Financially stressed parents punish their children often and sometimes too hard for petty mistakes.	0	0	1	3.3	1	3.3	28	93.3

N=30

Key: Strongly disagree = 1 Disagree =2 Agree =3 strongly agree =4

As Table 4.1 shows, the sampled teachers strongly agreed that there was a correlation between parental socio-economic status and various child oriented attributes including: provision of basic needs, family stability/security and psychosocial support. The four broad items reflect a high percent in the highest rating as per the scale that is 92.6%. From this percent, it is evident that parental socio-economic standing has an influence on the pre-school child's socio-emotional behavior and learning performance.

In most learning institutions, fees should be paid in full before or on the first day of the term/semester. However, on arrangement guardians and parents can be allowed to pay gradually during the term. Parents in this study were asked their preferred mode of fees payment. Full or monthly fees payment per term has implications on the child's settling down given that some schools will send children home for fees collection. Children who are sent home because of fees balances experience interruptions; these interruptions affect their socio-emotional behavior and learning performance. This information was therefore considered important since preference would portray parents' socio-economic status to some large extent. The findings are as shown in Figure 1

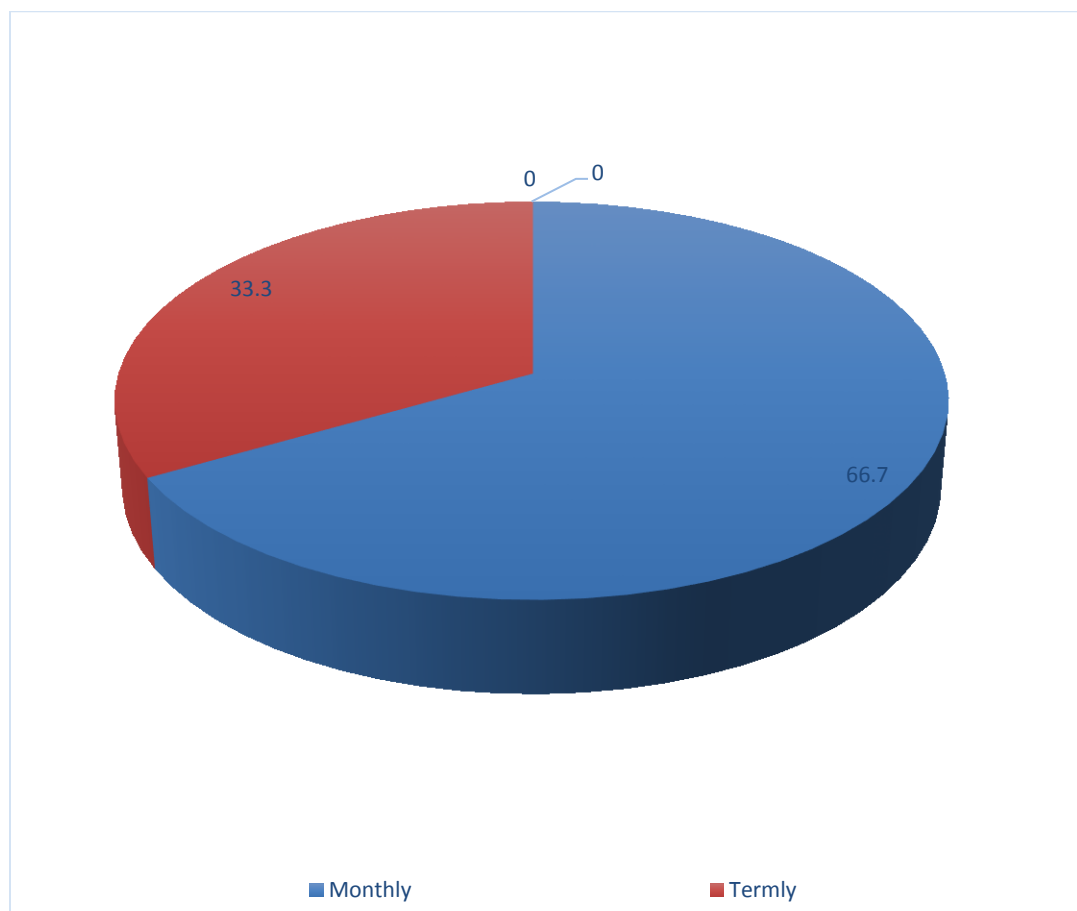


Figure 1 Mode of Fees Payment

Parents preferred paying school fees monthly (66.7%) as opposed to termly (33.3%) as Figure 1 reveals. This was observed strongly despite the school fees being on an average of 10, 000 Kenya Shillings. And below (72.2%) as seen in the Table 2 below. Monthly payment is a reflection of parental socio-economic status. Termly payment means the child will settle down and learn uninterrupted. On the contrary, in some instances monthly payment may lead to interruptions during the term time. It was of interest to investigate the average fees per term in order to ably establish the social economic status of the parents in this study and the findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Amount of School fees Charged on Termly Basis

School Fees Per Term	N	Percent
Below 10,000 Kes	130	72.2
Up to 19,000 Kes	40	22.2
20,000 & Above	10	5.6
Total	180	100

A majority (72.2%) of the sampled parents as Table 2 indicates had enrolled their children in schools where termly fees was Ksh 10,000.00. Parents enrolled their children in centers that matched their socio-economic status. If the fees charged were commensurate with the quality of services offered within the centers, only 5.6% of the children under study had access to such schooling privileges. It was important to find out how parents perceived the fees charged in the various pre-schools. This would help the researcher establish the social economic status in that, parents would give their opinion according to their financial or economic standing. There were two options in this; within range or too high. Their perceptions are summarized in Table 3

Table 3 Perception of Parents on Fees Charged

Parents Perception of Fees	N	Percent
Within Range	80	44.4
Too High	100	55.6
Total	180	100

The researcher posed a question on parental perception on school fees charged in the sampled pre-school centers. A good number (55.6%) felt that the school fees was too high, while 44.4% were comfortable rating the charges as being within range. This further portrays the financial constraints the parents could be going through in their attempt to raise the required fees. It is also an indication of the socio-economic status of the parents under study. To establish the monthly incomes participating parents were asked to tick in their respective brackets among three options as shown in Table 4. It was felt that this would be an indicator regarding their socio-economic status.

Table 4 Income/Salaries and Remuneration of Parents

Income/Salary and Remuneration (KSh.)	N	Percent
To link independent and dependent variable		
5,000-10,000	18	10.0
10,001-20,000	96	53.3
	66	36.7
Above 20,000		
Total	180	100.0

With regard to, parental income majority of the sampled parents in Table 4, were within the range of KSh.10, 001 to KSh.20, 000. This relates well with their preference for schools that charged up to KSh. 10,000. 36.7% had an income of above KSh. 20,000, hence only a few would opt for schools whose school fee was above KSh. 20,000 as seen in Table 4.10 (5.6%). This information is a reflection of parental socio-economic status. This situation could be further compounded where family size was large, as this would undoubtedly overstretch the resources. Moreover parents who are in formal employment as the following section presents may be time constrained to make extra earnings their low pay notwithstanding.

There was a need to find out the type of economic activities they engage in, either in formal or non-formal. The information gathered in this area is presented in Table 5

Table 5: Type of Employment/ Economic Engagement

Type of Employment	N	Percent
Formal Employment	93	51.7
Self-Employment	71	39.4
Other	16	8.9
Total	180	100.0

The researcher also investigated the type of parental economic engagement and as Table 5 clearly shows, slightly over 50% of the parents are in formal employment. The second largest economic engagement, 39.4%, was based on self-employment. A few parents, 8.9% were in other non-specified economic ventures.

Choice for: size, location and quality of residence is based on a family's socio-economic status. The researcher was therefore concerned to establish the type of residence a family lived in with regard to rented or own occupier shelters. This would help the researcher to ascertain the socio-economic status of the family. In addition it would shed some light on how well settled the family was (see Table 6).

Table 6 Family Residence

Type of House Lived in	N	Percent
Rental	141	78.3
Own House	39	21.7
Total	180	100.0

Table 6 details the type of residence. It was observed that a majority of the respondents (78.3%) were living in rental houses, while only 21.7% owned the houses they were living in. The big number of parents in rented houses is a clear indication that the location studied is a rich commuter zone. Therefore, most parents resided in this area because of their convenience to work or other commitments.

From the above results however, it was not possible to determine whether there was a statistical significant difference between parents' socio-economic status and their preschool children's socio-emotional behavior and learning and hence the data was subjected to t test as Table 7 shows.

Test of Hypothesis: Parental socio-economic status does not influence pre-school children's socio-emotional behaviour and learning performance.

Table 7, Test Results

Bivariate Correlation Coefficients	
r^2 Corr. Coeff. (r) Sig. (2-tailed)	Socio-economic status
	.831
	.691
	.001
Pearson's Chi-Square Test	
Chi-square value	Socio-economic status
df	29.305
Sig. (2-tailed)	12
	.001
N	30

Table 7 gives the output of both bivariate correlation analysis and Pearson's Chi-Square test. In the first part, the correlation coefficients between the independent variable: socio-economic status, and the dependent variable, children's socio-emotional behavior and learning performance. It can be observed there is a relatively strong correlation between socio-economic status and preschool children's socio-emotional behavior and learning performance. However, not all the correlation coefficients are positive.

This observation is similar to the output of the bivariate correlation analysis since all the correlation coefficients were significant. From the two separate tests, it was concluded that at 5% level of significance, the survey data provided sufficient evidence there exists a significant relationship between children's socio-emotional behavior and learning performance and the independent variable, parental socio-economic status.

A study by Ghati (2014) revealed similar results. The study, which was conducted in Ngong Division, Kajiado County focused on interrelation between early childhood development and socio-economic factors of parents. The study observed that a strong link exists between the two variables. A similar study in America by Mcloyd (1998) had previously revealed the same results. The findings in this study do not deviate much from previous studies; especially in terms of the existence of relationship between pre-school socio-emotional behaviour and learning performance and parental socio-economic factors.

6. CONCLUSION

Socio-emotional development and learning performance in early childhood are indicators of the best care giving from the parents and significant others right from their tender age. From the findings, the study has found that parental factors are significant in explaining the development of the dependent variables under study. The study finds that parental socio-economic status has a strong influence on the child's brain growth at the early childhood age. Social-economic status is highly related with parental stress, which in turn influences the way these parents interact with their pre-school going children. The early years of life provide a window of opportunity to lay a strong foundation for a child's life. Proper health, nutrition and early stimulation through interaction during this stage, facilitates brain development and total child well-being. Children reared in poverty or such deprived environments around the world, lag behind their more advantaged peers in physical, language, cognitive and socio-emotional development (World Bank, 2010). The factors under study evolve around the parents standing with regard to their ability to stimulate their children as they provide the needs holistically. Children in deprived environments are likely to, as they get older, experience marked challenges and may not measure up with their counter parts. When these children grow up, they earn less as adults and may find themselves engaging in risky social behavior.

Existing literature review indicates that parental factors presented an accumulated risk scenario to socio-emotional development and learning performance. In this study, the specific relationship of the parental social economic status, presents an almost linear relationship to socio-emotional development and learning performance in pre-school children.

The study findings are a pointer to the need to address parental factors by raising awareness to threshold levels on parental socio-economic status, parental social interaction, parental education level and the size of the family. Of

notable concerns is the relationship that exists in multiplication of the rest of the factors where one particular appears to feature strongly.

Parental socio-economic status explained the kind of housing, environment and healthy decisions made in the house. Based on this finding, the study recommends on education awareness of the fair standards expected in raising the best children able to cope socio-emotionally and capable of acquiring skills hence a smooth transition from childhood to young adulthood.

Early Childhood Education in Kenya focuses on enhancing holistic education, as such there should be more emphasis on the child rearing practices. Parental environment may have to be monitored to ensure that it complements the pre-school efforts towards fostering growth and development. Parents may require regular sensitization and actual training on the importance of socio-emotional well-being of their children. They should also be enlightened to realize the relationship between this aspect of development and learning performance

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