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RESEARCH ARTICLE

PERCEIVED FATHERS' PARENTING BEHAVIOURS AND ADOLESCENT CHILDREN'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN KENYA PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

Dr. Scholastica N. Kariuki Githinji¹ and Stanley Githinji Kuria².

1. Daystar University.
2. Kayole 1 Primary School, Nairobi.

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Abstract

The study explored the correlation of children's perceptions of their fathers' parenting behaviors and the pupils' academic performance in Kenya. Survey method involving self report measures was used to gather data on perceptions of fathers' support, monitoring, availability and involvement in school activities while official academic records provided mean scores for English, maths, and science. The research was guided by Urie Bronfenbrenner ecological theory and Baumrind (1968) parenting model. The respondents comprised of class 7 pupils selected by simple random sampling- of one district, 5 schools were selected and class in each stream, which led to 166 female and 198 male pupils in the study. Pearson and Spearman correlation coefficient techniques were used to analyze data. Findings revealed that fathers' high monitoring, availability and provision of basic needs are linked to pupils' higher academic performance at $p < .001$. However, fathers' involvement in school activities was not linked to their children's academic performance at $p < .001$. This research has both theoretical and practical implication; Parents and teachers can gain insight as to how fathers' behaviors relate with the academic outcome of children. The findings added useful knowledge towards enhancing fathers' child care activities and improving academic performance. The findings can be used to train fathers on involvement in raising their children and to enhance family-school ecological environment for children's learning.

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Introduction:-

It is generally recognized that for pupils to maximize their academic potential parental support needs to be present. Attempts to enhance parental involvement in children's education have been made by governments, administrators, educators and parents' organizations across the world including Kenya. The researcher's anecdotal observations in Nairobi schools indicate that fathers are less involved in their children's school activities than mothers. The Kenya Government recognizes the significant effects of parental participation on the quality of learning and notes that parental participation includes the use of available opportunities, providing information and participating in activities that promote children's learning (Kenya Law Reports, 2010). Parental involvement at home may occur in the form of investment of resources in the schooling of their children, discussion about school, helping children with

homework, attending workshops, meetings, and other school activities (Rain and William, 2011). Fathers who are available for their children expose them to various learning experiences (UNICEF, 2002). Such fathers also tend to provide material support for their children that directly aid learning or indirectly facilitate related learning activities. Further, a father's disciplinary methods, communication styles and behavior control strategies may also influence their children's academic performance. A father's positive role in a child's life can be realized if he is actively present for the child. As such, children of absent fathers and those without fathers may not perform as well as those with physically present fathers (Pruett, 2000).

Fathers who are hostile to their family members may create physical, emotional and interaction barriers. Additionally, children who do not connect positively with their fathers are likely to experience low academic achievement. These barriers affect the children's self-esteem and hence they may act negatively toward the learning process (UNICEF, 2002). Fathers who fail to develop positive psychological and emotional connection with their children may negatively influence their interest in going to school, and their overall participation in learning activities. The children may therefore, achieve low grades. However, a father who develops high self-esteem for his child through cooperation and friendly interactions is likely to make him or her happier and confident about their school work. The high esteem may make learning process easier, and is likely to promote high academic achievement.

Studies show that fathers' availability and involvement is associated with academic success, as well as social, emotional and cognitive well-being (Howrd, Lefever, Borkowski, and Whitman, 2006). It is also noted that fathers who work for long hours and those who spend a lot of time in social places may not have adequate time for their children (Crouter, Bumpass & McHale, 2001). Consequently, such fathers could be less effective in positively influencing academic performance of their children, compared to those who spare more time for their children. In addition, their children are also more likely to have social and emotional difficulties that may lead to poor academic performance. Parke and Gauvain (2009) are of the view that experiences in the family may affect the children's view of their academic abilities. For example, fathers who provide material support for the family, supply educational resources and get involved in their children's school activities are more likely to promote higher academic achievement than fathers who are minimally involved in the parenting activity. In addition, Parke and Gauvain (2009) assert that children from parents of low social economic status are more likely to experience problems related to poverty, feeling inadequate and may lack resources needed for learning. Such children may attend school without proper uniform, food, reading and writing materials, and suffer from child abuse and neglect. Fathers' social economic status may thus negatively affect their children's academic performance.

Fathers engaging in high stress occupations like police work, hawking, medical practice, mining and transport industry may not undertake their fatherly responsibilities effectively. Job overloads could be interfering with the way fathers relate with their children thus lead to low academic achievement. Fathers' over-indulgence in alcohol and substance abuse may lead to violence, abusive and authoritarian behaviors. Some children run away from such homes while others persevere in a violent and negative emotional climate. Children living in such environments are likely to be anxious, angry and stressed. Such children are likely to become low achievers in school (NACADA, 2010).

Materials and methods:-

This was a correlation survey that primarily used quantitative methods of data collection

Study Population:-

Purposeful sampling was used in selecting Nairobi County which comprises of a cosmopolitan population. Additionally, simple random sampling was used and Embakasi District was selected, Furthermore simple random sampling was used in selecting 10% percent of public schools in the district while stratified random sampling was used to obtain pupils in one class 7 stream for each selected schools with more than one steam. Embakasi district has 21 registered Public Primary Schools; as such a sample of class 7 pupils from 5 schools comprised a sufficient sample; with an expected population of 70 pupils in a class.

Fathers' Parenting Behaviors:-

Adolescent children filled in questionnaire on selected fathers' behaviors that measured their perceived support, control, availability and involvement in school activities. Fathers' support involved provision of basic need and school needs, while fathers' involvement involved attendance to school meeting, checking home work and

meeting class teachers. Additionally, fathers' control was assessed by examining whether the child was physically punished, received harsh words from, denied basic needs on behaving badly. Children were asked whether they were rewarded on doing something good and if the father instructed them on how they behaved in a friendly way. Finally, the children were also asked if the father bothered whether they misbehave or not. Fathers' availability was examined by items that sought to find out whether the child spent time with the father and if he lives with the family.

Adolescent Children's Academic Performance:-

On the other hand, data on dependent variables was gathered on children's academic performance that included completion of assignment tasks, and achievement in tests. Data on the pupils' academic performance was gathered using self reports measures and official examination records.

Statistical Analysis:-

The collected data was keyed into computer software- Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19. The values for each of the respondent's responses for fathers' behaviors were summed up and a mean score for each variable was computed. On the other hand, the score on adolescents' completion of tasks and academic score were also rated into means scores. Fathers' control, and availability were rated at 1 (low), 2 (moderate) and 3 (high) and while availability ranged from 1 rarely available, 2 often availability and 3 always available. For the independent variables, data on children academic performance ranged from 1(below Average, 2 (average) and 3 (above average). Furthermore, the scores on both the perceived parental behaviours and academic performance were correlated using Pearson and Spearman Correlation Coefficient as appropriate.

Ethical Consideration:-

Authority to conduct the research was obtained from the National Council for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and from the Nairobi City Council Education Department. Ethical clearance was also obtained from the Ethical Review Committee of Kenyatta University. Moreover, informed consent was obtained from children's parents through a permission slip before data was collected. The respondents were also reassured of their confidentiality and anonymity.

Results:-

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents:-

The respondents comprised 54.5% male pupils, while 55.5% were female. The children comprised of 21.9% of the pupils aged 10-12, 75% aged 12-14 and 3.1% aged 15-17.

Fathers' Control and their Children's Academic Achievement:-

One of the objectives of the study was to examine the relationship between children perceived fathers' control and their academic achievement. As shown in Table 1, 66.7% of the children who perceived low control of their fathers scored average achievement while 48.8% those whose father's provided moderate control scored average achievement. The Highest percentage of children who perceived high control (55.9) also scored average achievement. The highest percentage (11.8%) of those who scored above average in academic achievement comprised those who perceived high control. There was no clear pattern on the link between perceived fathers' control and children's academic achievement from the descriptive statistics, but those who perceived high fathers' control had the highest mean score of 1.795 compared to the moderate and the low.

Table 1:- Fathers' control and their Children's Academic Achievement.

Fathers' Control	Academic Achievement				Mean Academic Performance
	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Total	
Low Control	1 33.3%	2 66.7%	0 .0%	3 100.0%	1.6667
Moderate Control	63 48.8%	53 41.1%	13 10.1%	129 100.0%	1.6124
High Control	41 32.3%	71 55.9%	15 11.8%	127 100.0%	1.7953
Total	105 40.5%	126 48.6%	28 10.8%	259 100.0%	

Pearson correlation coefficient was computed at $\alpha = 0.05$. As shown in table 2 the computed Pearson correlation coefficient at $\alpha = .05$ (2tailed test) indicated that the correlation between fathers' control and pupils academic achievement was (.135*) = .030, $p < .05$.

Table 2:- Correlation between Fathers' control and Children's Academic Achievement.

	Academic Achievement	Father's Control
Pearson Correlation	.135*	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.030	
N	259	278

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). The results indicate that increased fathers' control is positively linked with children's academic achievement. Fathers increased control has some significant influence on children's academic performance.

Fathers' Availability and Children's Academic Performance:-

As shown in Table 3, It was found out that the children who perceived low father's availability comprised the highest percentage of pupils (52.5%) that scored below average. Additionally, those who perceived their fathers as always available (30.8%) comprised the lowest percentage of those who were below average. In addition, the highest percentage (59.3%) of children who were above average comprised those who perceived their fathers as always available while the lowest percentage of those who were average achievers comprised (41.4%) and were those who perceived their fathers as rarely available. Furthermore, the highest percentage of children who were above average (17.4%) comprised of those whose fathers were often available while the lowest percentage of the above average achievers (6.1%) were those whose fathers' were rarely available.

Table 3: Fathers' Availability and Pupils Academic Achievement

Father Availability			Academic Achievement			Total	Mean Academic Achievement
			Below Average	Average	Above Average		
	Rarely	Count	52	41	6	99	1.5354
		%	52.5%	41.4%	6.1%	100.0%	
	Often	Count	32	39	15	86	
		%	37.2%	45.3%	17.4%	100.0%	1.8023
	Always	Count	28	54	9	91	
		%	30.8%	59.3%	9.9%	100.0%	1.7912
Total		Count	112	134	30	276	
		%	40.6%	48.6%	10.9%	100.0%	1.7029

The highest mean achievement was recorded by those who perceived their fathers as always available while the pupils who perceived their fathers as rarely available had a the lowest mean score of 1.54.

On computing Pearson correlation coefficient to establish the relationship between fathers' availability and pupils academic achievement using was computed at $\alpha = 0.01$ as shown in Table 6.

Table 4:- Correlation between Fathers' Availability and their Children's Academic Achievement.

The results for the correlation between fathers' availability and pupils academic achievement as shown in Table 5 is $r (.165^{**}) = .006$, $p < .01$.

		Academic Achievement	Fathers' Availability
Fathers' Availability	Pearson Correlation	.165**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	
	N	276	294
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The results $p < .01$ indicated there is a significant positive relationship between fathers' availability and pupils' academic achievement. It implies that increased fathers' availability is linked to their children's higher academic achievement.

Fathers' Involvement in School Activities and their Children's Academic Achievement

The results indicate that the highest percentage of pupils who scored below average (49.4%) comprised those whose father's were rarely involved in school activities while those whose fathers were always available comprised the lowest percentage of those who were below average (33.3%).

Table 5:- Fathers' Involvement in School Activities and their Children's Academic Achievement.

			Below Average	Average	Above Average	Total	Mean academic Achievement
Involvement School Activities	Rarely	Count	42	35	8	85	1.6000
		%	49.4%	41.2%	9.4%	100.0%	
	Often	Count	45	59	14	118	1.7373
		%	38.1%	50.0%	11.9%	100.0%	
	Always	Count	24	41	7	72	1.7639
		%	33.3%	56.9%	9.7%	100.0%	
Total		Count	111	135	29	275	1.7018
		%	40.4%	49.1%	10.5%	100.0%	

The highest percentage (59.3%) of those children with average performance (56.9%) comprised of those whose fathers were always involved in school activities. The lowest percentage (41.2%) of those who were average achievers comprised those whose fathers' were rarely involved in school activities. In addition, the highest percentage of children who were above average (11.9%) comprised of those whose fathers were often involved in school activities while the lowest percentage of the above average achievers (9.4%) were those whose fathers' were rarely involved in school activities. Further academic achievement mean score were determined. Children whose parents were rarely involved in school activities had a mean score of 1.60, those whose parents were often involved had a mean of 1.76 while the ones whose fathers' always got involved scored a mean of 1.76.

Pearson correlation coefficient was further computed to establish the relationship between father's involvement in school activities and their children's academic performance as shown in as shown in Table 6 at $\alpha = 0.05$. The findings indicated that the relationship between perceived fathers' involvement in school activities and their academic achievement was $r = .098$ at $p = .106 > .05$.

Table 7:- Fathers' Involvement in School Activities and their Children's' Academic Activities.

		Academic Achievement	Involvement In School Activities
Fathers' Involvement In School Activities	Pearson Correlation	.098	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.106	
	N	275	293

These results indicate that Fathers' involvement in school activities has no significant relationship with their children's' academic performance. The findings imply that fathers' involvement is not linked to either higher or lower achievement.

Discussion:-

The inferential statistical results indicated that fathers' high control was positively related to the pupils' academic achievement. This implied that high control is beneficial for pupils' academic achievement. The control assessed involved punishment by beating, use of harsh words on misbehaving, rewarding good behaviours, showing how to behave on misbehaving and discussing issues of behaviour. The control behaviours involved a mixture physical punishment, firmness and reinforcement which entailed authoritative control. Although physical punishment is not recommended, the findings imply that firmness, providing direction and reinforcement by fathers is important for children's academic achievement.

Parents who are low in control are likely to experience behaviour problems with their children. Waime (2008) indicates that many parents are not guiding or disciplining their children. It is not surprising that the results indicate that children who experienced high control performed better than those whose father's provided low control. According to Baumrind (1968, 1971), authoritative parenting is warm and firm is critical for children, it involves

inducting children on behaviour expectation. The findings therefore validate Baumrinds (1991) theory. Furthermore, the current findings concur with Hickman and Crossland (2005) who reveal that parents who are concerned and involved in their children promote school success and positive academic improvements.

On fathers' availability high scores were positively correlated with high academic performance. The results were as expected because fathers' who are available are likely to be involved in the affairs of their children and this is likely to promote academic performance. The results concur with Ishii & Kuntz (1992) who reveal that fathers' presence extends beyond physical and fiscal boundaries to functional and emotional relations with children. Ishii & Kuntz (1992) further show that children's academic performance is greatly influenced by the absence or presence of the father in a household. Eastin (2003) in addition indicates that children of absent fathers had higher chances of being delinquent than those of present fathers. Children who behave badly are likely to perform less well than those of present fathers. Fathers' availability implies that they are accessible to the children. The availability influences the possibility of direct interaction or in-direct interaction of the children with their fathers (Lamb, Pleck, & Levine, 1987).

The current study finding that fathers' availability is positively related to their children's academic performance concurs with Lamb, Pleck and Levine (1987). The earlier findings reveal that fathers who are available for their children promote higher academic achievement than the uninvolved ones. The high academic performance can be understood from the premise that available fathers are more likely to attend to their children's academic needs. Fathers' unavailability is likely to be related to low levels of fathers' involvement in the academic affairs of their children (Nord, Brimholl & West 2001). The study was a National House hold Survey that was conducted 50 states through telephone. The study involved a sample 3- 12 grade. The survey revealed that fathers are less available for their children. However, the study showed that father availability is a powerful factor in their children's academic activities. There exists consensus that fathers' availability for their children leads to higher academic achievement. It can be inferred that fathers need to avail themselves for their children.

Finally on fathers' involvement in school activities and their children's' academic performance, it was found out that there is no significant relationship. The findings were rather surprising considering that theories suggest that parental supportiveness should promote positive adjustment. However, the general tradition among Kenyan's is that mothers are more involved in school activities. So the failure of fathers in being involved in school activities may not seriously affect children's academic achievement because father involvement is not the norm. The researcher inferred that children's whose fathers' rarely get involved in school activities are unlikely to get frustrated because fathers are less available for involvement in school meetings and appointments with class teachers than mothers. The fact that mothers get involved cushion the children from the possible frustration and thus their academic performance may not be affected.

The findings on parental involvement in school activities concur with Hassan and Anziano (2008) which examined mothers' and fathers' involvement in provision of care and academic activities for school age children in Navajo Indian families. The study revealed that fathers' involvement with their children's academic activities was not significantly associated with academic activities. The findings that concur have been conducted in the developing world where it is the mothers who mainly engage in school activities of their children.

The findings' diverge from Nord and West, 2001 findings that reveal that fathers who are involved in their children's school activities tend to influence them to become high academic achievers, have higher grade point averages, get better achievement test scores, receive superior grades, perform a year above their expected age level on academic tests, obtain higher scores on reading achievement. In addition, McBride, Sehoppe and Ilo (2005) study findings from Canadian children reveal that fathers' who are involved in their children's school activities lead to more academic learning and better performance.

Similar findings have been made by (Rimm-Kaufmann and Zang, 2005) who revealed that among girls whose low-income fathers' were more involved in school activities showed higher academic competence in reading. The current findings also differ with those obtained by National Center for Fathering (2009) Canadian. The study that involved children aged 10 to 13 revealed that 32% of fathers never visit their child's classroom and 54% never volunteer at school. More than 50% of the fathers had no contact with their kindergarten children's teachers; and in infants school only 10% of family-school communication was with fathers.

From the reviewed studies there appears to be differential findings between the study carried out in Indian and those conducted in USA and Canada. It could be that there are cultural differences in paternal involvement in their children's school activities. Cultures that have greater paternal involvement are likely to register significant relationship with academic achievement that the cultures where paternal involvement is less expected. Generally the current findings diverge from studies conducted in Western world, probably because the culture in the west is such that fathers are more involved than in Kenya and as such the impact is more felt in the western world.

Conclusion:-

In summary, the study revealed that Fathers' high control and availability enhance children's academic performance. However, Fathers' involvement in school activities does not have any significant influence on children's academic performance.

Recommendations:-

It is recommended that schools encourage and educate fathers' on involvement in monitoring their children by providing discipline and reinforcement as well as training behavior. In addition, teachers and school administrators should encourage fathers to be available for their children and educate them on how their available positively impacts on the children's academic performance.

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