

EFFECTS OF DIVORCE ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOLS PUPILS IN KANGETA DIVISION, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Divorce is dissolution of a marriage relationship. Divorce jeopardizes children emotionally, psychologically and intellectually. It affects the pupils' psychological well-being, as they go through adjustment of living without one parent. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the effects of divorce on academic achievement among primary schools pupils in Kangeta Division, Kenya. The study adapted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 18,697, comprising of 398 teachers, 26 head teachers and 18,247 pupils from in the study area. The sample size was 343 respondents, derived from 8 primary schools. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling methods were used to obtain the sample size. Three sets of questionnaires were employed as research instruments for data collection. Validity of the research instruments was improved through opinions and judgement of University experts. Reliability of the questionnaires was improved through a pilot study conducted in two primary schools in Maua Division. The reliability was estimated using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient and an average reliability coefficient 0.778 was obtained. Reliability for pupils' questionnaire was 0.846, class teachers were 0.782 and head teachers were 0.707. Data was coded for analysis through a computer programme; the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. Data analysis was by descriptive and quantitative statistics where qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The study findings revealed that pupils from divorced homes were psychologically affected. Therefore, this affected their academic achievement as they were easily irritated, depressed, and lacked attention in class. The study established that primary school pupils from divorced homes are psychologically affected hence affecting their academic achievement. The study recommends that Guidance and Counselling Services in primary schools should be encouraged to enhance positive psychological and social well-being with respect to academic achievement. The findings and recommendations should provide valuable reference for parents, teachers, school administrators, child psychologists and policy makers in education on effects of divorce on academic achievement among pupils from primary schools.

Keywords: Psychological, Effects, Divorce, Academic achievement

INTRODUCTION

Divorce is dissolution of a marriage relationship. The term divorce came from the Latin term *divortere*, meaning to turn in different ways or separate. According to Bradshaw (1999) divorce is the final termination of marital union cancelling the legal duties and responsibilities of marriage and dissolving the bonds of matrimony between the two parties. Divorce has adverse effects that touch not just the family involved but the entire society. When spouses divorce, that divorce affects relatives, friends, neighbors, employers, teachers clergy and scores of strangers. According to Collins (2003) divorce in the United States of America (USA) rose by fifty percent and have been on the increase since that time. Emery (2006) records that thirty-eight percent of white children and seventy-five percent of black children born to married parents will experience divorce prior to sixteen years of age and this leads to poor academic achievement. Statistics in Canada (1997) data indicated that there were approximately 77,000 divorces granted in Canada, a rate of 262 per 100,000 people. Therefore when parent's separate and the father

is denied the custody may be detrimental to academic achievement of the pupils.

In Africa according to Cloete (2005) divorce is highest in South Africa. Cloete (2005) notes that South Africa has an exceptionally high divorce rate and further asserts that the stressful nature of parental separation and divorce result in a high susceptibility of children to psychological, social, academic and health problems. According to South African Law Commission (SALC) of 2002 divorce is invariably traumatic for all concerned, but especially for children of such a marriage relationship hence affecting the academic achievement. According to Cohen (2002) over one million children are living in divorced families each year in South Africa. According to South African Law Commission (2002) divorce or separation is invariably traumatic for all concerned, but especially for children of such a marriage or relationship which may affect their academic achievement.

In Kenya according to Mwaniki (1984) 22% of marriages end in divorce due to misunderstanding

between the spouses. Mwaniki (1984) asserts that in case where divorce was permitted, children may suffer emotionally and psychologically being brought up by one parent, a relative or a grandparent and this may lead to poor academic achievement. According to Sakwa (2014) the number of cases filed for child custody is alarmingly on the rise in Kenya. In 2012, there were 1775 cases filed for custody, in 2013 the number went up to 1865 and in January 2014 a total of 170 cases related to divorce had already been filed in Kenya. This indeed reflects the rates of divorce in Kenya which may not only affect the spouses concerned but also the academic achievement of the pupils from divorced families.

High rates of divorce have been experienced as a result of *miraa* (*Khat*) farming since Kangeta is popularly known for *Miraa* (*Khat*) growing. This is also supported by Sikiru and Babu (2009) who estimated that about one-third of all wages were spent on *miraa* consumption at the expense of vital needs, indicating dependence. Further, Kalix and Khan (1984) adds that family life is harmed because of neglect, dissipation of family income and appropriate behaviour which in many cases leads to parental divorce and negligence. Pupils' academic and emotional well-being if properly monitored will go a long way in ensuring that potentials in pupils' academic achievement are harnessed, and put into use for national development and for realisation of vision 2030.

METHODOLOGY

This study adapted a descriptive survey design, which is a process of collecting data to test hypotheses or answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects under study. It determines and reports the way things are and it attempts to describe such things as possible behaviour, attitudes values and characters (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). The research design was suitable for this study because the researcher established effects of divorce on academic achievement among pupils from primary schools in Kangeta Division, Igembe South Sub-County of Kenya without manipulating any of the study variables.

The study was carried out in Kangeta Division, Kenya and focused on pupils and teachers in primary schools within the division. Divorce rates in Kangeta Division are high and it affects the academic achievement of pupils. Primary schools in Kangeta Division, Kenya were preferred because reports from the AEO (2013) indicate that Kangeta Division academic achievement of pupils is a major concern. Statistics from Igembe South Sub-County Education Office year 2014 showed the target population as 18,697 pupils, 389 teachers and 26 head teachers in the 26 public primary schools

within the Sub- County. The accessible population was 2132 respondents comprising of 2080 class seven pupils, 26 head teachers and 26 class seven teachers. Kangeta Division has 26 primary schools with a population of 2080 class seven pupils. Simple random sampling was used to select 8 primary schools.

The Ministry of education recommends an average class size of 40 pupils per class. Therefore 40 pupils were selected from each school using simple sampling technique. The sample size of pupils was distributed among the 8 primary. According to Kathuri and Pals (1993) the sample size for an accessible population of 2080 class seven pupils is 327 respondents. The other respondents in the study included 8 class seven teachers from each of the sampled schools and 8 head teachers also from the sampled schools. These were selected by purposive sampling since they had the required information for this study. The total number of respondents was 343.

Table 2: Summary of the sample

	Total number	Sample
Head teachers	26	8
Class teachers	26	8
Pupils	2080	327
Total	2132	343

This study employed questionnaires as research instruments for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) a questionnaire is a group of printed questions which have been deliberately designed and structured to be used to gather information from respondents. The questionnaires were appropriate to this study because they could be used on a large number of respondents simultaneously.

Borg and Gall (1996) point out that questionnaire are appropriate for the studies since they collect information that is not directly observable as they inquire about feelings, motivation, attitudes and accomplishment as well as experiences of individuals. Questionnaires had been chosen on the bases of these strengths. Quantitative data values were coded and analysed using Statistical Package for Social ScienceS version 20 for windows. Levesque (2007) recommends that SPSS can be used for data analysis.

The quantitative data that were obtained from the questionnaires was analysed using descriptive statistics and presented using frequency counts, means and percentages. The qualitative data obtained from the open ended question items were analysed and discussed thematically.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first objective sought information about primary school pupils' psychological effects of divorce on academic achievement. Information on Table 1 shows

the extent to which pupils agreed or disagreed with given statements on psychological effects of divorce towards academic achievement. The results of data analysis are presented on a five level likert scale:

Table 1. Pupils' opinions on psychological effects of divorce on academic achievement

Statement	SD(%)	D(%)	U(%)	A(%)	SA(%)
Pupils from divorced homes have difficulties in completing home work which affects their academic achievement	4.5	9.6	13.0	43.2	27.3
Pupils from divorced homes do not participate in group discussion hence poor academic achievement	6.8	13.2	11.4	43.2	25.5
Pupils from divorced homes are absent minded in class have learning difficulties	3.2	8.2	14.6	45.9	28.2
Pupils from divorced homes look depressed most of the time and therefore perform poorly in class	1.8	5.5	8.2	52.3	28.2
Pupils from divorced homes find it hard to forgive when offended hence affect class concentration	5.5	3.2	9.1	50.9	32.3
Pupils from divorced homes do not appreciate others in school and this isolates them from class discussions	0.9	4.5	10.0	52.7	31.4
Pupils from divorced homes lack attention and this affects the studies	4.5	4.5	12.7	50.0	31.8
Pupils from divorced homes poorly attend school leading to low grades in the exam	4.5	5.9	11.4	48.6	29.5
Pupils from divorced homes are highly irritated when offended hence do not do well in class	4.5	9.1	9.1	50.9	29.5
Average	4.0	7.1	11.1	48.6	29.2

Table 1 shows that 77.8% of the pupils agreed while 11.1 % disagreed and 11.1 % were undecided with most of the negative statements on psychological effects of divorce on academic achievement.

Information was sought further on any other feeling over parents' divorce that affects academic achievement and the pupils' responses generated the following thematic clusters; lack basic needs like food and clothing which affects their concentration, lacks parental guidance and love and lacks the role model from the significant other hence contributing to poor academic achievement. These results are in line with the findings of Clark- Stewart (1996) who stated that there are deleterious psychological effects of divorce on pupils' self-esteem, achievement in school and psychological adjustment. Clark further asserts that when pupils' self- esteem is lowered the academic achievement is greatly wounded.

The study sought opinions of class seven teachers concerning the psychological effects of divorce on academic achievements. Table 2 shows the results from a five level Likert scale on which the class seven teachers noted their opinions about the extent of agreement or disagreement with the statements.

Results on Table 2 shows that 74.2% of class teachers agreed while only 25% disagreed with the statements on psychological effects of divorce on academic achievement of pupils. This support the previous results obtained from pupils' opinions on psychological effects of divorce on academic achievement.

Information was sought further from class teachers on any other psychological effects of divorce on academic achievement of pupils. The main feeling was that pupils from divorced families are chronically out of school especially older ones taking care of their siblings. There was another view that they look withdrawn most of the time. Some class teachers attested that some pupils got engaged into drugs and this affects their academic achievement. These findings agree with the views of Clark-Stewart and Hayward (1996) in their studies reporting that there are deleterious effects of divorce on children's achievement and psychological adjustment. Head teachers gave their opinions regarding pupils' psychological effects of divorce on achievement.

Table 3 contains the data analysis results on the head teachers' opinions about pupils' psychological effects of divorce on academic achievement.

Table 2. Class seven teachers' opinions on psychological effects of divorce on academic achievement

Statement	SD(%)	D(%)	U(%)	A(%)	SA(%)
Pupils from divorced homes have difficulties in completing homework hence performing poorly	0.0	12.5	12.5	50.0	25.0
Pupils from divorced homes do not participate in group discussion and do not benefit academically	0.0	12.5	0.0	62.5	25.0
Pupils from divorced homes are absent minded in class hence have learning difficulties	0.0	12.5	12.5	50.0	25.0
Pupils from divorced homes look depressed most of the time hence performing poorly in class	0.0	12.5	0.0	75.0	12.5
Pupils from divorced homes find it hard to forgive when offended hence affect class concentration	0.0	25.0	0.0	50.0	25.0
Pupils from divorced homes do not appreciate others in class and this isolates them in class discussions	0.0	0.0	12.5	75.0	12.5
Pupils from divorced homes lack attention when in class and affects their studies	12.5	12.5	25.5	50.0	12.5
Pupils from divorced homes poorly attend school leading to low grades in the exam	12.5	12.5	0.0	62.5	12.5
Pupils from divorced homes are highly irritated when offended and do not do well in class	0.0	12.5	0.0	75.0	12.5
Average	12.5	12.5	7.5	55.6	18.6

Table 3: Head teachers' opinions on psychological effects of divorce on academic achievement

Statement	D(%)	SD(%)	U(%)	A(%)	SA(%)
Pupils from divorced homes have difficulties in completing homework which affects academic achievement	12.5	0.0	12.5	62.5	12.5
Pupils from divorced homes do not participate in group discussions hence poor academic achievement	0.0	0.0	0.0	75.0	25.0
Pupils from divorced homes are absent minded in class hence have learning difficulties	12.5	0.0	12.5	50.0	25.0
Pupils from divorced homes look depressed most of the time hence do poorly academically	12.5	0.0	25.0	37.5	25.0
Pupils from divorced homes find it hard to forgive when offended hence affects concentration	0.0	12.5	0.0	62.5	25.0
Pupils from divorced homes do not appreciate others in school and this isolates them from discussions	12.5	0.0	12.5	62.5	12.5
Pupils from divorced homes lacks attention when studying and affects their studies	0.0	12.5	0.0	62.5	25.0
Pupils from divorced homes poorly attends school leading to low grades in the exam	12.5	0.0	0.0	75.0	12.5
Pupils from divorced homes are highly irritated when offended hence poor class performance	12.5	0.0	12.5	62.5	12.5
Average	8.3	12.5	8.3	61.1	19.4

Results on Table 3 indicate that 80.5% of head teachers agreed while 20.8% disagreed with the listed negative statements on pupils' psychological effects of divorce on academic achievement. Majority of pupil participants in this study comprising of on average 77.8% pointed out that they have psychological problems on academic achievement. This suggests that most primary school pupils from divorced homes exhibit a negative psychological effect of divorce on academic achievement. Data analysis results on pupils' psychological effects of divorce on academic

achievement shows that most pupils have difficulties in completing work; do not participate in group discussion; are absent minded most of the time; depressed most of the time and mind wandering away most of the time. It can therefore be concluded that pupils from divorced homes have negative psychological issues which affects academic achievement. These findings correspond to the views of Clark- Stewart and Hayward (1996) in their studies purporting that there are deleterious effects of divorce on children's self-esteem, achievement in school and

psychological adjustment. When pupils are not able to adjust psychologically after parents' divorce and exhibit problems not there before, then mental block develops culminating in low achievement.

Rohner and Veneziano (2001) in their studies suggest that the overall father love appears to be as heavily implicated as mother love in offspring's psychological well-being and health, as well as in an array of psychological behavioural problems and towards achievement. Father involvement is positively correlated with children's overall social competence, social initiative, social maturity, and capacity for relatedness with others (Olsen, 2005). Hayward (1996) in his studies suggests that it was important for both parents to remain responsible to the upbringing of children. If children were to experienced psychological growth and strength, in most cases children repeatedly loved both of their parents and strongly wanted contact with both. Hence, it is important for the non-custodial parent to spend time together with children, for children preferred to do everyday tasks with the non-resident parent, such as doing homework, watching television or just talking.

The class seven teachers and head teachers viewed pupils as being depressed most of the time and expressed that most pupils had problems with completing work. As indicated by Dubowitz (2001) studies; pupils whose fathers are involved in their care are more likely to be securely attached to them, be better able to handle strange situations and be more resilient in the face of stressful situations. Parents' involvement is positively correlated with children's overall life satisfaction and experience of less depression. According to Mischel (1998) children who have attention from non-custodial parents are better able to manage their emotions and impulses in an appropriate manner.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicated that majority of primary school pupils from divorced homes exhibited negative psychological effects of divorce which has impacted negatively on academic achievement. This is where pupils showed difficulties in completing homework, being absent minded most of the time, had depressive symptoms, getting highly irritated and not submitting assignments to the teacher and failure to concentrate in their studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made from the findings of this study: Parents should have an important role to play in the outcome of children's reaction to their divorce since it affects their academic

achievement. Parents should handle divorce issues cautiously since it usually affects be the psychological well being and academic achievement of children. Parents therefore should handle divorce in a more mature and healthy way to allow the children a strong chance of making a positive adjustment to divorce without affecting their academic achievement

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