EFFECTS OF INTER-PARENTAL CONFLICT ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION OF FORM THREE STUDENTS IN RUIRU SUB-COUNTY KENYA

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ABSTRACT: *This study sought to examine the effects of inter-parental conflict on form three students in Ruiru Sub- County Kenya. It was guided by four theories: Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of needs theory; Martin Selgman's Learned Helplessness Theory, Grych and Fincham Cognitive Contextual Framework Theory and Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. A mixed method research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of 281 Form three students from31 public and private secondary schools in Ruiru sub-county. Children Perception of Inter-parental Conflict Questionnaire (CPIC) Academic Motivation Survey (AMS) for Students, an Interview Schedule for Guidance and Counselling Master/Mistress and a Focus Group Discussion Protocol for parents of the students were used in data collection. Data collected was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings disclosed that there was a significant relationship between inter-parental conflict and students' academic achievement motivation in qualitative data.*

KEYWORDS: Inter-Parental, Conflict, Academic, Students, Parents

INTRODUCTION

Inter-parental conflict refers to the disagreements between parents. The disagreement can be as a result of differences in opinions, values, and judgements and views. In families, Conflict between spouses is a normal and necessary part of family life. However, when it is handled in destructive rather than constructive ways, it can have negative consequences both for parents and their children. One major factor that plays a large role in a student's development is the witnessing of inter-parental conflict (Cummings & Davies, 2010). Exposure to this conflict has been shown to have a direct influence on children. Witnessing parents' anger is physiologically and affectively stressful for the children.

Inter-parental conflict is said to be more disruptive to children than divorce or the loss of a father (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Peterson & Zill, 1986, as cited in Morrison & Coiro, 1994). Amato, (1997) highlighted the view that parents play a central role in shaping the child's development through their influence. Thus, if parents keep having conflicts in their homes, children are bound to be affected as they grow up. They also asserted that children learn through imitating and identification with the parents and other significant adults. If the children grow up in a family where violence is a common phenomenon, they may end up doing the same in their families, unless intervention is carried out (Karimipour, 2016).

Inter-parental conflicts affect children by influencing psychological processes in the children or the functioning of family systems such as parenting (Betram, 2005). If the family is undergoing conflict, parents will not have time for their children. Berk (1999), asserts that problematic school performance, inter-parental relationships and low academic achievement motivation, are among the more common problems associated with child abuse and neglect.

Such children often experience difficulties with social relationship, problem solving and the ability to cope with new, challenging and stressful situations. According to Maina (2010), abused or neglected children also develop aggressive behaviour patterns, others become withdrawn while others even get Post Traumatic Stress Disorder(PTSD) or major depression.

Therefore, this study was designed to identify how inter-parental conflict affects academic achievement motivation among from three students in Secondary schools in Kiambu County.

LITERATURE UNDERPINNING

The literature on the relationship between inter-parental conflict and students' achievement motivations is scarce. Hardly any study has been undertaken to study the phenomenon, yet the increasing rate of inter-parental conflict, has affected families, schools, churches, the government, and the society (Maina, 2010). Inter-parental conflicts lead to children maladjustments which in turn results into negative effects on social, cognitive, educational and social-biological function (Cummings & Davies, 2002). The students' lives are enclosed or imprisoned if they continue being exposed to a violent environment and their self-esteem will be affected. This explains lack of motivation on students which is a major complain for teachers in schools (Muola, 2016; Riffat, 2011).

Psychologists have developed various theories that served to establish inter-parental conflicts effects on academic achievement among Students in Secondary schools. This study was based on the following theories: Martin Selgman's Learned Helplessness Theory and Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory.

Martin Seligman's (1975) helplessness theory explains that depression occurs when a person learns that their attempts to escape negative situations make no difference. Learned helplessness is passive behaviour which is characterized by instability to learn. A state of learned helplessness may affect the achievement motivation and academic success of students, because it involves psychological factors that play an important role in learning, like self-efficacy. Students become passive and will endure aversive stimuli or environments even when escape is possible.

A child who is brought up in a family where fighting is the order of the day and who tries all he can to stop the parents from conflicts and fails, develops a sense of helplessness. This is firstly described by symptoms of depression. To begin with, the student gets emotional disturbance. The child develops sadness, lassitude and a hopeless outlook on life. Secondly this child develops a reluctance to initiate action since he/she has tried over and over again in the past and failed to stop the parents from fights. This may lead to depression; the child then develops a cognitive deficit and is not able to solve problems and learn anything new, which makes him or her passive. This is caused by the new adopted set of belief in one's own helplessness on the causes of the fights between the parents. The cheerful beliefs that the child develops are like: "It's my incompetence that caused the fights; I am not competent in anything…" The child develops a sense of helplessness/hopelessness. This can lead to depression, low self-esteem, lack of confidence and at long last low achievement motivation.

Bronfenbrenner's work illustrates the importance of the home environment on a child's development. His theory predicts how the additional layers of influence help shape the family

environment and, consequently children's development. According to him, a person interacts with five layers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979): a) Microsystem: the microsystem is the smallest and most immediate environment in which the student lives. As such, the microsystem comprises the daily home, school or peer group or community environment of the child. The interactions within the microsystem typically involve personal relationships with family members, classmates, teachers and caregivers, in which influences go back and forth. How these groups or individuals interact with the student will affect how the child grows. Similarly, how this child reacts to people in his microsystem will also influence how they treat him/her in return. More nurturing and more supportive interactions and relationships will understandably foster the child's improved development. b) Mesosystem: this layer encompasses the interaction of the different microsystems which the developing child finds himself/herself in. It is, in essence, a system of microsystems and as such, involves linkages between home and school, between peer group and family, or between family and church.

These are relations between Microsystems for example, the relation of family experiences to school experiences. An example is a child who is rejected at home for instance by his/her parents may have problems in developing a positive relationship with teachers at school". Children growing up in environments with inter-parental conflicts as the order of the daymay havetheir academic achievement motivation at school affected" (Clark & Ladd, 2000, p. 43). c) Exosystem: The exosystem pertains to the linkages that may exist between two or more settings, one of which may not contain the developing child but affects him indirectly nonetheless. Other people and places which the child may not directly interact with but may still have an effect on the child. This layer has the linkages taking place between two or more settings, one of the settings is directly related to the immediate environment of the developing child, whereas the other is indirectly related, for instance, the relationship between the child and the parent's workplace. The child is not directly related to the parents' work place but the workplace could influence the home, and thus, influence the child) d) Macro system: This consists of the culture in which somebody lives. The connections would be a person's nation, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (SES). This concerns the characteristics of material resources, customs, values, norms, life-styles, parent's educational level, opportunity structures, parental occupation and hazards in which a developing child is engaged.

If a child grows up in an environment where education is not valued, the child may get affected. In a society where the age at marriage is dictated upon by some elders in the society, for instance girls getting married at an early stage, may have affect the marriage stability which may also have adverse effects on the children. e) Chronosystem: The layer covers change over time in the characteristics of the child and in the environment in which a child lives. For example, changes in family structure such as separation due to work, conflict, separation, divorce, relocation of residency, and employment opportunities may affect the family unity which may later affect the child.

The Ecological systems are very complex since they are made up of diverse components and nonlinear interactions (Wu & David, 2002). All the five systems independently influence an individual's psychological development. Yet, they are entwined so that a conflict in one system could negatively affect the others. This theory shows multiple risks for inter-parental conflict at all levels of analysis.

Abraham Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs. Maslow (1970) focuses on a person's self-actualization. A self -actualized person has the following characteristics: tolerance, welcoming uncertainty, acceptance of self and other, creativity, need for privacy, autonomy, genuine

caring for others, sense of humour and directedness. Needs are frequently defined as a lack of something that is required or desired. Human needs are divided into five categories: Physiological needs; these include food, shelter, clothing and education. When students lack these basic needs, they cannot grow holistically since they concentrate so much on their discomfort. When students are hurt by conflicts in the family especially between their parents, they may lack these needs. The achievement of the physiological needs makes one yearn for the next need in the hierarchy: safety needs. This is the need to feel secure and to be free from anxiety and fear in the society. Students who witness their parents' fight feel insecure at home. They always fear that the parents might separate one day or hurt themselves or them (Cummings & Davies, 2010). Another indication of the child's need for safety is his/her preference for some kind of undisrupted routine or rhythm. A child seems to always want a predictable, orderly world. An inconsistency in the parents, seem to make the child feel anxious and unsafe. Confronting the child with stimuli or situations will too frequently elicit the danger or terror reaction for instance inter-parental conflict, violence, separation and divorce (Cummings & Davies, 2010).

The third need according to Maslow is belonging needs. This refers to the need to be accepted and to affiliate with others. When students communicate and have a good relationship with their parents, they feel accepted. Mostly, parents who always fight have no time to make the students feel needed and loved.

Esteem need follows on the hierarchy. This need makes one gain approval from other people in the society. For example a student in school gains approval from both the peers and the teachers. When a couple fights, parents may not gain approval from their children and the society.

This study attempted to fill this existing gap in literature. Few studies have been done in Africa yet inter-parental conflicts are on the increase and have devastating effects on the students (Maina, 2010; Muola, 2010; Mbwirire, 2014). The study, therefore, sought to find out the effects of inter-parental conflicts on students' achievement motivation in Ruiru sub-county.

METHODOLOGY

The study was undertaken in Ruiru Sub-county. Ruiru Sub-County was chosen because: 1) it has a higher catchment of public and private secondary schools, 2) the county is cosmopolitan with people of diverse cultures and social inclinations; therefore, the respondents for this study represented this diversity, and 3)it was accessible and familiar to the author, therefore possible to trace the respondents. The population of the study comprised of 281 Form three students from 31 public and private secondary schools in Ruiru sub-county.

The form three students were selected because by the time of the study they had been in school for three years. They were expected to be getting more serious with their studies as they were one-year shy to doing their final (exit) examination. In addition, the researcher went further to include the guidance and counselling teachers from the selected schools in Ruiru Sub-County. Ten parents from different schools in Ruiru Sub-County were involved in the focus group discussion. This instrument was related to the research questions of the study.

The language adopted for the interview was English. This study adopted a mixed method focus on collecting, analysing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or

series of studies (Creswell &Clark, 2011). Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient (r) was used to establish the relationship between inter-parental conflict and academic achievement motivation in quantitative data, while thematic analysis was the analytic technique used to analyse data in the qualitative study Abraham Maslow's Human needs theory, Martin Selgman's Learned Helplessness Theory, Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Grych and Fincham's Cognitive Contextual Framework Theory, were the four theories guiding the study.

The study used three (3) research instruments to collect data: questionnaire, interview schedule and a focus group discussion protocol. Follow up questions were also incorporated along the interview sections. The interview guide had five questions. This instrument used was related to the research question of the study: What are the effects of inter-parental conflict among students in Ruiru Sub-County? A Focus Group Discussion was also used in this study.

Data analysis was through deductive approach since the aspects of the data were determined prior to data analysis. The study had one independent/predictor variable and one dependent/outcome variable. The predictor variable: inter-parental conflict was measured using a questionnaire.

Three sampling procedures were employed in this study: Purposive Sampling, Proportionate Sampling and Simple Random Sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select form three students, guidance and counselling teachers, and FGD participants. It was also used to select the group of couples/parents. It entailed a mixed gender group. Proportionate stratified sampling was used to select schools from the stratum of public and private schools, categories. Random sampling was chosen because it provides every sample of a given size an equal and independent chance of being selected as a member of the sample; it also yields research data that can be generalized of an error that can be determined statistically (Orodho, 2004).

The sample size of the schools and students constituted 20% and 20% respectively as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample size

Participants	Focus group	Interview	Public school	Private school
Male	5	0	103	46
Female	5	7	87	45
Totals	**10**	**7**	**190**	**298**

Accessible population Sample   Sample Size

School Type	Students	Boys	Girls	School	Boys	Girls
Public	13	515	433	3	103	87
Private	18	231	226	4	46	45
Total	31	746	659	7	149	132
Grand Total	31	1405 (100%)			20%(7)	20%(281)

Source: Sub–County Director of Education Ruiru Office

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Description of Students Participants' on the Relationship between Inter-parental Conflict and AAM

The student participants' academic motivation scores were analysed to get the range, mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis. The results are presented in table 2. As shown in table 2 the minimum score was -16.00 while the maximum score was 77.83. The mean score was 49.37 and the standard deviation was 14.675. The coefficient of skewness was found to be -1.077 meaning that many participants rated themselves highly on this scale. Kurtosis was 2.302 which showed that the distribution was platykurtic with many values having a high variance.

Table 2: Description of AAM Scores

Descriptive Statistics								
Category	N		Min	Max	Mean	Std	Skew	Kurtosis
AAM	281	93.83	-16	77.83	49.3661	14.67541	-1.077	2.302

Since academic motivation had seven domains, descriptive analysis was done with an aim of getting the participants range, mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis on each of the sub-scales of the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS). In order to get the required descriptive statistics, the student participants' total score in each sub-scale was used and the results are presented in table 3. The data in table 3 shows that the range for six domains of academic motivation was 16. The maximum and the minimum scores in this case were 20 and 4 respectively. The standard deviation of 2.828 of Extrinsic Motivation towards Introjected was the least. Generally, the standard deviation of the scores of the domains of academic motivation was considered moderately large with values ranging from 2.828 to 3.457.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for the Items in AAM

CATEGORY	N	Rag	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Sk	Kurtosis
IMTK	281	16	4	20	15.94	3.03	-1.049	1.489
IMTA	281	16	4	20	14.21	3.066	-0.528	0.376
IMES	281	16	4	20	11.02	3.426	0.169	-0.439
EMID	281	16	4	20	16.89	2.828	-1.638	4.214
EMIN	281	16	4	20	14.39	3.457	-0.444	-0.421
EME	281	16	4	20	15.6	3.396	-0.742	0.082
AMOT	281	16	4	20	6.49	2.857	1.705	3.679

Key: Min- Minimum, Max- Maximum, S- Standard deviation, Skewness,

IMTK- Intrinsic Motivation to Know, IMTA - Intrinsic Motivation Towards

Accomplishment, IMES-Intrinsic Motivation to Experience Stimulation,

EMid-Extrinsic Motivation Identified, EMin-Extrinsic Motivation Introjected,

EME- Extrinsic Motivation External Regulation, AMOT-Amotivation.

The highest mean score of 16.89 and the least mean score of 6.49 were obtained on extrinsic motivation identified and a motivation scores. This means that the extrinsic motivation identified had a higher mean because the respondents tended to agree with the items given for the scale. For example: because I think that a high-school education will help me better prepare for the career I have chosen and because eventually it will enable me to enter the job market in a field that I like. But ,the students strongly disagreed with the items on a motivation scale for example: "Honestly, I don't know; I really feel that I am wasting my time in school", and "I once had good reasons for going to school, however, now I wonder whether I should continue".

The distribution of scores for intrinsic motivation to know (-1.409), intrinsic motivation towards accomplishment (-0.528), extrinsic motivation identified (-1.638), extrinsic motivation introjected (-0.444), and extrinsic motivation external regulation (-0.742) were found to be negatively skewed which implied that participants rated themselves highly on these sub-scales. However, the distribution of scores for intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation (0.169) and a motivation (1.705) was positively skewed which meant that most participants rated themselves low on these scales. The values of kurtosis were less than three which implied a platykurtic distribution meaning that scores were more widely spread out.

In order to establish the interrelationship which existed among the seven domains of academic motivation, bivariate correlation analysis by use of Pearson product moment correlation was done to obtain the correlation matrix and the results are presented in a correlation matrix in table 4. As shown in table 3, all the domains related to intrinsic motivation were positively and significantly correlated to academic motivation with the highest relationship observed between intrinsic motivation to know and academic motivation ($r_{(281)} = 0.778$, $p < 0.01$); followed by the relationship between intrinsic motivation towards accomplishment and academic motivation ($r_{(281)} = 0.688$, $p < 0.01$) and the lowest relationship was found between extrinsic motivation introjected and academic motivation ($r_{(281)} = 0.131$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4: Correlation Matrix of the Domains of AAM

CATEGORY	IMTK	IMTA	IMES	EMID	EMIN	EME	AMOT	AAM
IMTK	1							
IMTA	.537**	1						
IMES	.410**	.270**	1					
EMID	.430**	.308**	.223**	1				
EMIN	.356**	.421**	.329**	.232**	1			
EME	.225**	.240**	.214**	.471**	.345**	1		
AMOT	-.206**	-.154**	0.013	-.268**	0.01	-0.05	1	
AAM	**.778****	**.688****	**.401****	**.507****	**.131***	**.152****	**-.561****	**1**

Key:

IMTK- Intrinsic Motivation to Know, IMTA - Intrinsic Motivation Towards

Accomplishment, IMES-Intrinsic Motivation to Experience Stimulation,

EMid-Extrinsic Motivation Identified, EMin-Extrinsic Motivation Introjected,

EME- Extrinsic Motivation External Regulation, AMOT-Amotivation.

Description of Participants' Perception of Inter-parental Conflict

The inter-parental conflict scale was categorized into five subscales. Descriptive analysis was done with an aim of getting the participants range, mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis on each of the sub-scales of the Children Perception of Inter-parental Conflict (CPIC) In order to get the required descriptive statistics, the participants' total score in each sub-scale was used and the results are presented in table 5. The data in table 5 shows that the highest range was 40 and the lowest was 8. The maximum and the minimum scores in this case were 60 and 20 respectively. The standard deviation of 1.815 of stability was the least. Generally, the standard deviation of the scores of the domains of CPIC was considered moderately large with values ranging from 1.815 to 5.219. The highest mean score of 41.12 and the least mean score of 10.74 were obtained on conflict properties and stability respectively.

This means that the students tended to agree with the items for the conflict properties scale for example: My parents get really mad when they argue and When my parents argue usually it has to do with their own problems and disagreed with the items on stability: The reasons my parents argue never change and My parents argue because they don't really love each other. The distribution of scores for conflict properties, self-blame and stability were found to be negatively skewed which implied that participants rated themselves highly on these sub-scales. However, the distribution of threat and triangulation were positively skewed which meant that most participants rated themselves low on these scales. The values of kurtosis for self -blame and Triangulation were found to be mesokurtic, which indicates a normal "bell-shaped" distribution, while conflict properties and threat were platykurtic which indicates a platykurtic distribution which is flatter than a normal distribution with shorter tails, while the kurtosis value for stability was leptokurtic. This was more peaked than a normal distribution with longer tails.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for the Items in CPIC

CATEGORY	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	Std	Sk	Kurt-osis
CP	281	40	20	60	41.1174	5.21917	-0.213	0.926
SB	281	18	9	27	20.6263	3.14856	-0.448	0.08
S	281	8	4	12	10.7367	1.81513	-1.92	3.608
TH	281	12	6	18	11.0107	3.61691	0.346	-1.026
TR	281	22	11	33	22.4448	3.94489	0.187	0.063

Key: Min- Minimum, Max- Maximum, Std - Standard deviation, Sk - Skewness,

CP- Conflict Properties, SB – Self Blame, S-Stability, TH-Threat, TR-Triangulation

In order to establish the interrelationship which existed among the five domains of the CPIC scale, bivariate correlation analysis was done to obtain the correlation matrix and the results are presented in a correlation matrix in table 6 as shown in table 6, all the domains were found to be positively and significantly correlated with threat and triangulation having the highest correlation ($r_{(281)} = 0.573$, $p < 0.01$), followed by the relationship between threat and conflict properties ($r_{(281)} = 0.519$, $p < 0.01$) and the lowest relationship was found between Threat and Self-blame ($r_{(281)} = 0.216$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 6: Correlation Matrix of the Domains of CPIC

CATEGORY	CP	SB	S	TH	TR
CP	1				
SB	.349**	1			
S	.363**	.312**	1		
TH	.519**	.216**	.296**	1	
TR	.517**	.285**	.233**	.573**	1

Key:

CP- Conflict Properties, SB – Self Blame, S-Stability, TH-Threat, TR-Triangulation

Hypothesis Testing

In order to determine the relationship between Inter-parental conflict and academic achievement Motivation the following null hypothesis was advanced:

H_0 1: There is no significant relationship between Inter-parental conflict and academic achievement motivation.

Table 7: Correlations between CPIC and AAM

CATEGORY	CP	SB	S	TH	TR	AAM
CP	1					
SB	.349**	1				
S	.363**	.312**	1			
TH	.519**	.216**	.296**	1		
TR	.517**	.285**	.233**	.573**	1	
AAM	-0.002	0.066	0.039	-0.033	0.042	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Key:

CP- Conflict Properties, SB – Self Blame, S-Stability, TH-Threat, TR-Triangulation, AAM-Academic Achievement Motivation

To test this hypothesis the data was subjected to a bivariate correlation analysis using the Pearson's product moment correlation co-efficient. The results showed that there was no significant relationship between Inter-parental conflict and academic achievement motivation. All items for the CPIC had low correlation with Academic achievement motivation which was insignificant at $p > 0.05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implied that the alternative was not accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The causes of the conflict are differences in opinions on economic, social and personal factors. Parents can argue over everything, whether simple or complex. The effects in the academic achievement of students are presented below.

Effects of Inter-parental Conflict on Students

Effects of inter-parental conflict include both internalizing and externalizing effects.

Internalizing Effects

The guidance and counselling teachers' responses of research question one on the effects of inter-parental conflict among students, revealed that there are internalizing effects of inter-parental conflict affecting the students from Ruiru sub-county: anxiety, body aches, depression, hopelessness, helplessness, low self-esteem, somatic complains, threatening and withdraw. Of all the internalizing effects, helplessness was the most common effect, followed by low self-esteem and then anxiety. The least effects were threatening and somatic complains. This finding was in agreement with the qualitative data collected in this study.

In response to the question on the effects of inter-parental conflict, participants (couple parents) of the qualitative data from the focus group discussion, gave different responses as indicated by the different extracts: "family crisis, drug abuse, joining illegal groups like "Mungiki" [an outlawed gang], joining bad groups, low academic performance, defence mechanisms, dropping out of school, illnesses, divorce and, violence" (parent female 3). Parent female 2 also added that: other effects of inter-parental conflict are indiscipline, low self–esteem, hopelessness, drug abuse, distortion of sexual orientation, committing suicide, stunted growth and illnesses."

Externalizing Effects

The guidance and counselling teachers' findings further indicated that there were externalizing effects of inter-parental conflict in Ruiru sub-county. A majority of the respondents mentioned deviant behaviour and poor concentration, followed by drug abuse, aggressive behaviour and negative peer influence were the effects of inter-parental conflict. The results have the implication that students who are exposed to inter-parental conflict cannot concentrate well in class this may affect their academic achievement motivation. They may also engage in deviant behaviour. Other externalizing effects mentioned were, poor dressing, dropping out of school, aggressiveness, arrogance, seeking for attention, disrespectfulness, fearfulness, hyper-activeness, masking, smoking, and use of vulgar language.

Discussion of the Results

It is worth noting that parents in Ruiru sub-county have inter-parental conflicts. The causes of these conflicts are numerous. They range from simple to complex reasons and typically "everything"' many factors can lead to inter-parental conflict. This is consistent with the findings of (Mbwirire, 2016;Menber, 2014;Ugochwukwu & Felicia, 2014). Who indicated that the causes of inter-parental conflict are numerous and can be from a simple factor to a complex one. It was also notable that families experience inter-parental conflicts.

The results on the effects of inter-parental children in Ruiru sub-county are consistent with Cummings and Davies' (2002), who found out that inter-parental conflicts were linked to internalizing and externalizing effects. They also found out that children exposed to inter-parental conflict may also feel overwhelmed in response to conflict leading to a sense of helplessness. This confirms Seligman's theory of learned helplessness which explains how a child exposed to inter-parental conflicts can end up suffering depression. Abraham Maslows The guidance and counselling teachers' findings indicate that inter-parental conflicts affect the students in Ruiru sub-county. These findings are consistent with the Grych and Fincham (1990) cognitive contextual framework theory, which proposes that children's interpretation of the inter-parental exchanges inform their immediate affective reactions and emotions elucidated which determine more in-depth processing of the interaction. Increased physiological arousal in response to inter-parental conflict in children indicates that inter-parental conflict can lead to both externalizing and internalizing behaviours. According to Seligman (1974), learned helplessness theory, Seligman explains that a child who is exposed to inter-parental conflict for a long time may develop helplessness which may lead to internalizing behaviours like depression. He further adds that they can develop hopelessness which makes them passive in life. The findings also reinforce Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory which indicates that the micro-systems affect the child's development.

Implications for Research and Practice

The wellbeing and psychological development of a child is dependent on the quality of the relationship between their parents. Inter-parental conflicts therefore largely impacts on psychopathology of a child and in the case of this paper, students' academic motivation is negatively impacted by high levels of inter-parental conflicts. This paper therefore provides a blue print for parents to keep check of their behaviour and relationship within the family unit so as to provide a good learning environment for their children. The paper underpins developments for practice and policy in Ruiru sub-county and the wider Kiambu County. The paper also provides an up-to-date evidence based on the students experience and parents as well as guiding and counselling practitioners.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study are consistent with the studies done by Cummings and Davies (2003), which indicated that the effects of inter-parental conflicts include both internalizing and externalizing behaviours. Students in Ruiru sub-county are affected by inter-parental conflict. In internalizing and externalizing behaviours: the two variables were found to have no significant relationship in quantitative data but qualitative data indicated a relationship.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is need for crucial consideration for Non-government organizations, policymakers, helping professions, such as social workers, teachers, guidance counsellors, marriage counsellors, child protection network, family welfare agencies, the government; and the public to organize for seminars and workshops for families which promote the academic functioning of students from families with inter-parental conflict. Family therapists, church workers and social workers working with children and families should organize education seminars and

sensitization on the impacts of inter-parental conflict on children, in particular, their academic achievement motivation. Partners with marital issues should contact social workers and other family counsellors for guidance with effective resolution and management strategies. School tutors should refer students with low academic achievement motivation due to parental disharmony to school social workers, and guidance and counselling teachers.

Parents should make efforts to resolve marital conflict before it escalates into hostilities and violence. They should also meet their children's needs. Besides, they should also further their education as educational attainment contributes to less inter-parental conflicts. In addition, they should learn to balance work and family roles so that they can have close relationships with their students which may moderate the impact of inter-parental conflict. The government can play a role of making information widely available to parents and provide funding for research into both the short and long-term effects of interventions to supporting families with inter-parental conflict. There is need for development of interventional programs in schools and outside school targeting both boys and girls but mostly girls. These programmes should be geared towards boosting girls' academic motivation and teaching coping mechanisms in case of inter-parental conflict. Conducive learning environment should also be provided in order to enhance their academic motivation and coping mechanism. Teachers and parents should devise ways of arousing students' interest in academics by showing the relevance of secondary school education in their lives and giving students' feedback in order to raise their expectancy for success. The teacher's role in the learning- teaching process should not just be delivering the subject matter, but should also promote life skills. More guidance and counselling sessions should be organized for the students as well as parents. This will help in nurturing the students' intrinsic motivation to know which was found to have significant and positive influence on academic achievement motivation.

Policy Recommendations

Educational trainers should consider the introduction of mandatory courses and seminars for helping teachers to develop necessary skills for helping students to develop life skills which could help them when they are affected by inter-parental conflicts. Also, appropriate intervention programmes particularly targeting girls should be developed in schools, in order to help reduce the gender differences which were found to exist with regard to students' inter-parental conflict and academic achievement motivation. In addition, Relationship support interventions should be developed in Ruiru sub-county which will improve child behaviour and bring improvements in parent depression and parenting skills.

Further Research

The results of this study may not be generalized to the Kenyan secondary schools because it covered a small sample drawn from only one sub-county. In order to control the effects of cultural, geographical and, or class differences, the study should be replicated in other counties and with students in different levels like form one, two, and four. Also, the findings of this study are based on secondary school students. In order to further contribute to the understanding of the relationship(s) between inter-parental conflict and academic achievement motivation of students at different levels of schooling, a similar study should be replicated with samples drawn from students in primary schools, colleges and universities.

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