PERCEIVED INTER-PARENTAL CONFLICT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION AMONG FORM THREE STUDENTS' IN RUIRU SUB-COUNTY

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ABSTRACT: *This paper is part of a study that was conducted in Ruiru Sub-County. The aim of the study was to examine the extent to which perceived inter-parental conflict influence academic achievement motivation among form three students. Three theories guided the study namely; Martin Seligman's Learned Helplessness Theory, Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Grych and Finchams's Cognitive Contextual Framework Theory. The study employed mixed method research design on a sample of 281 students, 7 guidance and counseling teachers and 10 parents. The target population comprised form three students, guidance and counseling teachers and parents of the students. Purposeful sampling was used to select the guidance and counseling teachers and parents while proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select schools from 13 public and 18 private schools in the sub-county as well as to from which the students were randomly selected. Data was collected using four instruments: Children Perception of Inter-parental Conflict Questionnaire (CPIC) and Academic Motivation Survey (AMS) for Students, interview schedule for seven guidance and counseling master/mistress and focus group discussion for ten parents. Data analysis was then done using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient (r) was used to establish the relationship between perceived inter-parental conflict and academic achievement motivation at 0.05 significance level. The results provided evidence that there was a significant relationship between inter-parental conflict and students' academic achievement motivation in qualitative data. A major implication and recommendation of the study was that, teachers, parents and all stakeholders in education should work together in creating conducive school and home environments for the development of academic achievement motivation. New intervention should be devised to make inter-parental conflict less afflicting to the children.*

KEYWORDS: Perception, Inter-parental conflict, Academic Achievement Motivation, Form three students, Ruiru Sub County.

INTRODUCTION

Inter-parental conflicts may be detrimental to the children if not managed or handled properly. The psychological wellbeing of children is affected which may hinder the functioning of the family unit. A family that is experiencing conflicts deters the creation of time for its members and children become the most affected. Academic underperformance has sometimes been attributed to bad inter-parental relationships and lack of achievement motivation. According to need for achievement theory, when people are put under appropriate conditions, they will do what they have been rewarded for doing. Weiner (1986) has presented the most ambitious attribution theory of achievement motivation and emotions. This theory deals with the perceived causes of success and failure, the characteristics of causal thinking, and subsequent emotional experiences in relation to achievement behaviors. Another important leap in

motivational research is goal orientation theory. The basic premise of achievement goal orientation theory (Elliot & McGregor, 2001) is that students perform well when they have set academic goals. The focus of this paper is therefore drawn to the perception of the influence of inter-parental conflicts on form three students in Ruiru Sub County.

LITERATURE UNDERPINNING

According to Wentzel (1991), goals related to school achievement have to do with seeing one as being successful, dependable, wanting to learn new things and wanting to get things done. Higher achieving students have higher levels of both social responsibility and achievement goals. They also have pro-social goals for instance they can share learning with their classmates, have social responsibility goals like following through on promises made to peers and high academic social responsibility goals of following teachers' instructions.

Eccles and her colleagues elaborated and tested Expectancy –value model of achievement related choices (Eccles *et al.,* 1983, 1984; Meece *et al.,* 1990). According to this model, choices are assumed to be influenced by both negative and positive task characteristics; expectancies for success are defined as individual's beliefs about how they will do upcoming tasks either in the immediate or longer term. Students who have experienced inter-parental conflicts may not have the short and long term goals since their immediate obsession and need would be on how to stop the parents from conflicting. They may have a deficit of the four components of task – value: a) attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value, and cost value. They lack the enjoyment the individual gets from performing a task, since they place no importance to the task (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards. The phenomenon of intrinsic motivation was first acknowledged within experimental studies of animal behavior, where it was discovered that many organisms engage in exploratory, playful, and curiosity-driven behaviors even in the absence of reinforcement or reward (White, 1959). These spontaneous behaviors, although clearly bestowing adaptive benefits on the organism, appear not to be done for any such instrumental reason, but rather for the positive experiences associated with exercising and extending one's capacities.

In humans, intrinsic motivation is not the only form of motivation, or even of volitional activity, but it is a pervasive and important one. From birth onward, humans, in their healthiest states, are active, inquisitive, curious, and playful creatures, displaying a ubiquitous readiness to learn and explore, and they do not require extraneous incentives to do so. This natural motivational tendency is a critical element in cognitive, social, and physical development because it is through acting on one's inherent interests that one grows in knowledge and skills. The inclinations to take interest in novelty, to act timely, assimilate, and to creatively apply our skills is not limited to childhood, but is a significant feature of human nature that affects performance, persistence, and well-being across life's epochs (Ryan & LaGuardia, in press).

Although, in one sense, intrinsic motivation exists within individuals, in another sense intrinsic motivation exists in the relation between individuals and activities. People are intrinsically motivated for some activities and not others, and not everyone is intrinsically motivated for

any particular task. People may be certain that they can do a task but they may not have a compelling reason to do it. The reason as to why people engage in a task is because they are intrinsically motivated which means they are interested and enjoy the task. In this type of motivation there are three domains: intrinsic motivation to know, intrinsic motivation to accomplish a task and intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation. This type of motivation represents the most self-determined component of motivation and self-determined students show persistence in academic activities.

The second type of motivation is extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome. Extrinsic motivation thus contrasts with intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing an activity simply for the enjoyment of the activity itself, rather than its instrumental value. However, like some perspectives that view extrinsically motivated behavior as invariantly non autonomous, self-development theory proposes that extrinsic motivation can vary greatly in the degree to which it is autonomous. For example, a student who does his homework only because he fears parental sanctions for not doing it is extrinsically motivated because he is doing the work in order to attain the separable outcome of avoiding sanctions (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Similarly, a student who does the work because she personally believes it is valuable for her chosen career is also extrinsically motivated because she too is doing it for its instrumental value rather than because she finds it interesting. Both examples involve instrumentalities, yet the latter case entails personal endorsement and a feeling of choice, whereas the former involves mere compliance with an external control. Both represent intentional behavior, but the two types of extrinsic motivation vary in their relative autonomy (Ryan, 1995). Given that many of the educational activities prescribed in schools are not designed to be intrinsically interesting, a central question concerns how to motivate students to value and self-regulate such activities, and without external pressure, to carry them out on their own. There are three domains of extrinsic motivation: external regulation, this is less self-determined in that a student may engage in an academic activity in order to get a reward or to be praised by the teacher or peers. Another domain is introjected regulation where a student takes on regulations as his or her own, for instance finishing homework to avoid letting parents down (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The other domain is identified regulation and is more self- determined. A student may for example engage in a particular academic behavior because he/she perceives the usefulness of that behavior like getting high grades and getting admitted to study a competitive degree at the university.

Interestingly there is a third category of students who may not value and enjoy a task or feel incompetent to do it and lack an intention to act or take action (Deci & Ryan, 1985). These students are said to be amotivated. Amotivation is the state of lacking an intention to act. When amotivated; a person's behavior lacks intentionality and a sense of personal causation. Amotivation results from not valuing an activity (Ryan, 1995), not feeling competent to do it (Deci, 1975), or not believing it will yield a desired outcome (Seligman, 1975). Students with this type of motivation will show non-regulation of effort towards academic activities. The perceived locus of causality is impersonal and as such the student is usually non-intentional, non-valuing, incompetent, and generally demonstrates behavior which show lack of control (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci *et al.,* 1999). According to them, achievement motivation is largely social psychological in nature. It often occurs within groups, where interpersonal interactions can undermine or facilitate engagement in the tasks to be done. For this study, it is important to distinguish between skills and performance deficits. A skills deficit would mean that a child

does not have the academic skills in his/her repertoire to succeed due to low intellectual ability or a lack of academic skills. A performance deficit, on the other hand, would indicate that the child has the necessary skills but fails to succeed. A performance deficit would be an indication of low achievement motivation that could possibly be due to the influence of family change as a result of conflict, separation and divorce.

Gesinde (2000) argues that the urge to achieve varies from one individual to the other. For some, the need for achievement is very high while, for others it is very low. He adds that achievement motivation is learnt through the socialization process. Those who have high achievers as their role models in their early life experience would develop a high need for achievement, while those who have low achievers as their role models will hardly develop the need for achievement. The family is obviously, a major socializing agent and therefore important in determining the child's motivation to achieve success in various areas. Motivation is crucial to a student's academic success at any age. Because students form self-concepts, values, and beliefs about their abilities at a young age, the development of early academic motivation has significant implications for later academic careers (Blank, 1997). Out of the many effects that a conflicting home may have on the child, academic achievement motivation was singled out for study in this research.

Studies that have directly investigated inter-parental conflict effects on academic achievement motivation among secondary school students are scarce. Majority of studies that have investigated the relationship have been done in developed countries and they mostly involve achievement motivation and not academic achievement motivation. Others investigate the relationship between other familiar factors and not parental conflict. This current study intended to investigate the inter-parental conflict effects on academic achievement motivation. Betram (2005) studied the relationship of parental involvement and post-divorce adjustment to the Academic Achievement and Achievement motivation of school aged children. One hundred and seven parents and teachers of 3rd -5th grade children participated in the study. The objectives of the study were to establish the relationship between environmental factors, parental adjustment with academic achievement and achievement motivation. The parents completed the questionnaires of parent child relationship inventory and divorce adjustment scale. The results of the study showed that the children of divorced families had lower motivation than those of intact homes and that they had lower scores in mathematics and languages. These were associated with uninvolved parents. They also had low cognitive skills than those of intact families. His recommendation was that a study on other familiar factors like family conflict be studied which informed this study. Therefore the current study involved secondary school students and dwelt on inter-parental conflict and not divorce and the effects on academic achievement motivation.

In a study conducted by Ebong and Orumwense (2016) on the influence of marital conflict on academic performance of students in Nigeria, a survey design was adapted for the study. The authors sought to provide answers to whether parental violence had effects on students' academic performance. The test revealed that there was a correlation between marital conflicts and academic performance. Although the findings of the study showed that there is a positive relationship between marital conflict and academic performance, the sample was drawn from primary school pupils and did not address academic achievement motivation which is the gap that this study intended to fill.

Muola (2010) investigated the relationship between academic achievement motivation and home environment among standard eight pupils to determine whether there was any

relationship between parental encouragement, parental occupation, education, size and learning facilities. He used an expost-facto research design. The sample size was 235 standard eight Kenyan pupils from six urban schools and rural schools in Machakos district. The result indicated a positive relationship of parental education with academic achievement of the students. The observation was that unstable home environment can contribute to low academic achievement motivation of pupils which inform the current study with an aim of establishing whether inter-parental conflict have effects on academic achievement motivation. Besides the study involved secondary school students which is the gap that this study fills. In this study the author sought to investigate how perceived inter-parental conflicts influence academic achievement motivation of form three students in Ruiru Sub- County.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Ruiru Sub-county was the area of study and the author chose this sub- county because of its higher catchment of public and private secondary schools; the county of Kiambu in which Ruiru is part is cosmopolitan with people of diverse cultures and social inclinations therefore, the respondents for this study represented this diversity, and it was accessible and familiar to the author, making it possible to trace the respondents. The target population was all the form three students in the 31 secondary schools in Ruiru Sub-county, guiding and counseling teachers and parents. 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. (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Martin Seligman's learned helplessness theory, Grych and Fincham's cognitive contextual frame work, Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory and Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory were the theories guiding this study. The study used questionnaires, interview schedule and focus group discussion(FGD) for data collection from students, guidance and counseling teachers and parents respectively. Three sampling procedures were employed in this study hence purposive sampling, proportionate sampling and simple random sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select Ruiru Sub-county, form three students, and FGD parent participants all of who 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).

Since a mixed method was adopted for the study, triangulation strategy was employed in data analysis. Both qualitative and quantitative data yielded from this study. Both data sets were analyzed separately, and the results discussed side by side. Descriptive and inferential statistical methods of data analysis were used in the presentation of the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The student participants' academic motivation scores were analyzed to get the range, mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis. The results are presented in table 1. As depicted 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 1. Description of Academic Achievement Motivation (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

Table 2. 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

The collected 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 perceived 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.

The results by the students participant on determining the extent to which perceived inter-parental conflict influences students' academic achievement motivation in Ruiru sub-county, surprisingly showed that there was no relationship between inter-parental conflict and students' academic achievement motivation. These results contradicted those of earlier studies by Betram, (2005), Ebong and Orumwense (2016) and Muola (2010), which reported a positive relationship between students' inter-parental Conflict and academic achievement motivation. In addition, the results from the qualitative data of the interview schedule contradicted the quantitative data results since 7 (100%) of the respondents (guidance and counseling teachers' respondents said that inter-parental conflict affects students' academic motivation.

One of the respondents said that:

> Every time there is a conflict between the parents we are able to detect because the child becomes less focused on education. In the class the student cannot concentrate you can tell that they are disturbed. The relationship with the parents is usually low and mostly this ends up affecting their performance in school (G & C teacher 1).

The findings revealed that inter-parental conflict have effects on the children's academic achievement motivation. These findings were also supported by the FGD findings in which the respondents indicated that:

> When the parents have a conflict at home, they [students] have no desire to do anything at home and at school. They at times even lock themselves in the bedroom. Their performance at school goes down (parent male couple 3).

Another participant from the FGD reiterated that inter-parental conflict affects academic motivation through a path way. Below is the response:

> Depending on the magnitude of the conflicts at home the children end up taking sides. Some children take sides with the father, others with the mother and some are neutral. When there is conflict, they suffer since there is no formal and informal education from the family and school. If they are at school their performance deteriorates because they stop relating well with the parents. The boys feel threatened and would want to revenge for the mother. Such are the ones who kill their fathers. The girls on the other hand would want to take sides. They suffer so much emotionally (parent male 3).

The mixed results in the findings could be explained by the fact that the samples used in the quantitative data by Betram (2005), Ebong and Orumwense (2016), and Muola (2010), were different from the ones used in the current study. Furthermore, these samples used by Muola (2010) were different from the ones used in the current study in terms of the level of schooling since they were primary school pupils.

The respondents used by Betram (2005) and Ebong and Orumwense (2016) were parents. Those used by Betram (2005) were from a developed country. The mis-match in the findings therefore could be as a result of cross-cultural and sample differences and the difference in the study locations, which may be a significant factor in the measurement of the variables. Therefore, the findings have inconsistent results since the findings of the questionnaire suggested that inter-parental conflict does not have any significant effect on the students' academic motivation at school or self determination to success in school, whereas the qualitative findings showed that inter-parental conflict influences students' academic motivation.

Implications for Research and Practice

This paper has widely described the effects of inter-parental conflict on students' academic achievement motivation. The findings are of great benefit to communities in Ruiru sub-county, Kenyan government and religious organizations. The need to educate couples on the preventive measures of conflicts is therefore paramount in our society today to develop future responsible citizens and effective productivity in the state labor market, since quality education is the bedrock of any society. This study is beneficial to educators and scholars since a school plays a great role in students' socialization. They will come up with programs which enhance students' academic achievement motivation and use this paper as a reference paper for future researches respectively.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study on the perception of inter-parental conflict and its effect of form three students' academic achievement motivation in the quantitative data suggests that there is no significant relationship between inter-parental conflict and students' academic achievement motivation. But the qualitative data findings indicate that inter-parental conflict influences academic achievement motivation.

Recommendation for Future 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.

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