

**INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL SUPPORT ON SOCIO EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN HAMISI SUB-COUNTY OF VIHIGA COUNTY,
KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Parents' typical attitudes, socioeconomic status and behaviours which form the emotional climate in which parents raise their children have been suggested to play an important role in children's social and emotional development. Effective and warm parenting as well as behavioral control deployed by parents has been shown to be related to low levels of problem behaviours and depressive symptoms among children. High parental psychological control has been found to be associated with increased anxiety, distress, and depressive symptoms among both children and adolescents. The main purpose of this study was to examine the influence of Parental socio-economic status on preschool children's social emotional development. The study employed a descriptive research design in collecting the data. It targeted 115 preschools in Hamisi Sub County. A stratified random sampling was applied to select head teachers, parents, and pupils. The study used questionnaires and interviews for data collection and data analyzed using frequency counts. Reliability and validity was pre –tested though piloting in one of the schools was results gave a reliability index of 0.85 Cronbach's alpha index. The results revealed that parents' socio economic status affect socio emotional development of children in ECDE to a great extent. It was recommended that all the concerned stakeholders should work towards promoting positive relationships between parents and pre-school children to develop the socio emotional aspects of development.

Key Words: Parental Support; Socio Emotional Development; Preschool Children.

1. INTRODUCTION

Parents play a role in their children's socio emotional development. Nowadays, socio emotional development among children is almost equated to success in life. Parents are ready to sacrifice all that they have for the education of their children which encompasses good values (Caron M, Weiss, S, Harris C & Catron 2006). This shows that socio emotional development will give an individual a good standing in the society which will offer a good life. Thus, they put immense pressure on their children to strive for good social emotion conducts. Zhang and Carrasquillo (2005) observed that parental characteristics and the values they hold do play a key role in their children's social emotional development. According to a National report (2005) on parental role

in U.S.A, attitudes and values expounded by parents, teachers and friends were found to have a strong impact on children's social emotional development.

Selashi A & Sentauehu C.R. (2008) indicated that parents for instance motivate their children through a number of ways which include positive and negative reinforcements through encouragement with words as well as talking, imparting their own ideas on values of right and wrong through guiding and counselling, punishing by taking away valuable items to show that an action done was not social emotionally acceptable in the parents' eyes and society will never accept such actions.

Many psychologists such as Cooney S. & Au, M. (2009), Van den Aardweg E. (2000) and Furuham S & Cheng C. (2000) believed that early childhood education should promote physical, cognitive and social emotional development which develops social abilities. They observed that a child whose social emotions development is neglected may lag behind in mental, social, and even physical development as a result. Smith and Billiter (2005) indicated that parents can promote social emotional development among children by helping the child understand people's feelings. According to Dickson (2001), children's social emotional development can be enhanced when they are encouraged to think imaginatively and to use ideas and language that is socially acceptable. Due to economic problems most societies are currently facing, children are deprived socially, psychologically and economically exposing them to neglect, abuse and exploitation of the highest order leading to social emotion degradation, children in an isolated community may be at higher risk of not achieving their potential, and second, low self-esteem, lack of respect for their peers, older people and lowered their social emotional development and hence lack of social emotion values. Baumrid (2012) states that at an early age children understand social emotionally based on rules and self-gratification a child uses the rules as the best way to promote inter-personal relationships for a healthy community. There are many parental supports that affect the social emotional development of children. This may include but may not be limited to; parent's socio-economic status, level of education, age, family structure among others (Baumrid D. 2002).

The family structure is one of the influential factors that affect the child's social emotional development. Different families have different social emotion patterns which bring a sense of respect and acceptance in their interaction with the parents, siblings, relatives and neighbours. This shows that a nurturing figure like a parent affects the child's social emotional development and eventually does a child have a sense of social emotion 'uprightness' when separated from the nurturing figure in the family and is he/she ready for a group situation that may need his social emotion judgment of right and wrong in a school set up. According to Cauffman (2006), most parents were of the opinion that it is much more difficult today to raise children to be "good people" than it was twenty years ago.

This is because many changes have taken place and which have influenced the methods and techniques of raising children. Behavior among children in schools has been blamed on the socio emotional decadence and decline in values in the society as well as lack of proper parenting skills (Gershoff, 2007). Parent's social economic 'status plays a pivotal role on pre-school

children's social emotional development. According to Safina (2005), the network of social economic status, family's level of encouragement, expectations, and educational activities at homes affect children's social emotional development. They also observed Social-economic groups from different families have created a difference in the social emotional development environments. This indicates that the better off the family, the more comfortable they are and the more the emphasis on their social emotional development.

The parental age is also one of the influential factors on children's social emotional development. Yang, L & Jin K. (2006) observes that the more advanced in age a parents are the higher they are experienced hence are capable of imputing good social emotions to their children. Children whose parents are advanced in age tend to behave well and are socially upright. The education level of parents plays a significant role in child's social emotional development. Parents who are highly educated are believed to be more responsible and are always willing to assist their children in selecting values which are important for their social emotional development. Safina (2005) while discussing the government policy on discipline noted that the topic of social emotional development and how values are passed on is pushed from one party to another. Parents believe it is a teachers' responsibility to nature their children's social emotional development while teachers believe the parents have a responsibility to development children's holistically. This study therefore examines the influence of parental support on Pre-school children's social emotional development in Hamisi Sub County Kenya.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The major transformation and changes occurring on family structure, has led to increase of issues in most of the families in Hamisi Sub County and it's argued that, this has brought serious effects on the socio-emotional growth and development of many children. Issues like Single motherhood, socio economic status, poverty, economic crisis, poor parenting; absence of love towards children that lead to lack of model to be emulated as well as stigma by the society is overwhelming for these children. All these issues are strongly associated with negative outcomes for children. Most of schools in Hamisi receive children from disadvantaged families. These children have no guarantee of good parenting due to lack of parenting awareness due educational level where most parents are not well educated on how to improve the social and emotional abilities of their children. Due to this problem, socio emotional development of preschool children in Hamisi Sub County has been dwindling in the past years, making them to lag behind their counterparts in other sub counties. The family structure and also the age of the parents has also been a major cause on the social emotional development aspect of many children in school. Parental support is very necessary because it builds, protects and repairs the social skills of children. The main purpose of this study was to examine the influence of Parental socio-economic status on preschool children's social emotional development. it majorly purposed to determine the effects of family socio-economic status on social emotional development of pre-school children in Hamisi Sub-county.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ladd K & Pettit G.S. (2002), described low socioeconomic status as "a high level of economic pressure that indicates spousal agreement that the family cannot meet its material needs, often

falls behind in paying its debts, and has had to cut back on everyday expenses in an attempt to live within available means". Oftentimes, SES is used interchangeably with social class, and for the purpose of this study we will consider it as such. Therefore, throughout this article references made to low or high SES can be thought of as references to low or high social class.

Parents encourage children to be independent and develop their own identities, but at the same time they also provide rules and boundaries for their children (Gershoff, (2007). Due to the guidance children receive, once parents set rules and guidelines, the children tend to follow them consistently (Bandura A. (1997). Parents recognize and set expectations appropriate for a child's developmental stage. Parents are firm with the rules and give clear reasons to children about why they have to follow. Parental support more openly discusses problems with their children. Two-way communication exists between parents and children, which helps develop good parent-child relationships (Park H, Chiang C & Ju M. (2010). One might say that parents treat children with respect and give reasons why they punish or reward their children.

Parent's social economic status plays a pivotal role on pre-school children's social emotional development. According to Omago, (2010), the network of social economic status, family's level of encouragement, expectations, and educational activities at homes affect children's social emotional development. They also observed Social-economic groups from different families have created a difference in the social emotional development environments. This indicates that the better off the family, the more comfortable they are and the more the emphasis on their social emotion values. While the families that not economically well off, the children will tend to find ways to earn money which might not be social emotionally upright.

Hoff (2005) carried out a study to establish whether there exists any significant relationship between selected family demographic variables and student academic achievement as well as social emotional development in Carolina, USA. The results from the analysis showed that the percentage of children on free or reduced lunch was negatively correlated with mathematics and reading achievement at a high significance and the percentage of parents with post high school education was positively correlated with mathematics and reading achievement at a high significance level of percentage. According to the study, it was concluded that learner's family socio-economic status measured by student participation in free or reduced lunch does have a negative impact on pupils' achievement. On the other hand, there was a significant relationship between learner's socio-economic status and their social emotional development.

The study found that parents' socio-economic status was an important predictor of the children's social emotional development. However, such conclusions were made in Carolina USA but not in Kenya and particularly in Hamisi Sub County where this study was carried out which raises concern as to whether there is a relationship between the parents social-economic status and the pre-school children's social emotional development. Moreover, the study addressed two student variables, namely the percentage of pupils that participated on free or reduced lunch program and percentage of pupils' parents with post high school level of education to measure the academic achievement as their social emotional development. While the mentioned variables were important indicators of family socio-economic status that

influenced pupils' achievement, other variables undoubtedly contribute to children's social emotional development. Hence, there is need for this study to be carried out on the influences parental socio-economic status on pre-school children's social emotional development in Kenya.

4. MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive research design in collecting the data. It targeted 115 preschools in Hamisi Sub County. A stratified random sampling was applied to select head teachers, parents, and pupils. The study used questionnaires and interviews for data collection and data analyzed using frequency counts. Reliability and validity was pre –tested though piloting in one of the schools was results gave a reliability index of 0.85 Cronbach's alpha index.

5. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of this study was to examine the influence of Parental socio-economic status on preschool children's social emotional development in Hamisi Sub County. To achieve this objective, the researcher sought the opinions of pre-school teachers using a closed ended questionnaire and recorded and analyzed their opinions thematically in a five point likert scale as recorded in table 1

Table 1 Showing Responses on whether Parental socio-economic status influence socio emotional development of the pre-school children

Materials provided in schools	Frequencies	Percentage
Strongly agree	100	53.8
Agree	50	26.9
Strongly disagree	20	10.8
Disagree	10	5.4
No response	6	3.22
Total	186	100

N=186

The results indicated that 80 % of respondents interviewed agreed that parental social economic status influenced social emotional development aspects through provision of resources needed in school for learning. 16.2% of respondents disagreed. These findings might have been mediated by children's age, parental warmth, responsiveness, restrictiveness, firmness and demand. Kerr and Steinberg (2000) observed that parenting style forms the foundation of self – esteem. Furthermore, exposing the student to intellectually stimulating things such as books, maintains knowledge of the children's academic records and activities⁶. Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of the study showed that parents' level of income greatly influence cognitive development of pre-school children in Sabatia Sub County. The study concluded that some learners in pre-primary schools in Sabatia Sub County were underachieving due to their Parents'

Level of income. This study recommended that strategies should be sought to empower parents both economically and socially within the sub county. Initiation of economic activities in the sub county was highly recommended

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