

Toxic Parenting Adversely Correlates To Students' Academic Performance In Secondary Schools In Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

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Abstract- The study investigated the connection between toxic parenting and students' academic performance in secondary schools. This was in the light of apprehension that there existed dwindling academic performance. At the same time, school administrators were depending on parents to assist students with inadequate academic performance to improve. Yet, reports of parental malpractices involving national examination were on the increase in Kenya. The study was steered by family system theory that states that an individual cannot be understood in segregation from the other family associates. The study adopted quantitative method, correlational research strategy. Stratified and simple random techniques were applied to select a sample of 344 form three students from 10 schools. A personal biographical data form, toxic parenting questionnaire and a document analysis schedule were used to collect data. Descriptive data were presented in form of frequencies. Inferential data was tested using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The results revealed that there was a statistically significant relationship between toxic parenting and students' academic performance, $r(342) = -.25, p = .000$. Students who scored high in toxic parenting scored low in academic performance. This study concluded that toxic parenting adversely correlated to students' academic performance. The study recommended that school administrators could use other methods like psychological counselling services to improve inadequate academic performance rather than inviting toxic parents to assist. A toxic parenting test could be ran before a student is sent home to bring a parent to school for scoring low in academic performance.

Index Terms- Toxic Parenting, Students Academic Performance.

I. INTRODUCTION

Toxic parenting practices are destructive approaches that parents use in their child-rearing. They undermine children's healthy advancement. Toxic parenting practices fail to nourish the physical, psychological and emotive necessities that allow children attain surviving skills essential for psychological and scholastic modifications at school. Toxic parenting encompass beating of children with leather belts, demeaning verbal criticisms to hitting them with cooking sticks and waist belts. These parents still rationalize these cruelties as acts of moral chastisement or of

edification. They subjugate their children through use of fear, guilt and humiliation. Toxic parents leave a legacy of guilty, shame and low motivational levels that could obstruct children's performance throughout their life's (Forward & Buck, 2018). In this study toxic parenting denoted parents who disregarded or flopped to meet the physical, psychological or emotive necessities of their children; those who abused their children physically, verbally and sexually; those that used fear, guilt, obligation, ridicule or humiliation to manipulate and control their children; those who were addicted to alcohol or drug and/or those who could have been suffering from various personality disorders and were not yet clinically diagnosed.

Academic performance refers to the extent to which students achieve educational benchmarks in terms of knowledge and skills in schools and colleges. Measures of academic performance include; different levels of academic grades achieved in a given test and different categorizations of extra-curricular activities like sports, dances, drama, leadership and other learned skills (Williams, 2018). In this study, academic performance referred to the grades which students attained in their continuous assessment tests that were standardized into T scores to enable comparisons. In Kenya, Academic performance is measured by the quality of grades attained in the National Examination known as the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). Grades attained range from A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, E and F for fail. National examinations in Kenya involve stiff competition between students and different categories of schools. This is because opportunities to proceed to higher institutions of learning depend on the quality of grades achieved. Students who qualify to pursue university education have got to achieve grades that range from A to C+. The students who score grades between C and D join technical and vocational training institutes for various technical courses that are not popular in Kenya (Kweyu, 2017). Those who score D- and below join even a lesser popular category of job sector known as 'Jua Kali', a word used locally in Kenya to denote informal labor (Agewa, 2017).

Kenya had been witnessing incidences of leakage and cheating in national examination (Matiangi & Magoha, 2018). The KCSE is conducted as a summative exam at the end of four-year secondary education cycle. Achieving good grades at this level, means a bright future for majority of Kenyans. At the time this study was being conducted in September 2018, there was noted decline in quality grades in KCSE examination and a noted

disparity in academic performance between schools and regions (Ouma, 2016). Just like there had been dwindling academic performance, parents also had increased malpractices to do with their children's examination behaviors. For example, Chege (2018) highlighted that there were trends of parental brutality on children for poor academic results urging them to stop basing their children's worth on examination results. Some children commit suicide on realizing that their results were not exactly what they had expected (Makokha, 2018).

II. TOXIC PARENTING AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

From the literature reviewed, the researchers noted that, the changing nature of work, technology and competition in job market had outpaced what Kenyan education system provided for students (Okoth, 2017). That was in spite of the efforts that had been put in place by educators and communities to improve the quality and quantity of educational institution and standards (Ministry of Education, 2019). As a result, most of Kenyan schools were experiencing increasing pressure from the government and business leaders to raise academic standards for all students in terms of producing quality academic grades (Matiangi & Makoha, 2018; Ayiro, 2016).

A study was conducted by Wenzlaff and Eisenberg (2018) on parental restrictiveness of negative emotions among children and how it affected them in future. The study established that negative emotional restrictiveness was like sowing seeds of thought suppression. The researchers argued that parents planted mental and emotional seeds in children. The seeds grew as the children grew up. In some families, the seeds planted were made up of love, respect and independence. In other families, parents planted seeds of fear, obligation, guilt and restrictiveness of negative emotional expression. The study concluded that restricted expression of negative emotions, produced children with emotional problems and social skills deficits. They recommended that, parental restrictiveness should not be practiced as it resulted in maladaptive learning and unrealistic expectations, aspects that were not good for academic performance.

In a report by Hart (2017), helping children to develop good attitudes and values was far more important than giving them items. This was because different types of behavioral seeds planted by parents' actions towards their children became consistent and dominant in children's life. Toxic environments caused severe emotional damage to innocent children. In Maryland and South Carolina, USA, parents of truant students were made to attend school with their children. It was observed that when the parents' attitude towards education changed, the children's attitude and behavior also got modified (Bowen, 2019). These aspects of behavior are supported by the principles of Family Systems Theory by Bowen (2019) that guided this study.

A qualitative survey was conducted by Metz (2018) in Canton and Hamilton desegregated schools in U.S.A. Through interviews, the researcher established that students were more preoccupied with the factors that were sensitive to human decency and sense of fairness with which they were treated, than other aspects of school activities. The study also revealed that teacher-student conflicts were a result of authoritarian and coercive controls than teachers' race. Maccoby (2017) conducted a study on students' attitude towards teachers' and the reasons behind the attitudes. The study

established that harsh, discriminative and inconsistent implementation of school rules, standards and procedures made students come to logger heads with teachers and poor academic. The study concluded that home atmosphere also affected how children viewed teachers and how they performed in school academically, socially and even morally.

A study by Baumrind (2012) on parent-child relations and parenting styles on adolescent competences, revealed that there were three types of child rearing practices that were named democratic, autocratic and Laissez-faire. She correlated the practices to the competence, independence and responsibility. She noted that two kinds of parenting styles, autocratic parents and permissive parents, had negative effect on their children's academic performance. She also noted that independence and orientation in girls was clearly associated with democratic upbringing. She further noted that parents who provided the most enriched environment were democratic parents, such children had the most purposive children.

A study by Walberg (2015) investigated many variables and came to a conclusion that academic achievements and outcomes were determined by psychological characteristics of individual students and their immediate environments. This was regardless of whether outcomes were cognitive, behavioral or attitudinal. A study by Mafla (2019). On influence of student's self-efficacy on academic performance was conducted among Colombian Dental Students. The study established that academic efficacy was positively associated with academic performance. The study also revealed that female students had stronger association than male students. Another study by Tissingtons (2019), concluded that poverty in families directly affected students' academic success. Low academic achievement had close relationship with low socio-economic status.

A study by (Hojo, 2012) in Japan investigated determinants of academic performance. The study established that family backgrounds had a strong influence on academic results, but was insignificant when the students were ranked on merit. Another study by Sothan (2018), in Cambodia used a multivariate regression analysis which indicated that entry grade, English ability, class attendance, study effort, academic efficacy and family socio-economic status were positively associated with academic performance. There was no evidence that age, gender, household location, parental education, parental involvement and teacher evaluation had any influence. The study established that term-time employments and family-size had an adverse impact on academic performance. The study concluded that personal backgrounds played potential role in predicting academic performance of students. In Turkey, a study by Kristo, Büşra, Öztag and Sikalidis (2020) investigated effects of eating habits on quality of scholastic performance among adolescents in high school. The study was conducted in 29 cities, and with a sample size of 298 participants. A correlation revealed some association between eating habits and scholastic scores. The study concluded that there was some association of quality of eating habits, although data was limited on the topic on quality of eating in Turkey.

In Africa, Ada and Anake (2015) investigated effects of child abuse on students' academic performance in Nigeria. This was in light of concern that there existed alarming endless cries of students who had been hurt and maltreated in the society. The

result of the analysis revealed that child physical and sexual abuse were negatively related to students' academic performance. The findings implied that children who were sexually and physically abused had low academic performance compared to students who were not abused. The findings concurred with Kashahu, Osmanaga and Bushati (2014) study on the relationship between parenting styles and students' academic achievement in Tirana State, Nigeria. The study established that authoritarian parenting styles had negative effects on the students' academic performance while authoritative parenting showed more successful results in terms of academic performance. Okango (2018) conducted a study in Uganda on effects of family conditions due to poverty on pre-school children's academic performance, and found a strong relationship.

In Kenya, there has been a lot of interest in research regarding academic performance. For example, Wambui (2017) investigated factors that influenced boy child's academic performance in Kirinyaga County in Kenya. The study investigated whether variables like family background, teacher-student ratio, peer pressure, availability of school resources and students' attitude towards academics had influence on academic performance. The study established that teacher-student ratio and family background that included parental level of education, alcohol and drug abuse and poor role modeling affected academic performance negatively. Another study by Odude (2013), investigated factors influencing academic performance in KCSE in private schools in Westlands Division in Nairobi, Kenya. The study concluded that teachers' experience had key influence on academic performance. A study by Musyoka (2018) established that school based factors like physical facilities and supervisory role of head-teachers had significant relationship with academic performance of students. Njoroge (2014) investigated discipline as a factor that affects academic performance and established that lack of self-discipline among students resulted in poor academic performance.

Thus this study sought to investigate the relationship between toxic parenting and academic performance. The researchers hypothesized that there was a significant relationship between toxic parenting and academic performance. The aim of this study was to sensitize school administrators regarding toxic parenting. This knowledge would assist them not to over-rely on parents regarding improvement of their children's academic performance. There was need for parents and students to aim at working hard towards self-employment than concentrating on getting grades for job-seeking. The research question was; what relationship existed between toxic parenting and academic performance of students in secondary schools.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The researchers got concerned regarding continued poor academic performance among secondary school students (Matiangi & Makoha, 2017). The problem was that majority of parents in Kenya, went into extreme pains to make sure that their children passed national examinations (Ayiro, 2016). Some parents would join exam cheating and corrupt cartels who sold papers before due date to make their children pass exams (Matiangi, 2017). Other parents paid individuals to do exams for their children (Kweyu, 2018). Other parents used verbal, physical

and psychological abuse to force their children to work harder to get better grades. Ironically, school administrators and teachers in majority of secondary schools in Kenya tended to over-rely on parents' capacity to assist in improving their children's academic performance. This assumption was based on the belief that all the parents possess the capacity to provide appropriate moral guidance and counselling (Ministry of Education, 2019).

The reviewed studies had been conducted in other countries (Mojo, 2012; Kristo, Busra, Oztog & Sikalidis, 2020 and Baumrind, 2012). Other studies were conducted in other geographical regions in Africa (Musyoka, 2018; Njoroge, 2014; Okango 2018) among others. Therefore, there existed literature gap on the topic of toxic parenting and academic performance. There was need to conduct an investigation into the relationship that existed between toxic parenting and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Gishu County, Kenya. The study aimed at providing an explanation to the declining academic performance in spite of using parents to assist improve grades among secondary school students.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out among secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County in the republic of Kenya. The researcher preferred the area because it has a total of 147 registered public secondary schools that belong to different types and categories. The study adopted correlational research design because all the variables were not manipulated. The study targeted a total of 9147 Form 3 students. They included 5292 boys and 3855 girls. The study employed stratified random sampling technique and simple random sampling technique to select a sample of 344 students to be involved in the study. Data were collected by the use of 24 items toxic parenting questionnaire, personal biographical form that had seven items and a document analysis schedule regarding test results lists. To establish the reliability of the questionnaire, a test re-test was conducted in a pilot study. Pilot study was done in three schools from Uasin Gishu. The reliability coefficient was determined using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The correlation coefficient obtained for toxic parenting questionnaire was $r = .80$. Ethical considerations were observed. The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The descriptive statistics like frequencies were presented to explain the demographic characteristics of participants. Pearson's product moment correlation (r) was the statistical test that was used to test the hypothesis. The mean score of toxic parenting and mean score of academic performance were computed and the results were established.

V. RESULTS

Demographic Description of Participants

The sample size for this study comprised 344 participants drawn from the selected 10 secondary schools (simple-sex boarding and mixed-day) from Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. Therefore, responses from 344 participants were analyzed in the study. The participants were Form 3 male and female students. The demographics of the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Type of School and Gender

Type of School	N	Gender	
		Female	Male
Single sex boarding	180	109	71
Mixed day	164	63	101
Total	344	172	172

The study established that male students were less compared to the number of female students. This was because the number of boys boarding schools were fewer than those of girls in Uasin Gishu County in Kenya. While in mixed-day schools boys were more than girls. Implying that parent’s preferred to take girls to boarding schools than they did boys. This could mean that girls were considered to be safer in boarding schools than in mixed day schools.

Toxic Parenting and Students’ Academic Performance

The study objective was to investigate the relationship between toxic parenting and students’ academic performance. The

Table 2

Toxic Parenting and Academic Performance

Pearson Correlations	Toxic Parenting	Academic Performance
Toxic Parenting	—	-.25
Academic Performance	-.25	—

From Table 2, the results shows that there was a statistically significant relationship between toxic parenting and students’ academic performance, $r(342) = -.25, p = .000$. From the results, the null hypothesis was rejected. The implication of the results was that when the level of toxic parenting was high, the academic performance of the students was low. That was to say that the level of toxic parenting was inversely proportional to the academic performance of the students. Therefore students from families with high level of toxic parenting were disadvantaged in relation to academic performance. Students who did not experience toxic parenting had high scores in academics. The findings were supported by a study by Walberg (2015) that attributed academic performance to psychological characteristics of individual students and their immediate environments. The study finding also revealed that students who scored low on toxic parenting were emotionally and psychologically comfortable to concentrate in academic work at school.

The finding was also consistent with results of several other related studies (Hojo, 2012; Ada & Anake, 2015; Musyoka 2018) the studies established that circumstances within families had relationship with academic performance. The findings supported results of Wenzlaff a Eisenberg (2018) that established that parental emotional restrictiveness resulted in thought suppression and deficits in learning of social skills. They concluded that parental restrictiveness of negative emotions leads to maladaptive

study hypothesis stated that; there was a significant relationship between toxic parenting and academic performance. To test this hypothesis, the students’ toxic parenting questionnaire was administered to the participants and their responses were scored. The academic performance of the participants was calculated from the participants examination results recorded in the personal biographical form item seven and eight. The grades were converted into T-scores to standardize them. The scores of toxic parenting and students’ academic performance were correlated using Pearson’s Product Correlation Coefficient and the following results were established as shown in Table 2

learning and unrealistic expectations just like children of toxic parents. Toxic parents do not respect children’s feelings or abilities. These parents can encourage their children to cheat in exams (kweyu, 2018). The finding was also supported by Kashahu et al (2014) who studied the relationship between parenting styles and students’ academic achievement. Their study established that students from parents with authoritative parenting style performed better compared to students who parents had authoritarian parenting style. However, this study differed with Musyoka (2018) who found that school factors and supervisory role of head-teachers had greater influence on academic performance than family background. This study found that toxic parenting had adverse relationship with academic performance.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that toxic parenting had a significant relationship with academic performance. Students who scored high in toxic parenting scored low in academic performance. The students who scored low on toxic parenting, scored high on academic performance. This study concluded that toxic parenting adversely correlated with students’ academic performance in secondary schools. Such students did not develop interest in school or in school work and they also lacked motivation to work. The study recommended that the school administrators could use

other methods like psychological counselling services to improve inadequate academic performance rather than to expect toxic parents to assist. A toxic parenting test could be ran before a student is sent home to bring a parent to school for scoring low in academic performance.

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