



**INFLUENCE OF PARENTS' MARITAL STATUS ON
IMPLEMENTATION OF CURRICULUM IN PUBLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOLS IN GARASHI ZONE, KILIFI COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: To assess the influence of parents' marital status on curriculum implementation in public primary schools in Garashi Zone, Kilifi County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem: Parents' marital status is a key determinant of curriculum implementation in schools. However, in Garashi Zone, the situation is quite different with syllabus coverage being slow and many primary school learners register low grades in examinations.

Methodology: The study employed mixed methodology with concurrent triangulation research design, involving 905 respondents. Sampling utilized Yamane's Formula, stratified and purposive sampling methods. Quantitative data from teachers were collected via questionnaires, while qualitative insights from headteachers and parents' representatives were gathered through interviews. Analysis included thematic analysis for qualitative data and descriptive and inferential analysis for quantitative data, presented using SPSS 23.

Findings: The study found that syllabus coverage is below average which has occasioned low performance in KCPE. This is attributed to parents' marital status.

Recommendations: Parents should plan their families and bring forth families they can comfortably take care of such that the meagre amount of financial resources available can cater for the education of their children in secondary schools. The Ministry of Health and the Division of National Family Planning should continue with their efforts to teach people on the essence of bring forth families they can manage.

Keywords: *Parents' marital status, curriculum implementation, public primary school.*

INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement in education, particularly in implementing primary school curriculum, is emphasized with positive correlations in the United States, according to Duncan and Brooks-Gunn (23). They highlight direct impacts like enhancing home learning environments and indirect effects such as increasing parental earnings. However, parental roles are influenced by marital status, as noted by Cherlin (2011), with single-parent households potentially affecting socio-emotional development and educational outcomes. Blake (2013) reinforces this, showing that children from single-parent families may face challenges in completing high school or attending college, prompting concern among policymakers and scholars.

Education is a key factor which determines long-time economic success and the association between family disruption and lower educational attainment raises the question of the sharp increase in a family instability during the past two decades will have lasting negative consequences on educational attainment of next generation (Blake, 2013). Consistent with these assertions, Bumpas (2014), in a study carried out in the Netherlands, asserted that one reason why children from single-parent families are less likely to do well in school is the precarious economic position of their families. Bumpas (2014) further indicates that mother-only families are more likely than other families to be poor, and their poverty is more extreme than that of other groups. Bumpas (2014) further asserts that even among single-parent families living above the poverty line, income insecurity is a common place.

In a study conducted into the intergenerational effects of family disruption in China, Beane and David (2013) notes that income account for between 30 and 50 percent of the difference in primary school among children from intact and non-intact families. Sociologists have to ask how child rearing practices and parent-child relationship are affected by family position and single parenthood and how these affect the longtime time well-being of children (Beane & David, 2013). Children growing up in a non-intact family are more likely to drop out of school. This disengagement from school is associated with the low education aspirations, since high aspirations are a critical factor predicting education achievement (Wilkins, 2016). A good measure of behavioral disengagement is the learners' attendance record; attitude towards working hard in school and going to primary and secondary schools are good indicators of the effective aspect of disengagement. Meanwhile, Barker and Stevenson (2016) noted that the average income

of step-parent families is substantially higher than the income of step-parent families, but somewhat lower than that of two parent intact families.

The quality of parent-child relationship in single-parent and step-parent-families may be lower than in intact families because of the stress associated with divorces, remarriage, or both, because of conflict between children and step-parents for "mother's male- partners. Children in step-parent-families also share corner experiences with children in single parent families in that they live apart from a natural parent and may be exposed to conflict between their biological parents.

In Nigeria, Adesehinwa and Aremu (2010) posit that factors resident in child, family, society, government and the school maybe composite causative effects for these downtrends; they, however concluded that there is a need for each of these variables to be considered extensively, hence the focus of this study is to critically consider family type and effects on academic achievements of primary school learners. The family, being a powerful influence on the child and its importance as a primary agent of socialization could in no doubt enhance or hinder the academic achievement of the child depending on the social climate in the family. Variance in psycho-social emotional fortification in the monogamy and polygamy family background could be an indicator to high or low implementation of primary school curriculum. Kenya has not been an exception with Ng'eno (2012) indicating that many primary school learners registering low learning outcome sin national examinations. In Garashi Zone, Ng'eno (2012) posits that parental characteristics contribute to implementation of primary school education.

In Garashi Zone, the situation is different and implementation of primary curriculum has not been devoid of challenges. Most schools have lagged behind in syllabus coverage ad pupils continue to register low grades in primary education in KCPE examinations. For example, in last year's (2018) KCPE examinations, Garashi Zone registered an aggregate of 33.1% in primary subject against the national aggregate which stood at 67.3 % (Ministry of Education, 2019). These statistics point to a glaring picture of low grades among pupils. Mwangi (2011) indicates that in the monogamous families, favorable learning environment is created, while Peterson (2012) noted that conflicts are relatively easier to solve in the monogamous than in the polygamous families. Moreover, less psychological disturbance is envisaged in the former than in the latter. Leaners from polygamous families are therefore more likely to experience more problems than students from monogamous

families. However, Mwangi (2011) are not indicative of the fact that even monogamous families are not devoid of challenges which might hamper implementation of primary school curriculum.

Mwangi (2011) and literature reviewed have not indicated how different parents' marital status influence implementation of primary school curriculum; research gaps which this study sought to fill.

Statement of the Problem

Parents' marital status plays an important role in the implementation of primary school curriculum. However, in Garashi Zone, the situation is different and implementation of primary curriculum has not been devoid of challenges. Most schools have lagged behind in syllabus coverage and pupils continue to register low grades in primary education in KCPE examinations. For example, in the 2022 KCPE examinations, Garashi Zone registered an aggregate of 33.1% in primary subject against the national aggregate which stood at 67.3 % (Ministry of Education, 2023). These statistics point to a glaring picture of low grades among pupils. Efforts to mitigate these challenges have not yielded much remarkable progress. Despite these statistics, few studies have interrogated the influence of parents' marital status on implementation of primary school curriculum; hence the study.

Objectives of The Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To assess the status of curriculum implementation in public primary schools in Garashi Zone.
- ii. To examine the influence of parents' marital status on curriculum implementation in public primary school sin Garashi Zone.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by parental characteristics theory by Palkovitz (2010). According to Palkovitz (2010), the core features of parenting including nurturance and protection are more universally recognized and much greater consensus exists about parents who are involved in their children's education than those who are not involved (Palkovitz, 2010). This theory holds that parents can help their children practice newly acquired skills in many different, real-life settings and hence their involvement in intervention may be

crucial for wider generalization and improvement of implementation of primary school curriculum. In the context of this study, parents' thoughts about monitoring, planning, or worrying about their children's lives may not represent observable behaviors but may significantly influence how they interact with their children in different settings. Thus, this theory is relevant in that it underscores the fact that parents' marital status as a key determinant of curriculum implementation in public primary schools. This study was grounded in Franklin's (1956) curriculum implementation theory, which asserts that a curriculum must prepare learners for their future roles in society. It advocates for teaching subjects that align with societal needs, rather than focusing solely on classical subjects. The theory emphasizes adapting the curriculum to individuals' needs and the demands of the modern industrial society, promoting teaching methods that cater to learners' strengths, weaknesses, and preferences. It underscores the importance of assessing learner competencies and mastery of subjects, aligning with the objectives of this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted mixed methodology and thus applied concurrent triangulation research design. Target population comprised 32 headteachers, 329 teachers and 544 parents' representatives totaling 905 respondents from which a sample of 276 respondents was determined using Yamane's Formula. Stratified sampling was used to create three strata based on the number of zones in Garashi Zone. From each zone, five headteachers and 10 parents' representatives were selected using purposive sampling. However, from each zone, 77 primary school teachers were sampled using simple random sampling to eliminate bias. This sampling procedure realized a sample of 15 headteachers, 231 teachers and 30 parents' representatives. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from teachers whereas interviews were used to collect qualitative data from headteachers and parents' representatives. Data analysis began by identifying common themes. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages and inferentially using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS 23) and presented using tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings of the study based on the objective. It also outlines the methods of presentation of the study findings and discussions.

Status of Implementation of Curriculum in Public Primary Schools

The study sought to assess the status of implementation of curriculum in public primary schools in Garashi Zone. This was measured by rating the levels of syllabus coverage and KCPE performance in curriculum in public primary schools. Results are shown in Table 1;

Table 1: Levels of Syllabus Coverage in Public Primary Schools in Garashi Zone

Levels of Syllabus Coverage	Number of Teachers	
	f	%
Excellent	40	17.9
Very Good	56	25.0
Good	23	10.3
Fair	92	41.1
Below Average	13	6.7

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 1 shows that only 40(17.9%) of the teachers stated that their syllabus is excellent, a quarter, 56(25.0%) stated very good, 23(10.3%) stated good whereas majority, 80(40.8%) indicated their syllabus coverage is fair with a paltry 13(6.7%) stating below average. During the interviews, the headteachers, however, responded on the contrary by stating that timely syllabus coverage has been a challenge in many public primary schools. They indicated that teachers rarely complete their syllabus in time. When probed further, headteacher, H1, noted;

In my primary school, the levels of syllabus coverage are below average. Teachers do not cover their syllabus in time to allow learners time to revise.

Similar views were expressed by the parents' representatives who noted that levels of syllabus coverage are below average. They stated that their teachers rarely cover syllabus in time. Parents' representative, PR1, observed;

In my primary school, teachers usually lag behind in covering syllabus and this has left pupils with little time for revision.

These findings point to the fact that syllabus coverage by teachers has been a problem in many public primary schools. This is consistent with the assertions of Kitimo (2014) reports that, in Garashi Zone, many teachers do not complete their syllabus in time. This also lends credence to the findings of a report by the Ministry of Education (2023) which showed that, in public primary schools in Garashi Zone, most of the teachers do not complete syllabus in time. These findings point to the fact that timely coverage of syllabus

has not been realized in many public primary schools. Having collected data on syllabus coverage, data were further collected on KCPE performance for the last five years (2019-2023). Results are shown in Table 2;

Table 2: KCPE Performance in Public Primary Schools in Garashi Zone (2019-2023)

Year of Examination	KCPE Results (%)
2019	37.87
2020	33.90
2021	31.64
2022	29.57
2023	30.61

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 2 shows that KCPE performance has been low fluctuating between 29% and 38% for the last five years, which is below average. These findings were supported by headteachers, teachers and parents' representatives who stated that academic performance of pupils has been low despite the concerted efforts being put. These findings corroborate the findings of a report by the Ministry of Education (2023) Garashi Zone registered an aggregate of 33.1% in primary subject against the national aggregate which stood at 67.3%. These statistics point to a glaring picture of low grades among pupils. These findings affirm the fact that performance of pupils has been low in many public primary schools.

Parents' Marital Status and Implementation of Curriculum in Public Primary Schools

The study sought to determine how parental marital status influences implementation of curriculum in public primary schools. Results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Teachers’ Views on the Influence of Parents’ Marital Status on Implementation of Curriculum in Public Primary Schools

Test Items	Ratings				
	SA	A	U	D	SD
	%	%	%	%	%
Single parents rarely enhance implementation of curriculum in public primary schools	44.0	8.7	3.6	40.8	6.9
In public primary schools, many parents are married though rarely participate in implementation of curriculum	31.2	5.2	3.9	51.9	7.8
Parents with cases of divorce rarely participate in the curriculum implementation in public primary schools	40.2	9.0	7.6	32.6	8.6
Parents with cases of separation rarely participate effectively in the curriculum implementation in public primary schools	50.6	8.2	4.3	22.1	14.8

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 3 indicates that 44.0% of teachers strongly agreed that single parents rarely enhance curriculum implementation in public primary schools, with 8.7% agreeing. Conversely, only 3.6% were undecided, 20.8% disagreed, and 6.9% strongly disagreed. These findings align with Blake's (2013) study in San Francisco, revealing lower educational attainment among children from single-parent families. OECD (2011) also supports these findings, projecting an increase in single-parent households in Europe and noting the associated challenges such as low enrollment, attendance, socio-emotional difficulties, and poor cognitive development. Overall, the evidence suggests that single parenthood negatively impacts students' academic progress and emotional well-being, leading to challenges in participating in secondary school activities. Table 3 shows that 70(31.2%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that, in public primary schools, many parents are married though rarely participate in implementation of curriculum while 12(5.2%) agreed. However, 9(3.9%) were undecided, 116(51.9%) disagreed whereas 17(7.8%) strongly disagreed. The study revealed that 90(40.2%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that parents with cases of divorce rarely participate in the curriculum implementation in public primary schools while 20(9.0%) agreed. However, 17(7.6%) were undecided, 73(32.6%) disagreed whereas 19(8.6%) strongly disagreed. Majority 113(50.6%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that parents with cases of separation rarely participate effectively in the curriculum implementation in public primary schools whereas 18(8.2%) agreed. On the same breath, 10(4.3%) were undecided, 50(22.1%) disagreed

whereas 33(14.8%) strongly disagreed. These findings are consistent with the findings of a study conducted in China in which Beane and David (2013) found that children growing up in a non-intact family are more likely to drop out of school. In summary, these findings thus affirm the fact that different dimensions of family structures namely the marital status of a mother, presence of the father and polygyny impact students’ progression to school and eventual academic performance.

Inferential Analysis

To verify the influence of parental marital status on implementation of curriculum in public primary schools, data were collected on the average family size of parents whose children attend the 12 sampled public primary schools and average KCPE performance for the last five years (2019-2023). Results are shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Average Family Size and Average KCPE Performance in Public Primary Schools

Average Family Size	Average KCPE Performance
9	37.6
7	34.5
5	29.9
4	28.4
4	40.5
9	39.3
8	50.9
7	49.6
5	45.6
9	47.9
7	58.4
3	56.7

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 4 shows that, in Garashi Zone, the average family sizes range between 3 and 9 members which have influence on curriculum implementation in public primary schools. These results further corroborate the findings of Bower (2013) that students come from different families with different number of members and affects children’s participation in secondary school programmes. Data in Table 4 were subjected to Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Analysis and the results are shown in Table 5:

Table 5: Relationship between Parental Marital Status and Implementation of Curriculum in Public Primary Schools

		Parental marital status	Implementation of curriculum
Parental marital status	Pearson Correlation	1	.506*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	12	12
Implementation of curriculum	Pearson Correlation	.506*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	12	12

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test Analysis which generated correlation coefficients of $r = 0.506$ with corresponding significant level (p-value) of 0.004 which was less than the predetermined level of significance, 0.05, that is, $p\text{-value} = 0.004 < 0.05$. Thus, the data shows there is significant influence of parental marital status on implementation of curriculum in public primary schools.

Thematic Analysis

During the interviews, headteachers and parents' representatives also stated that cases of single-parenthood are on the rise with net negative effect on curriculum implementation in primary schools. Parents' representative, PR2, observed;

In Garashi Zone, there are very many cases of single-parent families. There are many divorce or separation cases, teenage pregnancy and widowhood which render many children to belong to single-parenthood. This has often them to an extent where they abandon their education.

This view was supported by the headteachers who also stated that cases of single-parenthood have bene on the rise. Headteacher, H2, stated;

I have had to handle many cases of learners failing to come to go to school and reasons are often attributed to conflicts at home. Either their parents separated or divorced leaving them traumatized. In some instances, some learners stay with either their mother or father because one parent passed on. Sometimes reconciling these issues become a problem to children who end up abandoning their academic programmes midway.

These perspectives highlight single parenthood as a significant contributor to primary school dropouts, consistent with the World Family Chart's (2014) assertion that a large number of children live in single-parent households. OECD (2011) findings also support this, linking single-parent families to low enrollment, attendance, socio-emotional challenges, and poor cognitive development. This aligns with Owino and Kurgat's (2014) observations of many learners residing in single-parent households, indicating a rise in single parenthood exacerbating dropout rates. However, interviewees noted that monogamous family structures are predominant, with learners actively engaging in academic activities;

Despite the changes in the contemporary family arrangements, monogamy is still the most common form of families practised by many people and many learners from such families have had fewer instances of school dropouts.

These views also support the viewpoints held by Booth and Paul (2013) that learners raised in monogamous families do well across a range of measures of well-being than their peers in two-parent families while parental separation is associated with an array of adverse outcomes for learners and the rate at which they drop out of school. Hence, both quantitative and qualitative findings attest to the fact that availability of both parents is paramount in promoting learners' psychological well-being necessary to ensure that they attend school activities and complete their studies. On polygamous family structures, both the headteachers and parents' representatives indicated that polygamy is still practised with many learners from such families exhibiting psychosocial challenges which make it difficult for them to participate in academic activities. They affirmed;

Many people still practise polygamy. However, many children such families usually experience a lot of hardships since there is competition for limited resources

From these verbatims, it is evident that polygamy has had its effects on how often children undertake their academic programmes owing to competition for scarce resources in such family arrangements, thus, compromising learners' academic progression. On child-headed families, the headteachers and parents' representatives noted that such cases are common in Garashi Zone and learners who come who come from such family structures usually experience challenges taking part in academic activities. Headteacher, H3, noted;

In my primary school, I have orphaned learners who play both the role of parents to their younger siblings. Sometimes, they miss school to go and look for jobs to do to fend for their younger brothers and sisters.

Parents' representatives echoed similar views as headteachers that cases of child-headed family arrangements. Parents' representative, PR3, stated;

In my village, we have had children who have been orphaned and the elder brothers and sisters have had to assume the roles of parents taking care of their younger siblings. This has compromised their participation in academic activities in schools since they sometimes have to miss school to take care of their young ones.

These views are indicative of the extent to which child-headed family structures negatively affect curriculum implementation in primary schools. In summary, these mixed findings affirm the fact that primary school learners come from different family structures which have various effects on curriculum implementation.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that in public primary schools, syllabus coverage is subpar, with teachers often unable to complete their syllabi in time for adequate revision by learners. This inadequacy has resulted in consistently low academic performance, as reflected in the KCPE grades over the past five years (2019-2023). Furthermore, the research underscores the significant influence of parents' marital status on curriculum implementation in schools. Whether pupils come from monogamous, single-parent, polygamous, or children-headed families, there is a discernible impact on curriculum implementation in public primary schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that parents should plan their families and bring forth families they can comfortably take care of such that the meagre amount of financial resources available can cater for the education of their children in secondary schools. The Ministry of Health and the Division of National Family Planning should continue with their efforts to teach people on the essence of bringing forth families they can manage.

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