



## Family Structures and Academic Achievement: A Study of Family-Related Influences on KCSE Performance in Samburu County's Public Secondary Schools

Author

Lanyasunya A. Ropilo 

Author's email: [ropilolanyasunya@gmail.com](mailto:ropilolanyasunya@gmail.com)

(1) Moi University, Kenya.

### Cite this article in APA

Ropilo, L. A. (2024). Family structures and academic achievement: A study of family-related influences on KCSE performance in Samburu County's public secondary schools. *Journal of humanities and social sciences*, 3(1), 79-83. <https://doi.org/10.51317/jhss.v3i1.674>



A publication of Editon Consortium Publishing (online)

### Article history

Received: 30.10.2024

Accepted: 28.11.2024

Published: 31.12.2024

Scan this QR to read the paper online



**Copyright:** ©2024 by the author(s). This article is an Open Access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).



### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to establish the family-related factors that affect students' performance in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) in public secondary schools in Samburu County, with a focus on understanding the unique challenges faced by students from nomadic pastoralist backgrounds. Despite improvements in Kenya's secondary education system, including increased enrollment and infrastructure, academic performance in Samburu County remains low. The study used a mixed-methods approach, collecting data through structured questionnaires from Form IV school leavers and high school principals. The focus was on family-related factors such as the educational level of guardians, parental occupation, and socio-economic status and their impact on students' KCSE performance. The data were analysed using mean, frequencies, and p-values to identify significant factors. The study found that the level of education of guardians was the most significant family-related factor influencing academic performance. Additionally, socio-economic status and parental occupation were also found to have a notable impact on students' ability to perform well in KCSE. The study concluded that family-related factors, especially the educational background and socio-economic status of parents, significantly affect KCSE performance in Samburu County. The study recommends strategies to improve parental involvement in education, such as increasing awareness about the importance of education and initiatives aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of families to support students' educational outcomes.

**Key terms:** Academic performance, fees, guardian, performance, sponsor.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognised as a powerful tool for individual and societal development. In Kenya, the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) serves as a critical milestone in the education system, determining students' future opportunities in higher learning and employment. However, academic performance in the KCSE has been influenced by numerous factors, both within and outside the school environment. Among these, family-related factors are particularly significant, as they shape the educational experiences and aspirations of students.

In Samburu County, a predominantly pastoralist region in Kenya, unique socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors pose additional challenges to academic achievement. As students navigate their education in this context, family-related factors such as parental involvement, educational background, socio-economic status, and family expectations play a pivotal role in shaping their performance in the KCSE exams. These factors often interact in complex ways, influencing not only the academic outcomes of students but also their attitudes toward education and their long-term educational goals.

This study, titled Investigating Family-Related Factors Influencing KCSE Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Samburu County, seeks to explore and analyse how various family-related elements impact the academic success of students. By identifying the key family factors that affect KCSE performance, the study aims to contribute to a clear understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by students in the region, providing valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and families themselves. The findings of this study are expected to offer recommendations for improving academic outcomes, enhancing parental involvement, and addressing socio-economic disparities in the education sector in Samburu County.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Parents' role in influencing students' academic performance has been a focus of many researchers as an important element. Areas considered most critical in family-related factors are occupation, economic and education level of parents. Social class variables are

cited as having great influence (Schiefeldam et al. cited in Adell. 2002).

Caldas and Bankston (1997) also found out that among family factors that affect academic status of students are low socio-economic status, minority status, single parenthood, step-parenthood, and family involvement.

A study by Graetz (1995) also found that the educational achievement of children over time is greatly influenced by their social background. That is, educational success depends very strongly on the socio-economic status of one's parents. Parents who are well-endowed educationally and economically foster a higher level of achievement in their children. They also may provide higher levels of psychological support for their children through environments that encourage the development of skills necessary for success at school. This notion is supported also by Williams (1987).

Research indicates that children from low-SES households and communities develop academic skills more slowly compared to children from higher-SES groups (Morgan et al., 2009). Initial academic skills are correlated with the home environment, where low literacy environments and chronic stress negatively affect a child's pre-academic skills. The school systems in low-SES communities are often under-resourced, negatively affecting students' academic progress (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Children's academic performance is impacted by inadequate education and rising dropout rates, which further contribute to the community's low socio-economic standing. More research on the relationship between SES and education is crucial since bettering school systems and early intervention initiatives may help lower these risk factors.

In addition, the perception of family economic stress and personal financial constraints affected emotional distress/depression in students and their academic outcomes (Mistry et al., 2009). Rich (2000), quoted in Considine et al. (2002), linked academic achievement to family structure. As sole-parent families, on average, have lower levels of income, are headed by parents with lower educational attainment and are less likely to be in the labour force, children from these

families are likely to have lower educational performance. Other factors in sole-parent families that are likely to adversely affect the educational outcomes of children compared to those from two-parent families are said to include reduced contact between the child and non-custodial parent; the custodial parent having less time to spend with children in terms of supervision of school-work and maintaining appropriate levels of discipline; the lack of an appropriate role model, especially for males; increased responsibilities on children such as childcare roles, domestic duties which impede the time available for school work; and the nature of parent-child relationships in sole parent families may cause emotional and behavioural problems for the child (Buckingham, 2000; Rich, 2000).

The influence of family structure has been found to be only weakly associated with educational attainment, however, once controlling for other variables (Machin, 1998). It is more detrimental when children in sole parent families also experience a range of other risk factors such as low income (Sparkes, 1999).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Family related factors were socio-economic variables commonly used which were the guardians' socio-economic status, occupation and level of education. (Morgan et al. 2009).

Table 1 presents the results of family-related factors that influence academic performance in the study area.

**Table 1: Family-Related Factors**

Family-related factor		KCSE performance		Total N=100(100%)	P value
		Average N=46(46%)	Low N=54(54%)		
Age category of guardian	26-35 years	6(6%)	6(6%)	12(12%)	0.620
	36-45 years	6(6%)	14(14%)	20(20%)	
	46-55 years	18(18%)	22(22%)	40(40%)	
	Over 55 years	16(16%)	12(12%)	28(28%)	
Gender of guardian	Male	30(30%)	38(38%)	68(68%)	0.697
	Female	16(16%)	16(16%)	32(32%)	
Marital status	Married	40(40%)	40(40%)	80(80%)	0.429
	Single	2(2%)	8(8%)	10(10%)	
	Widow/er	4(4%)	6(6%)	10(10%)	
Education level of guardian	None	16(16%)	20(20%)	36(36%)	0.020
	Primary	20(20%)	4(4%)	24(24%)	
	Secondary	2(2%)	12(12%)	14(14%)	
	Tertiary	8(8%)	14(14%)	22(22%)	
	University	0(0)	4(4%)	4(4%)	
Occupation of guardian	Employed	8(8%)	16(16%)	24(24%)	0.664
	Crop farmer	6(6%)	12(12%)	18(18%)	
	Casual	4(4%)	4(4%)	8(8%)	
	Business	8(8%)	6(6%)	14(14%)	
	Herder	20(20%)	16(16%)	36(36%)	

Who paid fees	Parent	28(28%)	30(30%)	58(58%)	0.292
	Guardian	16(16%)	14(14%)	30(30%)	
	Sponsor	2(2%)	10(10%)	12(12%)	
Family economic status	Poor	26(26%)	32(32%)	58(58%)	0.967
	Middle	12(12%)	14(14%)	26(26%)	
	High	8(8%)	8(8%)	16(16%)	

The findings revealed that the education level of the guardian has a significant association with the student's academic performance (p-value = 0.020). The same results were found by Davis-Kean (2005), which showed that Parents' years of schooling were found to be an important socio-economic factor in influencing students' academic performance. Halle et al. (1997), using a sample of low-income minority families, also found that mothers' education level had a significant association with children's achievement in math and reading. Age category of the guardian, Gender of the guardian, marital status and occupation of the guardian, who paid fees for the respondent and family economic status had no significant association with the respondent's academic performance.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that the level of education of guardians influenced the academic performance of students more than their occupation and economic status, which were found to be slightly lower in significance. This agrees with the conventional Socio-economic Status Socio-economic status (SES) measurement, which is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation. It is commonly conceptualised as the social standing or class of an individual or group. Low SES and its correlates, such as lower education, poverty, and poor health, ultimately affect society as a whole. The

findings agree with Fallon (2003) that a child does not experience disadvantage on her/his own but in the family context. Stressed family settings cannot provide young children with the type of experiences which will be of optimum benefit. Leseman (2002), for example, cites '... abundant evidence for a strong causal relationship between family environments and poor mental capacity of children later in life.' Waldfogel (2000) has also observed that '[c]hildren who grow up in poverty fare worse than other children on a number of outcomes, for example, educational attainment and health.' Each child's growth and development is dependent on the nature and quality of her/his interactions with the environment into which s/he is born.

**Recommendations:** In relation to family-related factors, the education level of guardians was a major factor. There is a need, therefore, to have a multi-pronged approach to enhancing the general education levels of the people. One is to increase literacy levels, which currently stand at 12 per cent; two, by enhancing school enrolment, which is currently 49; and, thirdly, by opening up more opportunities for learning by all people. Reaching out to children, youth and adults to access education is a pre-requisite. This is done by making education initiatives flexible, relevant, and affordable for nomadic pastoralists. Flexible education delivery models are an important approach.

## REFERENCES

- Adell, M. A. (2002). *Strategies for Improving Performance in Adolescents*. Piramide.
- Aikens, N. L., & Barbarin, O. (2008). Socio-economic differences in reading trajectories: The contribution of family, neighbourhood, and school contexts. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100(2), 235-251.
- Buckingham, J. (2000). *Boy troubles: Understanding rising suicide, rising crime and educational failure*, CIS Policy Monograph 46, Centre for Independent Studies, Sydney.
- Caldas, S. J., & Bankston, C. L. (1997). Multilevel examination of student, school, and district-level effects on academic achievement. *The Journal of Educational of Educational Research*, 93(2), 91.
- Considine, L. (2002). *Factors Influencing the Educational Performance of Students from Disadvantaged Backgrounds*; Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training University of Sydney.

- Davis-Kean, P. (2005). *The Influence of Parent Education and Family Income on Child Achievement: The Indirect Role of Parental Expectations and the Home Environment*.
- Fallon, J. (2003). *CECDE and Educational Disadvantage; Context and understanding*. Paper presented at OMEP Conference, in University College Cork.
- Graetz, B. (1995). *Socio-economic Status in Education Research and Policy*. In John Ainley et al., *Socio-economic Status and School Education* DEET/ACER Canberra.
- Halle, T. G., Kurtz-Costes, B., & Mahoney, J. L. (1997). Family influences on school achievement in low-income, African American children. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 89(3), 527.
- Leseman, P. P. M. (2002). *Early Childhood Education and Care for Children from Low-Income or Minority Backgrounds*. OECD.
- Machin, S., & Reenen, J. (1998). Technology and changes in skill structure: Evidence from seven OECD countries. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 113(4), 1215-1244.
- Mistry, R. S., Benner, A. D., Tan, C. S., & Kim, S. Y. (2009). Family economic stress and academic well-being among Chinese-American youth: The influence of adolescents' perceptions of economic strain. *Journal of Family Psychology: JFP: Journal of the Division of Family Psychology of the American Psychological Association (Division 43)*, 23(3), 279–290. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015403>
- Morgan, P. L., Farkas, G., Hillemeier, M. M., & Maczuga, S. (2009). Risk factors for learning-related behavior problems at 24 months of age: Population-based estimates. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 37, 401-413. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10802-008-9279-8>
- Rich, A. (2000). *Beyond the Classroom: How Parents Influence their Children's Education*, CIS Policy Monograph 48, Centre for Independent Studies, Sydney.
- Sparkes, J. (1999). *Schools, Education and Social Exclusion*, CASE Paper 29, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics, London.
- Waldfogel, J. (2000). Poverty and Children. *Focus*, 21(2), Fall 2000. 61 – 62. University of Wisconsin-Madison Institute for Research on Poverty.
- Williams, J. (1987). Perquisites, risk, and capital structure. *The journal of finance*, 42(1), 29–48.