

# ORPHAN STUDENTS' SELF-ESTEEM AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THREE DISTRICTS OF CENTRAL KENYA

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## ABSTRACT

*Self-esteem of children is likely to be influenced by the environment where they are brought up. In effect, the purpose of this study was to find out the relationship between the self-esteem of orphaned secondary students and their socio-economic status in Kirinyaga, Nyeri North and South Nyeri districts of Kenya. The research design was survey. According to district education officers in the three districts, the total population of secondary school students was 58,448. Out of this population, 426 students constituted the sample of this study. Simple random and purposive techniques were used in sampling. A questionnaire was used to collect the data. In data analysis, descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analyzing the data. The major finding of this study was that socio-economic status of orphans influence the development of self-esteem. One of the recommendations of this study was that the Governments should come up with policies that would enable orphans to retain the property of the deceased parents in an attempt to make them meet their physiological and belonging needs.*

**Keywords:** *Orphan, students, self-esteem, socio-economic status*

## INTRODUCTION

A survey of the literature available shows that there is no universal definition of the term self-esteem. According to Wylie (1961), self-esteem consists of elements such as the perceptions of ones characteristics, attitudes, preferences, ideas, feelings, abilities, percepts and concepts of the self in relation to others and to the environment. Vurughese (2003) adds that self-esteem is wide-ranging term for it is intimately connected with our relationship with us and that this relationship determines everything about our lives. Moreover, Bee (1981) says that self-esteem is the positive or negative quality of self-concept. Damon (1989) observes that self-esteem is an effective evaluation of ones self in terms of positive or negative traits. As such, self-esteem is widely recognized as a control aspect of psychological functioning and well-being. It has been shown to be related to many psychological as well as behavioral variables. Broadzinkey in Ambron (1986) contends that children's self-esteem is essential for their self-judgment of their abilities, influence and popularity. Their degree of self-esteem will affect their behaviour by limiting or extending the range to which they will attempt to do whether in academic task, sports or friendship.

Another definition of self-esteem was given by Friedman (1995) who defines self-esteem as a psychological construct which refers to how the self (body and mind) is viewed and valued, that is basically how one feels about himself, how he judges himself in terms of skills, talents, abilities and attributes and how much he values and respects himself. In addition, Krider (2002) contends that self-esteem steps beyond the initial descriptive phase of self-concept and becomes a feeling of internal worth, that is after evaluating themselves based on the personal values and ideals they have developed.

Having high self-esteem is important because it helps one to hold the head high and feel proud of oneself, have courage to try new things and the power to believe in oneself, is more co-operative, enthusiastic, assertive, respectful and have hope (Nemours Foundation, 2005). Moreover, it has also been suggested that people with low self-esteem avoid trying new things, feel unloved and unwanted, pretend to feel emotionally indifferent, are unable to tolerate a normal level of frustration and are easily influenced (Child Development Institute, 2005). The Kenyan constitution defines children as being persons under the age of 18 and most policy makers agree that children under this age should not be expected to be self-supporting. At the same time, Bradshaw, Schneider, Bourne and Dorrington, (2003) in Reinglish (2006) observe that limited or constrained resources may prevent orphaned children from attending school.

Failure to attend school makes them extremely susceptible to exploitation and abuse at the hands of people who appear to be well meaning. Moreover, orphans are more vulnerable and have lower standard of living than an average person. Their future is likely to be quite uncertain and the negative implications are intensified with lack of education as well as financial scarcity (Charoensule, Wonukhen, Choncheral, Kuptapa and Rattagorn, 2004). However, Potts (2006) points out that wealth is typically a factor to measure socio-economic status and health outcomes have become blurred in the face of HIV/AIDS. Globally, children whose parents die of AIDS are often doubly burdened, losing not only the attention, care, and love that parents give but also losing access to basic resources such as housing and land. At the same time, households are impoverished through the long illness of a parent and the cost of medical care (Naar-King, 2009).

Moreover, economic hardships arising from condition of orphanhood leads to interrupted schooling, which has long-term effects of household poverty (Atwine, 2005). As such, orphans are likely to have fewer opportunities to acquire human capital, are vulnerable and will have more difficulty in securing gainful employment when they become youths and young adults. It has also been put forward that vast numbers of children are forced into precarious circumstances, exposing them to exploitation, violence, the risk of abuse and disease (Viva network, 2005). It is clear that orphaned children undergo hardships which may affect psychological and emotional balance thus necessitating the investigation of their self-esteem level. This study was therefore designed to measure the self-esteem level of the orphaned secondary school students. The study was carried out in 2009 to determine whether there is any relationship between orphan students' self-esteem and socio-economic status among secondary school students in Nyeri North, Nyeri South and Kirinyaga

district in Kenya. These students ranged from form one to form four. The study was guided by the hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between orphaned secondary school students' self-esteem and socio-economic-status.

## METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study was survey. The investigation was dealing with a naturally accruing phenomenon without manipulation of variables. Self-esteem was studied when it had already developed in the students, the socio-economic status was already in existence therefore, and this design suited this study. The schools were stratified into two categories as provincial schools and district school. Also the schools were sampled by type that is girls' schools, boys' schools and mixed schools, since self-esteem may differ by gender. The total population of students in the registered public secondary schools in the three districts was 58,492. The schools were sampled according to the high number of total orphans registered. The researchers picked 11 provincial and district secondary schools to participate in the study. Students from two parent families were sampled using simple random sampling technique while orphan students were purposively selected. In simple random sampling the researcher wrote yes or no and the papers were mixed and stirred properly and asked the class teacher to pick any depending on the number required in every school. In every school the number of students from two parent families was to match the number of total orphans as shown on Table 1.

**Table 1:** School Sample by Population and Number of Orphans

School	Category	Population		Orphans		Two Parent
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Kenyatta High	Provincial (B)- N.S	720	-	30	-	30
Kagumo High	Provincial (B)-N.S	900	-	18	-	18
Muruguru Girls	Provincial (B)-N.S	-	720	-	18	18
Mahiga Girls	Provincial (B)-N.S	-	540	-	15	15
Kiamutugu Boys	Provincial (B)-K	560	-	17	-	17
Karoti Girls'	Provincial (B)-K	-	870	-	18	18
Kagio Mixed	District (B&D)-K	417	252	12	10	22
Karatina Mixed	District (B)- N.N	180	180	12	8	20
Njogu-ini Mixed	District (D)-N.S	90	90	9	10	19
Kiamaina Mixed	District (D)-K	133	146	11	7	18
Gathathini	District (D)-N.S	90	90	12	6	18
Totals		3,090	2,888	121	92	213

Source: Education Offices in Kirinyaga, Nyeri North and South districts 2009 **Key:** B - Boarding, D - Day, BD -Boarding & Day, N.S - Nyeri South, N.N - Nyeri North, K - Kirinyaga

From Table 1, the sample was constituted by addition of 121, 92 and 213 making a total of 426. A questionnaire was used to collect the data for this study. The questionnaire was three sections, that is section for personal data, section for self-esteem scale and section for students' education and job aspiration. The section for personal data collected information on students gender, school category whether the student was an orphan or not and amount of pocket money given to the students per term among others. The self-esteem scale contained 25 positive items which were responded to as strongly agree (5) agree (4), not sure (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). The self-esteem scores were 125, which were divided into high, moderate

and low. The maximum mark was 125 while the minimum was 25. The students who scored between, 95-125 were said to have high self-esteem, 60-94 was moderate and 59 below was low self-esteem. The section on academic and aspiration collected information on what level the students desired to reach in academic and the job desired. Socio-economic levels were attained through data on parental/guardian education, parental./guardian occupation and the amount of pocket money given to students per term. The parental education attainment were as follows: No schooling (1), primary level (2), secondary level (3), college (4), and university level (5). The parental /guardian occupation was divided into following; unskilled (1), semi skilled (2), and professional (3). The amount of pocket given per term was grouped into Kshs 100-200 (1), 201-300 (2), 301-400 (3), 401-500 (4), above 500 (5). The highest score was 13 while the lowest score was 3. These scores were divided into the following levels that constituted parental/guardian social economic status: 3-6 (low), 7-9 (middle), 10-13 (high). These levels were then analyzed with self-esteem of the students.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During data collection, the total number of students indicated in the sample was 426, but the number of questionnaires filled up was 400. This was because some orphans had dropped out of school either due to lack of school fees, child labour for maintenance of other siblings or forced to marry by economic and social circumstances they found themselves in. This explains the difference in the number of orphans presented in the sample and actual number of orphans that participated in the study. Therefore, the number of students who participated in this study was 400.

**Table 2:** Students' distribution by school category.

School Category	Frequency	%
Provincial	264	66
District	136	34
Total	400	100

**Source:** Gitumu, 2010

Table 2 indicates that more students to participate in the study were drawn from Provincial Secondary Schools. This resulted as more of the orphans were found in Provincial Schools than in District Schools which indicated high drop outs of orphans. The students were also distributed by class level and Table 3 shows the detailed analysis.

**Table 3:** Students distribution by class level.

Class level	Frequency	%
Form 1	107	26.8
Form 2	96	24.0
Form 3	92	23.0
Form 4	105	26.2
Total	400	100.0

**Source:** Gitumu, 2010

From Table 3, it's explicitly clear that the distribution of students by class

level was well indicated. This was necessary in order to eradicate the biasness of one class level probably if their self-esteem was being influenced by unknown factors (a certain class level being influenced by certain circumstance). This was a good distribution since students from all class levels participated in the study in all eleven schools. The objective of the study was to determine whether there was any relationship between orphans' self-esteem and socio-economic status. The indicators of socio-economic status were parental/guardian education, parental/guardian occupation and the amount of pocket money given to the students per term. Students from two parent families acted as control. The students' responses were grouped and analyzed as indicated on instrumentation from which we have categories of socio-economic as low, middle and high. It was important to analyze self-esteem of orphans by guardians' socio-economic status. Table 4 presents orphans self-esteem levels and guardian's socio-economic status.

**Table 4:** Orphans Self-esteem Mean by Guardian's Socio-economic status.

<b>Guardian socio-economic status</b>	<b>Number of orphans</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Mean of self-esteem</b>
Low	84	49.4	54.29
Middle	67	39.4	56.99
High	19	11.2	56.53

**Source:** Gitumu, 2010

Table 4 indicates clearly that the highest percentage of orphans lived with guardians within low socio-economic status. The orphans living with guardians from low socio-economic status had the lowest mean of self-esteem. Something to note is that even the orphans living with guardians from high socio-economic status did not attain high self-esteem mean. This may mean that even with socio-economic status of where a child lives, there are other factors that influence the development of self-esteem. Self-esteem mean of non orphans was also a factor of importance thus Table 5 shows the results.

**Table 5:** Non orphans self-esteem mean by parental socio-economic status.

<b>Parental socio-economic status</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Mean of self-esteem</b>
Low	54	23.5	68.89
Middle	95	41.3	67.25
High	81	35.2	66.42

**Source:** Gitumu, 2010

From Table 5, it is clear that non orphans from parents living in low economic status had a higher mean of self-esteem. The student's from a higher parental socio-economic status had the lowest mean of self-esteem. Of noteworthy, is the fact that the mean of self-esteem from low, middle and high parental socio-economic status fellow under moderate category of self-esteem. This may mean that parents from low parental occupation probably interact with their children sensibly and perhaps provide affection since they are always with their children. This may have contributed to their children registering a higher mean of self-esteem. The parents in high socio-economic status may have not been involved with their children a lot owing to the nature of their occupation. This may have contributed to their children

registering a lower mean of self-esteem than their counterparts. It was also important to find out whether there was difference in self-esteem mean by gender and parental/guardian socio-economic status. Table 6 gives the results of self-esteem mean of orphan boys by guardian socio-economic status.

**Table 6:** Orphan boy's self-esteem mean by guardian socio- economic status.

<b>Guardian socio-economic status</b>	<b>Number of orphans</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Mean of self-esteem</b>
Low	31	45.6	54.81
Middle	27	39.7	52.04
High	10	14.7	57.10

Source: Gitumu, 2010

Table 6 shows that the orphan boys who lived with guardians from high socio-economic status had a higher mean of self-esteem than those boys who lived with guardians from low and middle socio-economic status. This may mean that orphan boys are affected or influenced positively or negatively by guardians' socio-economic status. The guardian in high socio-economic status influence positively the self-esteem of the boys and vice versa is also true.

**Table 7:** Orphan girls self-esteem mean by guardian socio- economic status.

<b>Guardian socio-economic status</b>	<b>Number of orphans</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Mean of self-esteem</b>
Low	53	52.0	55.15
Middle	40	39.8	60.33
High	9	8.8	55.89

Source: Gitumu, 2010

Table 7 indicates that the highest percentage of orphan girls who participated in the study lived with guardians from low socio-economic status and the orphan girls living with guardians from high socio-economic status registered the lowest percentage. The orphan girls living with guardians from middle socio-economic status recorded the highest self-esteem mean. And orphan girls living with guardians from low and high socio-economic status registered almost the same mean of self-esteem. From these results, it is clear that the self-esteem of orphan girls is not influenced by the guardian's socio-economic status the same way orphan boys are. The self-esteem mean of non orphan students by gender and socio-economic status was also analyzed.

**Table 8:** Non-orphan boy's self-esteem mean by parental socio-economic status.

<b>Guardian socio-economic status</b>	<b>Number of orphans</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Mean of self-esteem</b>
Low	31	27.7	63.13
Middle	40	35.7	63.93
High	41	36.6	67.00

Source: Gitumu, 2010

From Table 8, non orphan boys from low parental socio-economic status registered the lowest mean of self-esteem while the non orphan boys from parents

in high self-esteem recorded the highest mean of self-esteem. The deduction may be that non orphan boy's self-esteem is influenced positively by parental socio-economic status. Non orphan girl's self-esteem mean was analyzed and the results are presented on Table 9.

**Table 9:** Non-orphan girls self-esteem mean by parental socio-economic status.

Parental socio-economic status	Number of orphans	%	Mean of self-esteem
Low	23	19.5	68.93
Middle	55	46.6	69.67
High	40	33.9	70.65

Source: Gitumu, 2010

Table 9 shows a pattern of self-esteem mean of non orphan girls. It is clear that non orphan girls from parents in low parental socio-economic status registered the lowest self-esteem mean followed by non orphan girls from middle socio-economic status and the highest self-esteem mean was recorded by non orphan girls from high parental socio-economic status. It can therefore be inferred that non orphan girls are influenced positively or negatively by parental socio-economic status. From these results, the lower the parental socio-economic status the lower the self-esteem means and vice versa. After analyzing the mean of orphan and non-orphan students, a one way analysis of variance with a 0.05 level of significance was computed. The critical value for this test was  $F=0.691$  with degrees of freedom 398. This indicated a relationship. As a result, we reject  $H_03$  which stated that there was no statistically significant relationship between parental socio-economic status and self-esteem at 0.05 level of significance. This correlation is strong and positive (+). The positive implies that self-esteem is likely to increase as the parent/guardian socio-economic status increases.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Orphans' self-esteem is affected by socio-economic status (orphan's, parental/guardian's). This is an indication that students' feelings of worth may be influenced by the environment which includes what the parent/guardian has at home as in the society. The orphans find themselves in an environment of suspicion and more so, probably affect their self-esteem. The orphans also live in poverty and conditions of no development economically. This is proved by this research that socio-economic status affects their self-esteem. This finding is no indifference of gender for both male and female orphans registered low self-esteem pointing that the socio-economic status of orphans affect self-esteem.

Since socio-economic status influences self-esteem, communities should have regulated mechanisms and social structures that allow well organized assistance to orphan. As most orphans develop low self-esteem due to social-economic factors, there should be clear and appropriate local norms, national policy, laws and effective enforcement mechanisms on children's property and inheritance rights. This would prevent confiscation of children's property by other guardians or other grabbers.

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