

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL MARITAL STATUS AND STUDENTS SELF-ESTEEM AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN GICHUGU DIVISION, KIRINYAGA, KENYA

***Margaret W. Gitumu**

****Micah C. Chepchieng'**

*****Mourice O. Udoto**

Department of Educational Psychology

Egerton University, Egerton, Kenya

**Email: mgwannjiru@yahoo.com*

***Email: chemochep@yahoo.com*

****Email: mudoto@yahoo.com*

ABSTRACT

The parental marital status determines the family environment in which the child is born and brought up. The family types are either single or two parents' families. It is in the family that a child experiences love or hatred and the two have an effect on the development of self-esteem. Self-esteem influences the whole of individual's day to day activities, affecting thoughts and beliefs about the world and affects all relationships negatively or positively. As such, this study sought to find the relationship between students' self-esteem and parental marital status among secondary school students in Gichugu division, Kirinyaga-Kenya. This study measured the self-esteem levels of students living with the single parents and a control group of students who lived with two parents. The study was an ex-post factor which employed survey method. The 274 Form Three students filled a questionnaire that consisted of personal data and self-esteem scale. Research results in this field indicated that most of the students living with two parent registered higher levels of self-esteem than the students living with one parent. Teacher counselors should therefore come up with programmes on how to enhance self-esteem on students from such families.

Keywords: *Self esteem, parental, marital status, secondary school students*

INTRODUCTION

According to Friedman (1995), self-esteem is 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 e.g. measuring up in terms of skills ,talents ,abilities and attitude and how much he values and respects himself. A more elaborate definition of self-esteem was given by Krider (2002) who contends that self-esteem steps beyond that 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, children evaluate themselves based on their perceptions of others. In addition to the individual's perception which he/she has, this definition puts emphasis on two other important elements: the perception of others about the

individual and what the individual thinks he/she ought to be and would like to be. The purpose of this study is to determine whether there are any differences in self-esteem level between students from single and those from two parent families. Based on this, it was assumed that there is no statistically significant difference in self-esteem level between students from single and those from two parent families.

SINGLE PARENTING AND CHILDREN'S SELF-ESTEEM

Since parents play a key role in the development of self-esteem of their children (Friendman, 1995), it is not surprising that a disruption in the parental relationship would have effect on the child's development. When the divorce has occurred, a major change in parenting takes place simply as a result of the absence of the non-custodial parent. The children may experience anxiety over the fear that if the love in the marriage relationship can end, so too could the love in the parent-child relationship. Routines and traditions change drastically, and the world that the child was accustomed to is suddenly turned upside down. As the primary parent struggles to keep emotional balance and still manage the home, children receive less attention, thus when the children need more support and nurturing, they often do without. Moreover, due to the many responsibilities and stresses that many single parents experience, their response or reaction to children's needs and cries significantly decline. This may impact negatively to the development of self-esteem in children.

PARENTAL INFLUENCE ON CHILDREN'S SELF-ESTEEM

Parents are probably the greatest influence on the development of one's self-esteem. They are the children's primary advocates and they provide the first psychological situation which the children must survive and thrive. Bornstein (1998) observes that childhood is the phase of life cycle when parents provide experiences that are believed to exert significant and salient influences. This is so because the parents' attitudes, feelings and actions are always recorded in the child's mind and form a basis of his or her self-image. The self-esteem level is a product of the extent, to which the child was praised, encouraged or relentlessly criticized (Rainey D and Rainey B., 1986). The parents who withhold unconditional love and acceptance produce a child who must perform to be accepted, and looks to others for the missing approval.

According to Newman (1993), parents impact on the child's self-esteem in that any negative communication lowers their self-esteem. Those children who have experienced a lot of love and fair discipline have a high self-esteem. They accept who they are because they have been accepted as cherished beings by the parents. Conversely, children who have been pushed around, ignored, physically abused, live in uncertainty and fear as well as those separated from their parents for long periods, develop low self-esteem. Also, parents who are over permissive, over protective, or label the children as 'stupid' dummies, who cannot do anything right, lead children to develop low self-esteem.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive, ex-post factor study design. This was found appropriate because the investigation was dealing with a naturally occurring phenomenon without manipulation of variables (Kathuri and Pals, 1993). Self-esteem was studied when it had already developed in the students; therefore, the study was non-experimental since there was no manipulation of the dependent variable (Frankel and Wallen, 2002). Out of 1382 form three students in the schools studied, a sample of 306 was selected. In order to get a representative sample per school, allocation by proportion was done. Students from two parent families were sampled using simple random sampling technique while students from single parent families were purposively selected.

In this study, questionnaire was used for data collection. This questionnaire was divided into two: section A (personnel data) and section B (self-esteem scale). Section A addressed information on personnel background such as age, sex and parental marital status of the student. Section B was a self-esteem scale that measured the level of self-esteem of the students. The hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The variable of self-esteem was studied using the parental marital status. T-test was used to determine whether there was difference in self-esteem level between students of single and those from two parent families.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: t-test for the difference in self-esteem level

t-test	-1.155
Significant (2 tailed)	0.000
N	274 .000

The t-test results showed existence of a statistically significant difference Students' Self-esteem and Parental marital Status ($t = -1.155$, $P < 0.05$). This means that the students from two parent families recorded a higher level of self-esteem than the students from single parent families. Therefore, the hypothesis that stated that there is no statistically significant difference between the self-esteem level between students from single and two parent families was rejected. This therefore means that there is a difference in self-esteem level of students from single and those from two parent families. These results may be used to explain the significance of parents in the development of self-esteem in their children.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in self-esteem level between students from single parents and two parent families. The students from two parent families recorded significantly high levels of self-esteem. This therefore, is an indication that the two parents are important in the development of children's self-esteem. These findings can be used to explain the

importance of the parents in the development of self-esteem since the child experiences the feelings of love, or hate first from the parent, which significantly contribute to the development of self-worth. The following recommendations were made in relation to the hypothesis on differences on self-esteem levels between students from single and two parent families. The family should be encouraged to live intact. On the other hand, couples planning to divorce should be made aware of the effects divorce would have on the development of self-esteem of their children.

Where the parent is single, the relatives of the opposite sex may be encouraged to be close to the child more so at the age of three to six in an attempt of making the child to identify with him or her. In addition, the teacher counsellors should come up with programs on how to enhance self-esteem on children from single parent families. The ministry of education should intensify the training of teacher counsellors to be posted in schools countrywide to take care of the special needs of the students from single parents and also from two parents who develop low self-esteem. Of great importance, is that, the parents should be encouraged to provide a good atmosphere to their children for the development of high self-esteem levels and to avoid issues that would infuriate their children.

REFERENCES

- Bornstein, M. H.** (1998). Parents: Available: [http://parenthood. Library.wiseedu/Bornstein/Bornstein.html](http://parenthood.Library.wiseedu/Bornstein/Bornstein.html). Accessed on 12/4/2003.
- Frankel, J. R. and Wallen, N. E.** (2002). *How to Design and Evaluate Research Education* (4th ed.). United States of America: Mc.Graw-hill.
- Friendman, M. S.** (1995). Parenting for Self-esteem. Available: <http://medicalreporter.health.org/tmr>. Accessed on 17/7/2005.
- Kathuri, J. N. and Pals, D. A.** (1993). *Introduction to Educational Research*. Njoro Kenya: Egerton University Press.
- Krider, D.** (2002). Self-esteem in young adults: Available: <http://www.usb.edu-journal/2002/krider/krider.html>. Accessed on 17/9/2005.
- Newman, F.** (1993). *Children in Crisis*. Toronto. Canada: Scholastic Canada Ltd.
- Rainey D. and Rainey, B.** (1986). *Building your mates self-esteem*. New York: Here's life publishing Inc.