

Relationship between Family Problem Solving Strategies and Emotional Self-Regulation among High School Students in Parklands Zone Nairobi City County, Kenya

Rachael Uzodinma Nwankwo., Sabina Mutisya, Ph.D., Simeon Peter Kamomoe Ph.D.

Department of Counselling Psychology, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Emotion self-regulation is an aspect of life that many students struggle with in high school. This is evidenced by the fact that most students engage in maladaptive behaviors such as suicide, rape, burning of school properties, gang beating, drug and stealing. This study examined the relationship between family problem solving strategies and emotional self-regulation among high school students in Parklands Zone Nairobi City County, Kenya. The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between family problem solving strategies and emotional self-regulation among high school students in Parklands Zone Nairobi City County, Kenya. The study used quantitative approach and employed correlational research design. The study targeted form three and form four students of selected high schools in Parklands Zone Nairobi City County Kenya, who were between the ages 16 and 18 years. The study target population was 1,336 students drawn from four schools with sample size of 312 participants. The data was collected using questionnaires and the instrument used was family assessment device. The study employed stratified random sampling and used simple random sampling to select the participants. The data was tabulated and analyzed using the descriptive statistics while the relationship was analyzed using Pearson product moment coefficient. SPSS v 27.0 was used in the analysis. The findings of the study showed that there was a positive significant relationship $n = 312$, $r = .255$, $p = .000 \leq 0.05$ between problem solving and emotional self-regulation among high school students in Parklands Zone Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Keywords: Problem Solving Strategies, Emotional Self-Regulation and High School Students

BACKGROUND

Family problem solving strategies is a system families employ to address their problems while emotional self-regulation is the capacity to control and manage one's emotion at all time.

According to Hanh (2023), family problems arise due to lack of understanding, lack of communication and misconceptions, jealousy and selfishness. The study noted that families solve these problems by engaging in silence, avoidance, withdrawal, expressing one's opinion, compliance and engaging in intense argument. However, the study stated that these problems could be solved amicably when families develop listening, respect and understanding among members of the family. By so doing, children would learn proper ways of solving problem and it would help them to know how to handle their emotions when they arise.

In Canada Bouchard and Sonier (2021) conducted a study on the relationship between sibling bullying, family functioning, and problem solving: a structural equation modeling. In this study, the researcher tested a comprehensive model in which prior involvement in bullying mediated the relationship between intrusive parenting styles during relationship conflict and maintaining individual and family benefits. They postulated that more bullying in childhood both perpetrated and victimized will be linked to parental influence during conflict.

Furthermore, the study explained that youth who were involved in sibling bullying as children now report poorer coping behaviors. In addition, it noted that past experiences of sibling bullying were associated with

current family well-being.

In USA Keyzers et al. (2019) conducted a study on family problem solving and attachment quality: associations with adolescent risk-taking behavior. The study examined the relationship between effective communication, family adjustment, and adolescent risk behaviors, and examined the mediation of family adjustment problems on the relationship between effective communication and adolescent risk behaviors. The study stated that two analyses were carried out to test the research hypotheses. It reported that effective communication was negatively related to parents' and adolescents' perceptions of adolescent risk behaviors and positively related to coping at home, after controlling for age, gender, and race/ethnicity. It also reported that family coping skills did not moderate the effects of effective communication with parents or adolescents' perceptions of their risky behavior. The study recommends that preventative measures that encourage positive relationships between parents and adolescents can help families reduce negative risks for youth. The study emphasized that a strong parent-child relationship prevents the development of negative attitudes. That by creating an environment conducive to open communication and trust, parents have a positive impact on the development of young people.

Many things can cause problems in the family. Family problems range from lack of finance to selfishness and children negative behaviors and lack of support for one another. However, in all these the most important thing is how these problems are solved.

In Uganda a study was conducted by Matam and Mkwizu (2020) which investigated the antecedents of family conflicts. The results of the study showed that the core issues associated with family conflict are financial and resource priorities. In addition, it was found that differences in hobbies and interests, selfishness and lack of communication play a central role as causes of conflict between families. The study concluded that financial and resource priorities were precursors to family conflict in Uganda. Parents need to address the issue of finance which most times if not well handled brings a lot of conflict and can influence how the children cope with their emotions.

Many families have no other ways to resolve their family problems except to engage in quarreling and fighting, some other families try to resolve their problems by engaging in dialogue. Nevertheless, very few families use therapy to solve their problems. Meeting a counselor precisely a family counselor can be a great way to resolve family problems. The reason to why families do not use therapy to resolve their problems could be that they are not aware of the role of a family counselor or that they are ignorant of the importance of therapy, however, the significance of using therapy in family problems cannot be overemphasized.

In Kenya, Mtende and Kipchumbachepken (2023) conducted a study on home conflicts resolution through family therapy. The study's focus was on developing an integrated family therapy prototype system that allows families to access family therapy in a timely manner for family conflict resolution. The study stated that a usability analysis of the prototype was performed and user feedback was collected, and 87% of the users indicated satisfaction with the acceptance of the system. The findings of the study showed that this prototype was effective in facilitating families to utilize family therapy to resolve conflicts promptly, thereby improving domestic morality and well-being. The study went further to argue that conflicts in the family and incidents of violence are increasing day by day in Kenya. It noted that these cases were caused by disagreements between family members who suffer in silence due to personal issues, since it is difficult to seek family therapy to resolve family conflicts. The study reported that a person commits suicide every 40 seconds. Despite the rise in family vices, the study noted that Kenya's health information system currently does not address specific mental health-related symptoms or monitor interventions for them.

Family problems that are not properly resolved, makes children to become confused on how problems should be handled in life. This confusion makes them lose balance and cannot handle their emotions and this in turn influences their academic pursuits and they begin to do poorly in academics due to disinterest in school activities.

In Kenya a study by Ndayambaie et al., (2020) on the impact of family Conflicts on children education. The study objectives were to identify the factors that causes family problem, and to clarify the influence of

children's education on improving family problem and family well-being. The study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The study's findings show that the main causes of family conflicts in the region are lack of communication, lack of understanding, lack of proper management of family property, irresponsibility, and infidelity. Moreover, the study found that most of the children of the participants are quickly becoming very poor academically compared to their school performance before they encountered the problem.

Most families do not give the students the opportunity to learn how to solve their problems as well as how to manage their emotions while growing up. Students who have come from dysfunctional families where there is disorderliness and life is not structured, where parents have no time for their children and there is lack of communication and lack of respect for one another. Where Parents use yelling and fighting to solve problems such students tend to develop poor emotional self-regulation ability.

For this reason, these students engage in negative behaviors such as strikes, riots, rape, drug abuse, burning of school properties, gang beating and disinterest in school activities. These negative behaviors make the students do poorly in academics and it poses a big challenge to the safety and security of the school environment and the residents of Parklands Zone Nairobi City County. It is for this reason, therefore that the researcher carried out this study in Parklands Zone Nairobi City County, Kenya.

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between family problem-solving strategies and emotional self-regulation among high school students in Parklands Zone Nairobi City County, Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative approach and a correlational research design were employed in this study. The study used four selected high schools in Parklands Zone Nairobi City County Kenya. The target population was form three and form four students who were between the ages of 16 and 20 years of age. The study used simple random sampling to select the students. The study employed questionnaire to collect information from the students. The questionnaire used were family assessment tool developed by Nathan Epstein, and his colleagues in 1983 at McMaster University in Canada and Emotional regulation skill questionnaire developed by Grant et al. (2018). The study used SPSS v 27.0. A sample of 312 participants was used and the sample size was determined by Yamane formula 1967. The study was approved by the Ethical review board of Catholic University of Eastern Africa and Licensed by national commission of science and technology, Kenya.

FINDINGS

Sample characteristics

Students between the ages 17-20 had the highest frequency of 185 while those between the ages 13-16 had the frequency of 127. Female students participated more with 163 frequencies while male students had 149 frequencies. Those in form three had the highest frequency of 183 while those in form four had the frequency of 129.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Problem Solving Strategies

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
We usually act on our decisions regarding problems	312	1.00	4.00	2.0577	.97387	.948
After our family tries to solve a problem, we usually discuss whether it worked or not	312	1.00	4.00	2.1474	1.08959	1.187

We resolve most emotional upset that come up	312	1.00	4.00	2.1571	1.01643	1.033
We confront problems involving feelings	312	1.00	4.00	2.2276	1.05301	1.109
We try to think of different ways to solve problems	312	1.00	4.00	1.6218	.87364	.763
Valid N (listwise)	312					

The statement on we usually act on our decisions regarding problems has N =312, M = 2.0577, SD=.97387 meaning that the family do not act on their decisions regarding problems, the decisions they have made on problem solving are not taking seriously. The Statement that says after our family tries to solve a problem, we usually discuss whether it worked or not showed N=312, M = 2.1474, SD = 1.08959. The result showed that the family don't discuss after they tried to solve a problem. Meaning that they don't know whether the problem-solving technique they have employed worked or not.

Furthermore, the statement that says we resolve most emotional upset that come up showed N= 312, M=2.1571, SD= 1.01643. This result showed that the family does not resolve most emotional upset that come up and this pose a challenge to the family. The statement that says we confront problems involving feelings showed N=312, M= 2.2276, SD= 1.05301. This result showed that the family does not confront problems involving feelings and it is a big influence on the students. Lastly, the statement that says we try to think different ways to solve problems showed N= 312, M= 1.6218, SD =.87364. This result showed that the family does not find other ways to solve problems, they stick to the old ways of solving problems and it does not help the family to grow.

The Pearson's Product Moment coefficient correlation analysis was also conducted in order to realize this objective. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation between problem solving and emotional self-regulation

		Problem solving	Emotional self-regulation
Problem solving	Pearson Correlation	1	.255**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	312	312
Emotional self-regulation	Pearson Correlation	.255**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	312	312
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

According to table 3, The Pearson's Product Moment coefficient correlation analysis showed that there was a positive significant correlation n =312, r = .255, p = .000 ≤ 0.05 between problem solving and emotional self-regulation among high school students in Parklands Zone Nairobi City County, Kenya. This result means that there is strong relationship between problem solving and emotional self-regulation among high school students in Parklands Zone Nairobi City County Kenya.

DISCUSSION

The study's findings show that there was a positive significant correlation between family problem solving strategies and emotional self-regulation among high school students in Parklands Zone Nairobi City County Kenya. Where $n= 312$, $r=.255$, $p = .000$. This study shows that family problem solving strategies has significant relationship with emotional self-regulation of students. Meaning that when there is poor problem solving strategies in the family, the emotional self-regulation of the student's decreases and when there is good problem solving strategies in the family, the emotional self-regulation of the student's increases. This invariably shows that if family can adopt proper and good strategies of solving problems it will help the students in a great way to learn from the onset how to manage their problems and channel it to positive behavior in order to better equip themselves on how to face and tackle challenges that may face them in future.

This study is in agreement with the study conducted by Bouchard and Sonier (2021) whose findings explained that youth who were involved in sibling bullying as children now report poorer coping behaviors. The study noted that experiences of sibling bullying were associated with current family well-being.

The study is also in agreement with the study conducted by Mtende and Kipchumbachepken (2023). The findings of the study showed that the prototype used in the study was effective in facilitating families to utilize family therapy to resolve conflicts promptly, thereby improving domestic morality and well-being.

CONCLUSION

Every family need to adopt a good family problem solving strategies. These strategies will help every member of the family to learn how to solve their own individual problems. As children are growing up, they learn from the family basic ways of handling problems. If families use negative attitudes in solving their problems, the children learn that and if families employ positive attitudes in solving problems the children learn that as well. For this reason, families are encouraged to adopted positive ways of solving problems such as engaging in dialogue, open communication, trust, respect for one another, listening and understanding among members and expressing one's opinion. These attitudes if adopted by the children will help them in living quality lives and be in a position to manage their emotions as they arise.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This study recommends that families should adopt positive ways of solving family problems that enhance the well-being of every member.
2. This study recommends that Parents should give their children the freedom to air their views at all times. Children should be given the opportunity to express themselves freely without fear of being shut down or disgraced in order to enhance their self-esteem.
3. Parents should endeavor to involve their children when decisions are made on how to solve family problem in order for them to learn positive ways of solving their own problems

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