

Relationship of Family Background on Learners' Commitment to Education and School Attendance in Public Day Secondary Schools, Kangundo Sub-County, Machakos County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to find the relationship of family background on learners' commitment to education and school attendance in public secondary schools, Kangundo sub-County Machakos County, Kenya. Family background plays key role in ensuring their children get committed in educational endeavor and high level of school attendance. The process nurtures learners' educational journey to make them economically productive, responsible, sociable and morally upright generation in society. Though the case, most families internationally and locally fail to fulfil this mandate. Kangundo is not exceptional. This study seeks to find the relationship of family background on learners' commitment to education and school attendance in public day secondary schools in Kangundo sub – County Machakos County Kenya. The objective of the study is: find the relationship of family background on learners, commitment to education and school attendance Epstein's theory of School, Family and Community Partnerships (2003) guides the study. Engaging convergent mixed method design. The study uses questionnaire for Data collection with items containing structured and unstructured questions to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The target population for the study consists of schools and class teachers. Twenty-three (23) schools and thirty (30) class teachers. The sampling techniques engaged for the study are stratified and purposive sampling for both schools and teachers. The study used Kothari's proportional sample size to determine the sample for the study. Six (6) schools and twenty-two teachers were sampled for the study. Chi Square was used to determine the relationship of family background on learners' commitment to education and school attendance. The findings of the study note that family background has statistically significant relationship on children's commitment to education and school attendance. Most married partners in Kangundo are either separated or divorced. The findings further noted that children whose parents are separated or divorced as distracted from learning and that they attend school irregularly. Using chi Square, test revealed: ($\chi^2 = 5.294$, $P = 0.049$) level of significance of the separated or divorced partners on their children's commitment to education. Encouragingly, the respondents observed that There are interventions that might be applied to make families function normally free from separation and divorce.

The finding observed that children from dysfunctional families attain low scores and grades in academic performance further, the study indicated that that there is need for civic education amongst married partners on parenting skills. The study concluded that family background statistically relates to learner's commitment to education and school attendance. However, in Kangundo, most married partners are either separated or divorced or separated and therefore children are distracted from learning, attend school irregularly leading to the attainment of low academic scores and grades. The study recommends on a study focusing on effectiveness of intervention measures that address strong family unity and co-existence. Further, a study on sustaining family unity and co-existence of married partners in Kenya needs to be conducted.

Keywords: Family Background, Learners' Commitment to Education and School Attendance

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental human right and cornerstone that socialize and equalize individuals despite of their class, race or social economic background. This enhances development and societal progress. For learners to be actuated and committal to education there must be strong family support. Learners committed to learn are promising societal pillars not only to their individual families but to the global community. For effective realization of this, family back up is critical. Global society has made education to learners accessible but due to non-supportive families, most learners have not appreciated the effort to embrace it. They are thus either absent from schooling or learning with least interest and commitment. Though the same studies indicate and approve that family back ground determines the level of learners' commitment to education and learning, they also note that families present unique challenges obstructing education sector. These challenges become critical if issues that defunctionalize families are not sought and addressed (UNESCO, 2020). The Constitution of Kenya (2010) approves education as a right to every child and mandates for compulsory and free Basic education. The Ministry of Education (2012) acknowledges existence of free day secondary education in Kenya. Though the effort of making education accessible to all, most learners enrolled in public Day Secondary Schools in Kangundo attend school irregularly and eventually drop out. This increasing trend seems not to be bothering individual affected families nor the wider general society of the locale. This study seeks to find the relationship of of family background on learners' commitment to education and school attendance in Kangundo sub-County, Kenya.

According to UNICEF (2011), most parents have neglected and left their parental responsibility to teachers. Others have boycotted responsibility on their children due to financial constraints. According to Meleen (2019), family has a great influence on the general up bringing and wellbeing of a child but modern families have failed on this responsibility. It is the family that determines the moral, social and intellectual wellbeing of any individual. The other factors that model the being of an individual only act as interventions on what is already established and existing. The role played by the family is key in a child's aspirations to achieve commitment of life's endeavor. This underpins the point that family background is key in nurturing all round child. Though social and economic pressure has caused separation and divorce of most married partners. The situation has necessitated to single parenting, childless parents and the grand parenting families. The position has weakened moral family fabrics. This is evidenced on learners' truancy in learning institutions and lack of commitment to school work. Epstein et al (2009), outlines pivotal roles played by families towards their children's zeal to life engagements, learning and school achievement. These include: communication, learning at home, parenting, volunteering, decision making and collaboration. This study makes keen reference to parenting, learning, communication and decision making.

Family background is the most influential determinant on learners' commitment to education and passion to school attendance (Hornby & Blackwell, (2018). The family's socio-economic position, parental education levels, and family support systems collectively develop passion to learning and learning environments. The combination adheres to zeal the child to education and attaching them to high rate of school attendance. The position calls for firm family decision to ensure child are committed in education (Sirin, 2020).

Ondenga (2025), found that family background nurtures a child's health and nutrition which contribute greatly to focused attention to learning and school attendance, translating to high academic performance. His findings point that parental characteristics equally influence the students' commitment to school work and attendance. Commitment to these translate to learning passion, schooling and academic achievement. Ondega's study notes that learners' innate ability depends on parental characteristics and the values under which the family is nurtured, so the child develops.

Studies conducted globally indicate that lower class families have insufficient aspiration to mentor and aspire their young ones develop educationally as compared to their counter parts of upper-class families. The accounting reasons for this position have been observed as limited exposure of low-class families, limited resources which includes; financial and human resource, to inspire children learn. Low class families expose children to environments that distract and deter learning and school attendance (2006, Glewwe, Paul, Michael, & Kremer). World Bank (2010) asserts that though intellectual stimulation reinforces schooling experience, it is

less likely to be present in lower class families. He further adds that the socio-economic background leads to absenteeism and high dropout rates. According to Ttendo, and Ounyesiga (2025), high parental education levels often result to high academic achievement for students. To the Converse, students whose parents have low education levels, more likely experience academic challenges, partly because of limited parental support with homework, aspirations and academic related engagements. Parental involvement as a component of home background critically commits a learner to education, high level of school attendance and academic achievement. Though the most of families that deny learners from getting education are the dysfunctional ones. (Ministry of Education Kenya, 2019). This study seeks to find relationship of family background on learner's commitment to education and school attendance in Kangundo sub- county, Machakos County, Kenya. Despite the government's efforts to promote learners' committal to education through policy reforms, parental support is notably observed to be key which miserably misses locally and internationally. Parental education level is observably strong predictors of children's commitment to learning and academic achievement. Learners whose parents are formally educated are inclined to learning committedly with high levels of discipline unlike those whose are not (Benner, Boyle and Sandle 2016). Research from Sub-Saharan Africa points significant disparities in learners' educational commitment based on family background, with Kenyan studies showing that children whose parents are educated are more likely to be committal in learning, by attending school regularly, complete secondary education by attaining high grades and scores in examinations. The present study examines the relationship of family background on learners' commitment to education and school attendance in public secondary schools in Kangundo sub-County Machakos County, Kenya.

Objective of the study

This study is focusing on this objective;

Deterring the relationship of family background on learner's commitment to education and school attendance in Kangundo sub county, Machakos, Kenya.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is guided by Epstein theory of family community and school partnerships of (2003). The Epstein theory focus on six levels; however, this study focuses on four levels. Which includes the following: parenting, communication, learning at home and decision making. A parent who communicates to their children on the value of education imbues the spirit, love for education and learning amongst their children. This will spur and develop the art of learning at home which enhance performance and realization of achievement of learners' dreams. In a similar way; the parent develops affinity to make follow ups follow on their children's educational journey and intervene appropriates where need demands. The process enhances parenting skills towards the up-bringing of all round and balanced children. Parents who develop this art of nurturing children influence learners' intellectual stimulation and commitment to education, thereby prompting school attendance, high rate of transition from one class to another. This call for high level of decision making on the part of the parent and the child to actualize the mission. According to Holcomb – McCoy (2007), observes that parenting skills instills moral among the growing generation to keep to the observance of responsibility and adherence of the expected norms to fulfil entrusted responsibility(ies). Children who are keenly parented are more likely to be committed in education and school work.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopts convergent parallel mixed research design. The design matches quantitative and qualitative data to come to comprehensive analysis of research phenomenon. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed separately then the results were compared and merged for the overall interpretation. This makes it possible to explain incompatible findings (Cresswell, 2013). This design is applicable to this study since it minimizes limitations of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Cresswell, 2014).

Research instruments

The study uses questionnaire for data collection. The questionnaire had two sections; Section (A) that sought demographic information of the respondents and section (B) that addressed variables of the study. The questionnaire consists structured and unstructured questions. The unstructured part of the questionnaire contains qualitative data. Questionnaire is used because the target population is literate to respond accordingly to the items, besides the use of a questionnaire economizes time (Tichapondwa, 2013). The structured questionnaire restricts the respondents on the type of responses or information to provide. This restricts the respondents to the subject matter of the study. Thereby, helping in minimizing chances of bias among the respondents and making it easier for quantitative analysis (Orodho, 2009). On the other hand, unstructured questions are flexible since they are open ended. They enable the researcher acknowledge the respondents' beliefs, value and opinion on the problem under study (Cohen & Manion, 1994).

Target Population

The target population consists of two categories; schools and class teachers. The target population for schools consisted of 23 public secondary schools and 30 class teachers.

Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

The study employed sampling techniques discussed herein. First, stratified sampling was used to group schools to their respective sub-counties. According to Gitau (2008) observed that when the population under study consist of distinctive categories, it can be grouped into the respective distinctions to accommodate representation from the various distinct groups. Cresswell (2015) also points that stratification sampling divides the population into groups on the basis of resemblance or similarity. Kothari (2013) also observes that when the population do not homogeneity, stratification sampling is encouraged to accommodate the population in regard to their unique differences for proportional representation.

Sampling for schools

Schools were sampled purposely because they had more than one stream.

1. These were Kathiyamaa with 5 streams.
2. Matungulu with 3 streams.
3. Kangundo High School.
4. Misiani Girls 6 streams and two other schools were selected on stratified sampling based on the sub-counties. A total number of 6 schools were stratified out of a population of 31 schools.

Sampling for Teachers

Teachers were sampled on the basis of schools. The total number of teachers was 22 form four class teachers. The form four teachers were chosen because they understand the commitment level of their learners, Equally, they are able to account for each individual learner's family influence on committal to education and school attendance.

Sample Size

Sample size is the population drawn from the target population to participate in the actual study. To determine sample size, the study used Kothari method of proportional allocation. In this method, the size of the sample is kept proportional to the population of the stratum. The sample taken from each stratum proportionally represents the population of that stratum. Schools that participated in the study were stratified on the basis of their respective sub-counties, then the sample size from each sub-county was attained through this method of proportional allocation also.

Data Analysis

The study uses chi square to find the relationship of family background on learner's commitment to learning and school attendance. Chi Square test of association determines how family background relates to learner's commitment to learning and attendance in schools.

Validity study

The study focused on content validity above other types of validity. To ensure content validity, the study sought expert opinion to ascertain whether the instruments reflect the content domain that they were meant to measure. The expert assisted to find if the items had focus on what they sought test, clarity, and spacing to provide responses.

Reliability

The study used Cronbach Alpha to establish internal consistency of values. Cronbach Alpha assisted to determine the relationship of items in the same instrument. The use of Cronbach Alpha enabled to ascertain the strength of the instruments' reliability; besides, it showed the relationship between family background on learners' commitment to education and school attendance.

Ethical considerations

In the process of data collection, the respondents were asked to provide information freely on their own will. They were asked not to write their names on the questionnaire and informed that information given would be confidential to be used only for the purpose of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic information of the respondents

Most of the sampled respondents were female (66.7%) and this indicates that affirmative action is effectively being actualized. Majority were married (71.45%). The fact attests that respondents to this study were of a high sense of responsibility. While, only 23.8% were not married. The findings showed that the respondents were in the ages of 20 – 40 years. A bigger portion of them being 31-35 years of age (28.6%) and 36 – 40 years (28.6%). Indicating that the human capital tutoring in schools is middle aged with the ability of experience and energy. The table below shows demographic information of the respondents of the study.

Table 1: Demographic information of the respondents

Demography	Category	Frequency (n = 21)	Percentage
Gender	Male	7	33.3
	Female	14	66.7
Marital status	Married	15	71.4
	Unmarried	5	23.8
	Non-committal	1	4.8
Ages (Years)	20-25	5	23.8
	26-30	4	19.0
	31-35	6	28.6
	36-40	6	28.6

Sampled respondents were from 9 counties (Busia, Kericho, Kiambu, Kisumu, Machakos, Makueni, Meru, Nyamira and Tharaka Nithi)

Respondents who participated in this study majority of them were from Machakos county (33.3%). The home county on which the focus of the study was participated the most. The point under pins the credibility of the responses provided. According to Ocharo (2024), notes that the locale residents understand their strengths and weaknesses more than those they host.

The table below shows demographic information of respondents with their respective county of origin.

Table 2: Respondents Counties (n = 21)

	Busia	Kericho	Kiambu	Kisumu	Machakos	Makueni	Meru	Nyamira	Tharaka Nithi
No.	1	1	1	1	7	2	2	5	1
%	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	33.3	9.6	9.6	13.8	4.8

Duration as class teachers

Most of the teachers have served as class teachers a period range of 1 – 2 years (52.4%). Noting that the participants were either newly appointed to the teaching service or were new teacher in the locale under study. The duration category that had most served as class teachers was at the percentage of (9.5%). This informs that teachers of diverse experience participated in the study and this informs of the creditability of the result obtained. Figure 1 below illustrates in percentage form the duration served as class teachers in correspondence to time range period indicated below.

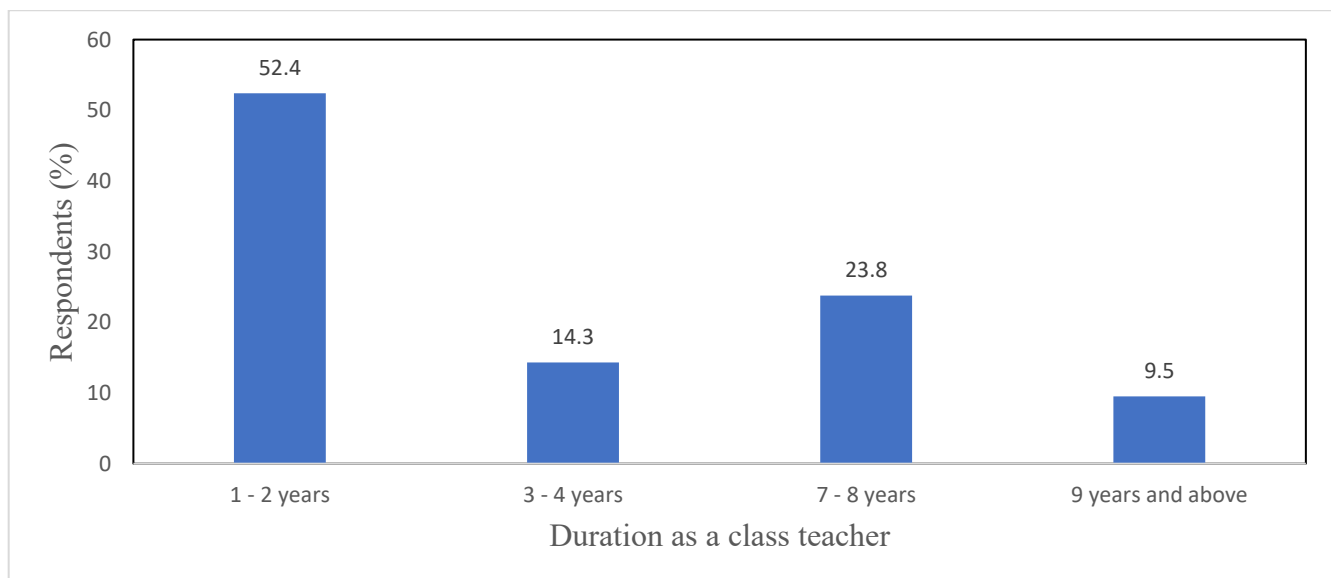


Figure 1: Duration as a class teacher.

Family Background's Influence on Child's Commitment to Learning and School Attendance

Teachers (95.2%) agreed that family background is significantly related to a child's commitment in learning. This place the family as a key player in their children's education development and without family support, learners' academic potential might not to be realized. The findings agree with UNSECO (2020) who arrived at the same findings in a similar study. The family background similarly relates a child's school attendance as confirmed unanimously by all the teachers (100%). The unanimous support given by teachers approves that learners' zeal to learn is anchored in the values and foundations of family's mentorship ideals. This finding addresses the puzzle of the ministry of education (2012) that notes that though day schools aid low-income families to ensure all learner attend school, the dropout rate among students is high. This study enables the ministry put up counter checking measures.

Family Ties in Kangundo Sub-County

In this sub-county, majority of the teachers (61.9%) noted that most families have partners who are separated and divorced. The position shows parental failure in nurturing child as part of their responsibility. The study approves Epstein et al (2009) observes that parenting is a key factor that addresses learners' academic growth and indicates that poor parenting is mostly due to parents' misunderstanding.

The table below shows the nature of family ties in Kangundo sub-County

Table 3: Family ties in Kangundo in Sub-county

Family ties	Frequency (n = 21)	Percentage
Most families have cordial relations between husband and wife	6	28.6
Most families have partners who are separated and divorced	13	61.9
Families featured with child negligence	11	52.4
In most cases children living alone with the absence of parents.	6	28.6

The table shows that most families (61.9%) have partners who are separated. The finding suggests that social and economic responsivities are a threat to modern families as they break a part and leave children without parental guidance. This affirms with qualitative finding of this study that points to disagreement as the cause of separation and divorce amongst families. President Obama (2009) observed that parents are the nuclear focus that tend children academically, socially, morally and physically and with the absence of parental support, children grow multiformed in the stated aspects.

Causes of family differences

Family differences are caused by mainly the disagreements between the partners (66.7%). This explains why respondents agreed in unison that family background determines learners' school attendance. This finding agrees with that of Ttendo and Ounyesiga (2025) which observed that such families deny children their right to education. Table 4. bellows shows the causes of family differences with corresponding percentage

Table 4: Causes of family differences

Causes of differences	Frequency (n = 21)	Percentage
Disagreement between the partners	14	66.7
Abuse of drugs by one of the partners or both	3	14.3
Influence of urban life	1	4.8
Not sure	3	14.3

Children from strained families' Commitment to education

The respondents mostly noted that children from families which had differences get distracted from learning and had least commitment in education (81.0%). The finding approves the critical importance of parental guide to children in the acquisition of education and wellbeing of their general growth. The finding inclines to that of Horney and Blackwell (2018) whose finding indicates that the support system of a family nurtures learning passion among children and creates learning environment for them but lack of it deforms them physically and psychologically. It was also noted that the level of learners' school attendance was generally irregular (76.2%), This informs that distracted family leads to distracted and irresponsible childhood, The finding affirms to the claim of Sirin (2020) whose finding notes that united families raise children who attend school regularly. The figure 2. Below shows in percentage form how children from such functional and dysfunctional families commit themselves in school attendance. The report indicates that (90.5%) of learners from families with differences attain low scores and grades. This informs that family background is key in the educational formation of a child.

The finding herein agrees with Ondenga's (2025) that approves that the family's social and economic support to a child supports their educational growth.

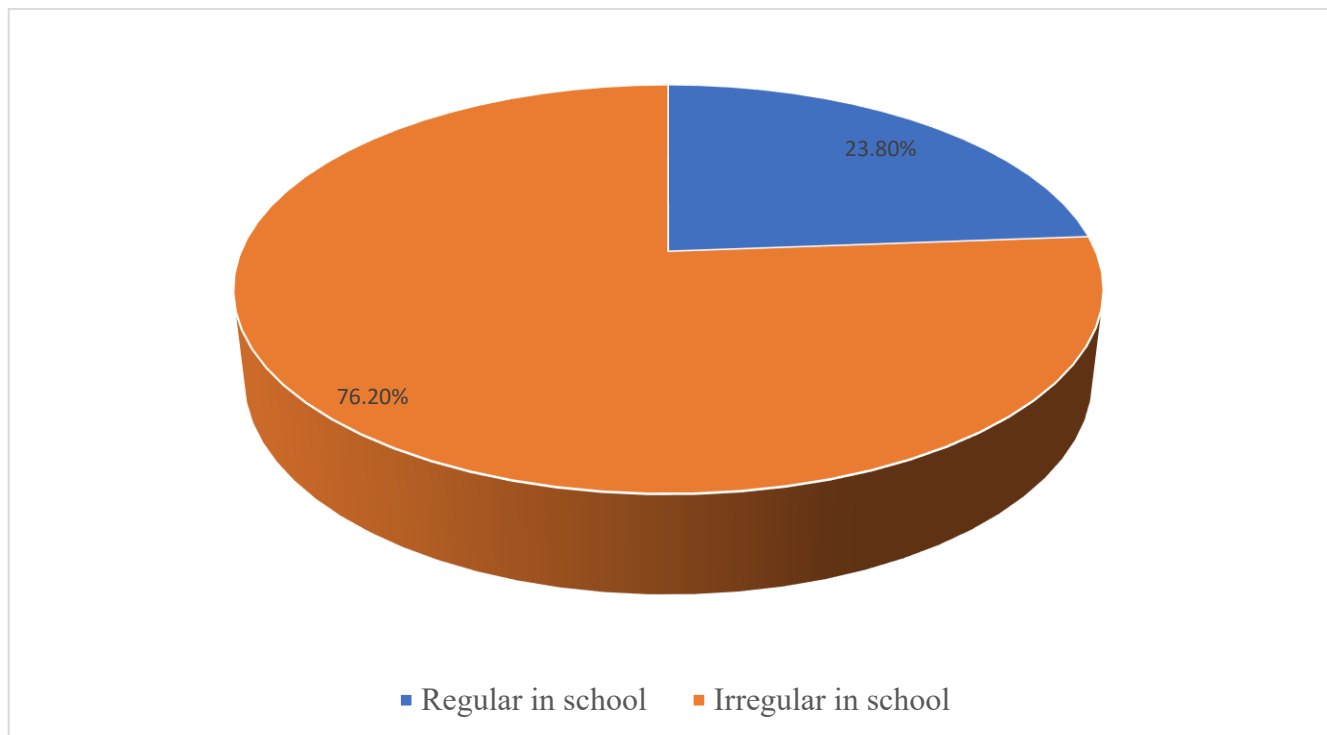


Figure 2: Level of learners' school attendance

As a result of irregular school attendance, most respondents (90.5%) reported that learners from notably scoring low grades and scores. The finding relates this phenomenon to irresponsible parenting and thus affirming the association of family on learners' committal to education. Epstein et al (2009) notes that parents should appreciate their children's achievement with and without school environment. In qualitative responses most teachers observed that: To enhance strong family relations, there is need for civic education on parenthood to enable them raise responsible and committed children in and outside school situation. Teachers reported that this is possible through religious organizations, forums on parenting, counseling forums for both parents and learners on importance of strong family relations and through open and free forums for all, where everyone feels safe to express themselves freely.

Interventions to put in place to make families function normally

Most of the respondents (85.7%) were aware that there are interventions to put in place to make families function normally. The responses herein testifies that with keen response from stake holders like; religious organizations, the government and non-governmental organizations can work together build up broken families in performing their role as the basic human community. According to UNSCO (2020), notes that the challenges that make families disfunction, unless addressed may have ripple effect to the coming generations that might degenerate from normal human functions into devalued nature of humanity. In their qualitative responses, in a similar item, they observed: The government needs to make realization of barasa meetings to sensitize parents on their parental responsibilities. Mechanical measures need to be instituted to check on rehabilitated families to ensure that they keep on truck. child negligence needs to punished as punitive measure to the anomaly. If the warning is ignored, then humanity will be a thought of the past in the records of history. Human being will embrace animal behaviour as part of their normal nature.

Figure 3. Below shows the percentage of awareness on intervention measures.

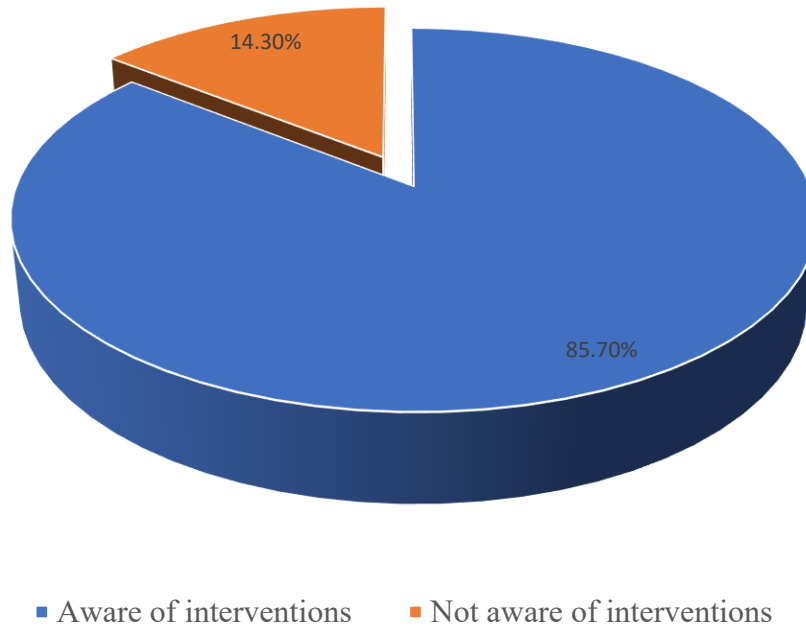


Figure 3: Awareness of interventions to make families function normally

Influence of Family Separation and Divorce on Levels of Children's Commitment to Education

Using chi square test of association at 95% confidence level, the findings show a significant effect ($\chi^2 = 5.294$, $P = 0.049$). Families having separation or divorce experience children having less commitment in education, Table 5.

Table 5: Influence of separation and divorce on children commitment to education

	Commitment in education of children		
	Highly committed in education	Distracted with least commitment	Total
Families have partners separated/divorced	0 (0.0%)	12 (100%)	12 (100%)
χ^2 value	5.294		
P- value	0.049		

The possible interventions to make families function are;

Most of the respondents observed that the government needs to empower families economically so that they may address educational expenses aligned to their children's education. Economic empowerment is necessitated by the understanding that poverty leads to separation of families because of economic constraints. Besides the respondents pointed *There is need for the conflict management mechanisms to harmonize families already separated and prevent potential family breakage. Religious organizations support, counselling and parenting education can be used to address and implement these solutions to respond to the problem.* The respondents also noted *parenting skill training needs to be initiated amongst young couples. They need to be skilled on financial management to aid parents to have financial planning and budgeting for their children's education.* Among other interventions that were cited includes: instituting legal mechanism support, mediation to reunite families, family therapy by mental health workers.

Relation of Family's Separation and Divorce on Children's Levels of School Attendance

Using chi square test of association at (95%) confidence level, the findings show a significant association ($\chi^2 = 5.294$, $P = 0.049$). Families having separation or divorce experience children having less commitment in education as illustrated in table 5 below.

Table 5: Influence of family background on learner's school Attendance

	Children's Commitment to school attendance		Total
	regular in school	Irregular in school	
Separated and divorced partners	0 (0.0%)	12 (100%)	12 (100%)
value	5.294		
P value	0.049		

CONCLUSION

Family background relates a child's commitment to education and school attendance. Though most families in Kangundo are either separated or divorced due disagreement between married partners. Children whose parents are either separated or divorced are distracted from learning and the rate of school attendance is irregular. However, the respondents observed that there are interventions that might be put in place to enable families function normally free from breaking up.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Make a study on sustenance of family unity and co- existence among the urban poor societies in Kenya. Besides, there is need for a study on the issues and challenges facing partners who have neglected educational responsibility of their children. Education stake holders need to ascertain the extent to which intervention measures addressing family difference are effectively challenges and issues affecting family unity.

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