

Motivational Strategies Adopted by Parents to Promote School Attendance in Primary Schools in Baringo County

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to establish how parental motivational strategies influence school attendance amongst primary school adolescent girls in Baringo County. The study adopted a survey research design using mixed methods approach and guided by Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory. The study was based on the Feminist paradigm. There were 656 primary schools in Baringo County with 140,011 pupils; 67,671 girls and 72,340 boys. The study targeted head teachers, class teachers and standard seven girls in public primary schools in the county. The schools were stratified according to the sub-counties. Proportionate random sampling was used to select participating schools from each sub-county which made 66 primary schools. All the head-teachers and class teachers from the selected schools participated in this study. Simple random sampling was used to select 30% of the class seven pupils in each of the selected schools. Data was collected using questionnaire, interview schedule and document analysis. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques which include frequencies, percentages and means; and Chi-square. The hypotheses were tested at significance level of 0.05. The analysis of the qualitative data followed the path of aggregating the words or images into categories of information and presenting the diversity of ideas gathered during data collection. Data was presented using frequency tables and graphs. The motivational strategies were identified as provision of basic needs which include food, smart uniform and sanitary towels. The findings can be used by parents, teachers and policy stakeholders to strategize on how to improve attendance of girls in primary schools so that they can realize their full potential and be a resource to the community and the nation.

Keywords: motivational strategies, school attendance, influence

1. Introduction

According to Adebola, Anyachebelu and Madu (2012), the higher the level of girls' education status, the more developed a nation is. This is why the Kenyan government has been investing heavily in the education sector with the aim of achieving gender equality in basic education (Republic of Kenya, 2005). Despite the government's concerted effort in introduction of Free Primary Education and Free Secondary Education, wastage among students has not stopped. The Koech Report (1999) asserts that the greatest challenge facing Kenya is that of ensuring access by eliminating all existing disparities, with particular reference to the education of girls, women and children in disadvantaged regions like arid and semi-arid lands (ASALS). Despite the critical role female education plays in the society, Kenya still witnesses gender disparity in all levels of education.

In Africa girls' primary school enrolment accounts for only 57% of the school-age population as compared with 75% to boys (Adetunde & Akampae, 2008). Adolescent girls typically lack access to financial capital and have more limited opportunities to gain the education, knowledge, and skills that can lead to economic advancement. Fatuma and Sifuna (2006) state that 40 % of the girls who entered Form One in 1973 were lost from the system by the time their class entered form four in 1976 compared to 26 % of the boys. Namunya, Bomet and Kiprop (2014) found out that the dropout of pupils in primary school in Katilu division of Turkana County which borders Baringo County rose from 5.0% in 2006 to 5.5 % in 2008. It is important to note that Baringo County is in arid and semi-arid land just like Katilu. This clearly shows that the number of girls that enter and remain in the education system is lower compared to that of the boys.

2. Statement of the Problem

Statistics from Baringo County Education office (2014) show that there are 656 primary schools with 140,011 pupils out of which 67,671 are girls and 72,340 are boys. In 2013, there were 71,989 boys and 67,373 girls and in 2012, there were 71,773 boys and 67,182 girls in primary schools in Baringo County. A study by Serem (2014) showed that the dropout rate for for boys in rural primary schools in Baringo County was 34.12% while for the girls was 37.31%. In the urban primary schools, the dropout rate for boys was 29.93% while for girls was 32.01%. Further, repetition rates for boys and girls in rural areas were 34.12% and 37.31% respectively. The repetition rate in the urban was 29.93% for boys and 32.01% for girls. This means that the enrolment of boys is higher than that of girls. The differential enrolment points to a problem with girl's education in the County that needs to be solved. The purpose of this study was to establish motivational strategies adopted by parents to promote school attendance in primary schools in Baringo County.

3. Literature Review

Motivation is the force that initiates, guides and maintains goal-oriented behaviours. Motivational strategies are the processes whereby parents and teachers initiate, guide and maintain goal-oriented behavior of their children in order to attend school. Motivation could be seen as self determination to succeed in whatever activities one engages in, be it academic work, professional work, sporting events, among others. Gesinde (2000) posits that the urge to achieve varies from one individual to the other, while for some individuals need for achievement is very high, for others it may be very low. However, there are high achievers and low achievers. Gesinde (2000) asserts further that, those who have high achievers as their models in their early life experience would develop the high need to achieve, while those who have low achievers as their models hardly develop the need to achieve. Human beings are said to be extrinsically or intrinsically motivated. Intrinsic motivation is said to be derived internally in the job itself. It is that which occurs while a person is performing an activity in which he takes delight and satisfaction in doing. Intrinsic motivation is seen as internal reward, while extrinsic motivation is incentive or reward that a person can enjoy after he finishes his work.

Parent involvement has been defined and measured in multiple ways, including activities that parents engage in at home and at school and positive attitudes parents have towards their child's education, school, and teacher. The distinction between the activities parents partake in and the attitude parents have towards education was highlighted by several studies (Epstein, 1996; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon, 2000). Increased frequency of activities was associated with higher levels of child misbehavior in the classroom (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999), whereas positive attitudes towards education and school were associated with the child's increased academic performance (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, Cox, & Bradley, 2003). Specifically, Izzo et al. (1999) reported that an increase in the parent's school activities may help the teacher to manage the child's existing behavior problems thus enhancing school attendance. The significance of parent attitudes toward education and school is less well understood, although attitudes are believed to comprise a key dimension of the relationship between parents and school (Eccles & Harold, 1996). Parents convey attitudes about education to their children during out-of-school hours and these attitudes are reflected in the child's classroom behavior and in the teacher's relationship with the child and the parents (Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993).

When parents are involved in their children's academic lives, children tend to perform better academically than when their parents are not involved. Parents involvement in their child's academics can take a number of different forms, such as attending parent-teacher conferences, helping a child with homework, going to school activities, such as school fairs, and knowing what the child is doing in class, as well as how they are doing in class (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Doan Holbein, 2005). In this study parents were expected to motivate the learners by attending school activities and finding out the progress of the learners in class by inquiring from the teachers.

Parental involvement can also have different qualities, such as monitor and support. A parent can monitor the child's academics in such a way that it is perceived as controlling (e.g when a parent hovers over a child attempting to complete a homework assignment). On the other hand, a parent can be supportive of the child's academics in a way that gives autonomy to the child (e.g when a parent checks over a child's homework assignment after the child asks for assistance)(Régner, Loose, & Dumas, 2009). Research suggests that it is the supportive type of involvement, rather than the monitoring type of involvement that contributes to better academic outcomes (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). One reason may be that supportive involvement is part of an authoritative style of parenting that is characterized by high levels of warmth and moderate levels of control.

In contrast, monitoring involvement may be considered as high levels of control and low levels of warmth. In general, children tend to fare better when parents use an authoritative (rather than an authoritarian) parenting style (Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992). Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, and Doan Holbein (2005) suggest that parental involvement may be predictive of children's school engagement, intrinsic motivation, sense of autonomy, and self-regulation-all of which have been shown to predict positive academic outcomes which is expected to enhance school attendance. Régner(2009) and her colleagues found that, as expected, parental support was related to mastery goals for junior high school students.

Parent and family factors (i.e., whether the student resides in a single-parent household, family socioeconomic status, parental unemployment, homeownership, etc.) have also been shown to predict school attendance. Gottfried (2011) noted that it has traditionally been difficult for researchers to disassociate student and family characteristics in analyses that examine school attendance. Indeed, in his analysis of data obtained from Philadelphia, he discovered that past research may have underestimated the influence of parent and family predictors. Despite this assertion, existing research suggests that there are specific family-related factors that influence school attendance as presented in the following paragraphs.

Research suggests that the parent's socioeconomic status wield a significant influence on the likelihood that students will attend school regularly (Crowder & South, 2003; Henry, 2007; Reid, 2005). Students who reside in urban neighborhoods are more likely to miss school and/or become chronically absent due to the myriad of

factors that distract students from school (Balfanz & Letgers, 2004; Orfield & Kornhaber, 2001). Students who are homeless or reside in temporary housing are also more likely to miss school. Citing reports from the U.S. Department of Education, the National Coalition for the Homeless (2007) reported that while 87% of homeless youth are enrolled in school only 77% attend school regularly. The National Coalition for the Homeless (2007) report that children who are homeless are also more mobile than their peers making regular school attendance more difficult. They estimated that half of homeless youth change schools two or more times each academic year. Forty percent change schools at least one time. Thus, the child's home status significantly predicts whether the child will attend school regularly. This was the reason for conducting this study in order to establish the influence parental motivational strategies have on school attendance amongst primary school adolescent girls in Baringo County.

Past research has suggested that family characteristics such as the number of parents in household and parental practices all influence student attendance, as well. For example, students from single-parent families are more likely to miss school than students from two-parent families (Finlay, 2006). Parents who are actively involved in their child's school experience and monitor their child's participation in school-these behaviors include talking with their child about school, checking homework, and participating in school-based parent organizations. Sixty-four percent of students who responded to the 2009 High School Survey of Student Engagement indicated that they attended school because of their parent or guardian (Yazzi-Mintz, 2009).

Children, who are supported by protective services, including foster care, frequently miss more school than children who are not served by these programs. Conger and Rebeck (2001) analyzes records from 17,000 New York City children in foster care and disclosed that approximately three-quarters of children placed in foster care attended school. Heilbrunn (2004) studied 30 truant students in Colorado and found that the students were frequently in the care of child protective services and had been removed from their homes. Tallies collected by the juvenile justice system revealed that truant students frequently experiences issues such as child neglect, abandonment, mental and physical health concerns, as well as previous placement in programs operated by health and human services(Heilbrunn,2004).

The findings from the Marchant et al. (2001) study confirm the important role that relationships among parents, teachers, and peers play on early adolescents' school achievement. In particular, students' perceptions of their parents' values about achievement had the strongest relationship with both motivations and competence. When students perceived that parents valued the importance of effort and academic success, students had higher perceived academic competence and placed a high priority on their academic ability, effort, and grades. Parental values were correlated with both parental responsiveness and involvement in school. It is noteworthy that students internalized parental values into their own learning traits. Results from this study also raise the possibility that parent involvement in the home verses participation at school may differentially relate to student motivation. This possibility would extend the range of parent involvement practices schools should seek to promote.

Other researchers have also investigated whether all types of parent involvement necessarily have a beneficial impact on student motivation. Ginsburg and Bronstein (1993) investigated parental involvement (surveillance of homework and reaction to students' academic grades) in relation to children's motivational orientation. Results showed that parental surveillance of homework was related to an extrinsic motivational orientation. The more parents were involved in monitoring, enforcing, or helping with homework, the more students reported being extrinsically motivated and dependent on external sources for academic guidance and evaluation.

Teachers rated these students as showing less initiation, autonomy, persistence, and satisfaction in doing their schoolwork. In this study of Ginsburg and Bronstein (1993), however, the surveillance was considered as over-controlling, and it may be necessary to examine ways that parents might be involved with schoolwork without being viewed as over-controlling. Results also indicated that when parents reacted to their child's grades (either high or low) with extrinsic rewards, that reaction was related to an extrinsic motivational orientation. Once again, teachers were more likely to rate these children as being less motivated, exhibiting less pleasure, and demonstrating less persistence in doing their schoolwork. However, when parents reacted to their grades by providing encouragement and praise, students were more likely to report an intrinsic motivational orientation characterized by a preference for challenging tasks, curiosity, and interest in learning. These findings support the notion that parent variables play a role in the development of children's intrinsic motivation. In this study the motivational strategies adopted by parents to be investigated include attending school activities, supervising children when doing homework, monitoring the performance of the child in school, being interested in what their children do in class and rewarding their children for good academic performance.

4. Methodology

This study was carried out in Baringo County, Kenya. This study adopted a survey research design. This study utilized eclectic research approach in which both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The study was

undertaken in primary schools in Baringo County. There are 656 primary schools in Baringo County with 140,011 pupils out of which 67,671 are girls and 72,340 are boys. The accessible population consisted of head teachers, teachers and standard seven girls in public primary schools in the county because they had valuable information for this study. For the purpose of this study, the schools were stratified according to the sub-counties then a proportion of 10 percent of schools were randomly selected from each strata to represent the sample. From each school, 30% of standard seven girls were selected as respondents through random sampling method. Each head teacher of the schools sampled and a class teacher of class seven from sampled schools were included in the study sample. This meant that there were 66 Head teachers, 66 class teachers and 259 class seven girls, making a total of 391 respondents for this study. The researcher used questionnaire, interview and document analysis as the main tools for collecting data. Descriptive statistical techniques were used in the analysis process.

5. Findings

The study sought to establish the motivational strategies adopted by the parent to promote schools attendance in primary schools in Baringo County. The results are as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Students' Responses on Motivational Strategies Adopted By Parents

Statement	SA		A		N		D		SD		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I am encouraged to attend school when:												
parent-teacher contact is increased	181	69.9	70	27.0	6	2.3	1	.4	1	.4	259	100.0
my parents are involved in my academic activities	170	65.6	76	29.3	9	3.5	3	1.2	1	.4	259	100.0
my parents get involved in school activities	164	63.3	74	28.6	10	3.9	4	1.5	7	2.7	259	100.0
my parents help me to complete a homework assignment	167	64.5	65	25.1	17	6.6	8	3.1	2	.8	259	100.0
my parents support me in my academics in a way that gives me independence	156	60.2	83	32.0	15	5.8	4	1.5	1	.4	259	100.0
my parents have high expectations for what i can achieve	168	64.9	74	28.6	13	5.0	1	.4	3	1.2	259	100.0
my parents protect my self-esteem	158	61.0	63	24.3	27	10.4	8	3.1	3	1.2	259	100.0
my parents offer rewards in a motivating manner	183	70.7	63	24.3	7	2.7	3	1.2	3	1.2	259	100.0
my parents are always available for me	172	66.4	64	24.7	18	6.9	2	.8	3	1.2	259	100.0
my parents create confidence in me	174	67.2	62	23.9	15	5.8	5	1.9	3	1.2	259	100.0
increases												

It is evident from Table 1 that pupils' attendance increases when parents-teachers contacts increases (96.9%), when parents get involved in academic activities of their daughters (95%), when parents increase involvement in school activities like academic days(91.9%) and when parents support their daughters in academics in a way that give them independence(92.3%). The study further established that when parents assist their daughters to complete their homework assignment (89.6%) and when parents have high expectations for what their daughters can achieve enhance their school attendance (93.4%). Similarly, 85.3%, 95%, 95% and 91.1% of the pupils who participated in this study stated that parents who protect their self esteem, offer rewards in a motivating manner, are always available for their daughters and create confidence in them, increases school attendance of their daughters respectively. According to Gesinde (2000), human beings are said to be extrinsically or intrinsically motivated. When parents offer rewards to their daughters, they encourage them to continue attending school. This actually acts as a positive reinforcement. The findings indicated a statistically significant relationship between parents' motivational strategies and girls' school attendance in primary schools in Baringo County ($\chi^2 = 274.90$, $df=76$ and $sig = 0.000$).

The findings of this study are in agreement with previous studies that established that increased frequency of activities was associated with higher levels of child misbehavior in the classroom (Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspro, & Fendrich, 1999), whereas positive attitudes towards education and school were associated with the child's increased academic performance (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, Cox, & Bradley, 2003). Specifically, Izzo et al. (1999) reported that an increase in the parent's school activities may help the teacher to manage the child's existing behavior problems thus enhancing school attendance. When parents are involved in their children's academic lives, children tend to perform better academically than when their parents are not involved. Parents involvement in their child's academics can take a number of different forms, such as attending parent-teacher conferences, helping a child with homework, going to school activities, such as school fairs, and knowing what the child is doing in class, as well as how they are doing in class (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems & Doan Holben, 2005).

6. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the motivational strategies adopted by parents(X1) to promote pupils' attendance in primary schools were parent- teacher contacts, parents' involvement in academic activities and school activities in the schools where their daughters are learning and parents support their daughters in academics in a way that give them independence and encouraging them to complete their homework assignment. Further, when parents have high expectations for what their daughters can achieve and protect their self esteem, offer rewards in a motivating manner, always available for their daughters and create confidence in them motivates learners to continue attending school.

7. Recommendations of the study

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the study recommends that parents should be encouraged to visit schools of their daughters frequently and create a good rapport with the teachers in the schools where their daughters are learning. Parents should also have high expectations for what their daughters can achieve and offer rewards in a motivating manner.

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