

Relationship Between Parental Marital Status and Levels of Self-Esteem Among Undergraduate Students in Public Universities in Kenya: A Case of University of Kabianga

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Abstract

Kenyan universities have experienced a growing phenomenon of student's unrest, drug abuse, deaths, relationship break ups, exam malpractice among others, which pose serious challenges in the growth and development of the students. Feelings of self-worth develop very early in childhood, thus parents and guardians play a great role in determining what the child thinks about him or herself. Self-esteem of children from either single or married parent families is important as it has a direct impact on the child's behavior in school. This study investigated the influence of parental marital status on students' self-esteem in universities. Causal-comparative research design guided the study. The target population included 840 fourth year students from the University of Kabianga. Proportionate stratified sampling and simple random sampling was utilized to identify a sample size of 271 male and female students. Data was collected by use of a questionnaire. The study established a statistically significant difference ($t_{2.386} = 115.788, p < 0.05$) between parental marital status and the level of self-esteem among undergraduate students in University of Kabianga. Students from married parent families recorded higher level of self-esteem to students from single parent family. The study concludes that parental marital status has a positive relationship on undergraduate students' self-esteem in universities. The study also recommends strategies to improve students' levels of self-esteem. The students should seek and train for self-esteem based counseling even when they are not encountering serious problems. University student counselors to develop SE special counseling programs and activities on psychological and psychosocial issues

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Introduction

Parental marital status has been found to have a positive effect on children's self-esteem (Ferro & Boyle 2015). The researchers found out that a positive self-evaluation is a vital predictor of one's general well-being and a degree of adaptation to the social context, as well as a powerful factor in protecting against psychosocial risks. The study of Van (2019) also found that children from single parent families show higher levels of depression, and anxiety and lower levels of self-esteem compared to children from married parent families. These findings are collaborated by the study of Elfhag, Tynelius and Rasmussen (2018) who also found out that, those children from single parent families had lower self-esteem compared to those raised by both parents.

Caldwell and Henry (2017) pointed out that custodial single parents may experience problems in the following areas; change in economic status, self-blame, loss of self-esteem and depression, role overload, social isolation, loneliness, interpersonal conflicts and disruption of customary living arrangements. Therefore, the family is the primary agent of socialization, the setting in which children begin to acquire the beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors considered appropriate in the society, preparing the child for economic self-sufficiency and encouraging the child to maximize other cultural values such as morality, religion and achievement (Ogwo, 2013). It is evident that individuals who perceive the presence of supportive family are more likely to feel a greater sense of self-esteem, which boosts the confidence of the student, and in turn boosts their motivation and performance.

University students in Kenya face a myriad of problems, which include drug abuse, deaths, relationship break ups and exam malpractice among others, which pose serious challenges in growth and development of the student. Psychological problems such as overwhelming anxiety, depression, loneliness, unrest, and somatic symptoms are quite prevalent among students with low self-esteem. This may lead to student's violation of the rights of others and of social norms as well as a disregard for authority among others. Feelings of self-worth develop very early in childhood, thus parents play a great role in determining what the child thinks about him or herself.

A study by McKay and Orth (2018) shows that, the level of self-esteem depends on several parental factors, not just whether the child grows in a single or married family. His study asserts that developing children's self-esteem begins with the life of the parents. Parents' insecurities are frequently, injected into the life of their children; therefore, becoming the children's own set of insecurities. Parents' vulnerabilities or strengths commonly become those of their children (Morrison, Coiro, & Blumen 2018). This happens in the lives of both

single and married parents. This is to indicate that, it is the manner of parenting, rather than type of parenting per se that influence the development of an individual's self-esteem.

In a study done by Iguacel, Fernández-Alvira, Ahrens, Bammann, Gwozdz, Lissner, and Tornaritis (2018) on parental marital status and children's self-esteem, the researchers found out that, self-esteem of children from either single or married parent families is a very central issue, because it has a direct impact on the child's behavior in school. Further research has shown that children with present fathers do better in school, are less prone to violence, and have higher self-esteem and self-confidence (Kevorkian 2019). According to Chuks (2017) about 52 percent of African urban parents were single and had children with lower self-esteem.

A strong self-esteem will act as a weapon against the challenges in life, the student will face. A low level of self-esteem will inhibit development while a high level of self-esteem will enhance it. The relationship between parental marital status and student's self-esteem is therefore an aspect of a person's environment interface that warrants attention. Given the challenges experienced by university students, the current study investigated the relationship between parental marital status and the level of SE among students in public universities, in Kenya with focus on University of Kabianga in Kericho County.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Kericho County in the University of Kabianga, which is made up of former Kericho and Bureti districts. The County borders Bomet and Kisii County in the south and the Nakuru County to the south east and Kisumu to the west. University of Kabianga is a Public Chartered University in Kenya. University of Kabianga attracts students from across the country. The university was chosen randomly to represent other public universities in Kenya. The study utilized causal-comparative design, to investigate the influence of parental marital status on the levels of self-esteem among university students.

The population comprised of 840 fourth year students. It included 540 male and 300 female fourth year undergraduate students enrolled in the university. A sample size of 271 students (174 male and 97 female) was used. A questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents results and discussions of the data collected from the field, based on the responses to the items in the administered questionnaire as per the objective and research hypotheses of the study. The chapter deals with Relationships between Parental Marital Status and Respondents' Self-Esteem. This study investigated the influence of parental marital status on students' self-esteem in universities. Causal-comparative research design guided the study.

The objective of the study was to evaluate the relationship between parental marital status and the level of self-esteem among undergraduate students in University of Kabianga. It had been hypothesized (H_{01}) that there was no statistically significant relationship between parental marital status and the level of students' self-esteem. The study used frequencies, percentages and t-test analysis to evaluate the relationship between parental marital status and the students' level of self-esteem. Table 3 shows students' distribution by parental marital status and level of SE among students.

Table 3

Students' Distribution by Parental Marital Status and self-esteem level

Students parental marital Status	Self- esteem level						Total	
	High		Moderate		Low		<i>f</i>	(%)
	<i>F</i>	(%)	<i>f</i>	(%)	<i>f</i>	(%)	<i>f</i>	(%)
Married	1	0.37	146	53.87	67	24.72	214	78.97
Single	0	0	40	14.76	17	6.27	57	21.03
Total	1	0.37	186	68.63	84	30.97	271	100

From Table 3, it is clear that those students from the married status were more in all levels of SE (high - 1(0.37), moderate -146(53.87), low -67(24.72) and overall of 214(78.97). It can therefore, be concluded that most students in University of Kabianga come from married families. 57(21.03) are from single families, however McKay and Orth (2018) opined that, the level of SE depends on several parental factors, not just whether the child grows in a single or married family. The study of Mburu et al (2012) asserts that, developing children's SE begins with the life of the parents and that, parents' insecurities are frequently injected into the life of their children; therefore, becoming the children's own set of insecurities. This happens in the lives of both single and married parents. This is to indicate that, it is the manner of parenting, rather than type of parenting per se that influences the development of an individual's SE.

In a two-parent family, the balance between the fathers and mothers different socializing patterns may be

what keeps the self-esteem levels relatively high. Apparently, the researcher feels that from the single parenthood, the absent parent upsets this balance, which leaves the student from the single parenthood in a family environment in which less is expected from him, and consequently may not develop the positive feelings of self-esteem. However, it was worth noting that all the groups had moderate self-esteem of 53.87% and 14.76% respectively. These results are in agreement with studies done Booth (2017) in Ngnoumen et al., (2017) indicating that gender of the parent plays an important role in the development of self-esteem.

Moreover, not all students from single parent families are affected by low self-esteem, just as not all students living with two parents are doing great. However, Guthman and Roble-Pina (2017) observed that, there was no gender difference in self-esteem and that there was also no significant difference in the self-esteem scores in relation to parental marital status. These findings corroborate with the research findings of Science Mu (2019) which showed that the students with married parents had higher overall self-esteem compared with students with single parents. Table 4 indicates the variability in students' self-esteem and the parental status.

Table 4

Variability in students' self-esteem scores as per the parental status

Students parental Marital Status	N	Minimum	Maximum	Range
Married	208	0	29	29
Single	63	0	18	18

From Table 4, the maximum score of respondents from married parent families was 29 and the range was 29 because the minimum was zero. Maximum self-esteem score of those from single families was 18, giving a range of 18. This shows that the self-esteem score of students from married families was more dispersed than the self-esteem score of students from single families. This means that there are many factors in married parent families causing the variation. Table 5 shows the results of the group statistics of self-esteem and parental marital status.

Table 5

Group Statistics of self-esteem and Parent marital status

	Parent marital status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Self-esteem	Single	73	1.63	.514	.060
	Married	198	1.79	.453	.032

The results in Table 5 provides basic information about the group comparisons, including the sample size (n), mean, standard deviation, and standard error for self-esteem by group. The results show that, there were 73 single parents and 198 married parents. The mean for single parent's self-esteem is 1.63, and the mean for married parent's self-esteem is 1.79. The findings reveal that there is a relationship between parental marital status and the level of self-esteem as shown in tables 19-21. Parental marital status had a positive relationship on students' SE. This was further confirmed by a standard mean of 0.032 for the students living with both parents and 0.060 for those in single parenthood. At the same time, it was important to run an independent samples test for students SE and parental marital status for equality of means. Table 6 indicates the results of independent samples test.

Table 6

Independent Samples Test for Self-Esteem and Parental Marital Status

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Self-esteem	Equal variances assumed	12.957	.000	-2.527	269	.012	-.163	.064
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.386	115.788	.019	-.163	.068

The results in table 6 reveal that the $p < .019$ is less than the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$, hence the conclusion that the mean self-esteem for students raised by single parents and students raised by married parents were significantly different. This answers the research hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference ($t_{2.386} = 115.788$, $p < .05$) between parental marital status and the level of self-esteem among undergraduate students in University of Kabianga. Results show that students with married parents had higher overall SE compared with students with non-married parents. In a two-parent home, the balance between the mothers and fathers' different socializing patterns may be what keeps the SE of the students relatively high.

The results in table 6 also show that SE of students' from single parent families is lower than that of students' from duo parent families. Based on these results, the hypothesis (H_{01}) suggesting that there was no

significant statistical relationship between parental marital status and the level of self-esteem was therefore, rejected. Another study also supported the findings that children of divorce which is under single-parent family tend to fare less well than peers raised in families with two biological parents (Farooq et al., 2017). Moreover, a substantial amount of family research has provided convincing evidence that children of single parenthood tend to experience more psychological, social, and academic difficulties than those raised in households with two biological parents (Kinga et al., 2018). However, living with two biological parents does not have a consistently beneficial effect across developing countries.

Summary of the Major Findings

This section is organized according to the research objective of this study. The summary is discussed with a view of making conclusion for the study.

The study used frequencies, percentages and t-test analysis to evaluate the relationship between parental marital status and the students' level of self-esteem. It is explicitly clear that those students from the married status were more in all levels of SE (high – 1(0.37), moderate – 146(53.87), low -67(24.72) and overall of 214(78.97). It can therefore be concluded that, most students in University of Kabianga come from married families noting that 57(21.03) are from single families. The study findings reveal that the $p < .019$ is less than the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$, therefore the mean self-esteem for students raised by single parents and students raised by married parents were significantly different. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) suggesting no significant relationship between parental marital status and student's level of self-esteem was rejected. The results show that, there were 73 single parents and 198 married parents. The mean for single parent's self-esteem is 1.63, and the mean for married parent's self-esteem is 1.79. This therefore is an indication that the two parents are important in the development of students self-esteem and that parents should be encouraged to have a two-parent family where possible and where not possible, then family support to be offered to the single parent family.

Conclusion and recommendations

The findings revealed that Parental marital status had a positive relationship on students' SE. Students from married parent families recorded higher level of self-esteem than students from single parent family did. This therefore is an indication that the two parents are important in the development of students self-esteem and that parents should be encouraged to have a two-parent family where possible and where not possible, then family support to be offered to the single parent family through family counseling and mentorship.

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