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THE INFLUENCE OF SINGLE MOTHERHOOD ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF CHILDREN IN ISLAMIC FAITH-BASED SCHOOLS, MOMBASA COUNTY, KENYA

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THE INFLUENCE OF SINGLE MOTHERHOOD ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF CHILDREN IN ISLAMIC FAITH-BASED SCHOOLS, MOMBASA COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigated the influence of single motherhood on pupils' academic performance in Islamic Faith-Based schools in Mombasa County, Kenya. The study wanted to establish whether pupils' academic performance differed between children from intact family and those from single motherhood.

Methodology: Case control study design was used to determine the difference between the control group and experimental group. A questionnaire and interview was used to collect the primary data while pupils' report books were used to obtain test score as a secondary data. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample size of 36 participants. Purposive sampling was preferred because of nature of the study and targeted population. Data analysis involved using frequencies and Pearson co-efficiency.

Results: The results indicated that, there is high significance difference on academic performance between children from single motherhood and those from intact families. The main conclusion derived from this research is that, single motherhood has negative influence on pupils' academic performance in Islamic-Based Schools.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: The study recommends that teachers should give more attention to children from single motherhood to enable them cope and be able to compete with children from intact families. In addition, teachers, Imams and parents should ensure counseling services are provided to them in order to adjust to the academic environment.

Key words: *Single motherhood, Intact Family, Islamic Based School and Madrasa*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades an important literature amount has developed internationally (Amato, 2005; Babalis, 2011), in order to examine the effect of family structure on the well-being of the child. The emergence of alternative family types, such as single parenthood found in various patterns such as the formal dissolution of marriage, separation/divorce or the voluntary single parenthood-single mother raises questions as to the quality assurance in the overall development of the child. The family is the child's first place of contact with the world. The child as a result, acquires initial education and socialization from parents and other significant persons in the family. Agulana (2010) points out that the family lays the psychological, moral, and spiritual foundation in the overall development of the child.

Single family structures come about as a result of either choice or break ups. These family structures are becoming increasingly common experiences in the lives of parents and children (Omuroyi, 2014). Single motherhood family may arise when a female decides to produce and rear children outside wedlock or even due to death of one spouse. According to Frazer (2004), psychological home conditions arise mainly from illegitimacy of children, the label of adopted child, broken homes, divorce and parental deprivation. Such abnormal conditions of the family are likely to have a detrimental effect on the academic performance of the child.

The primary environment of a student is the family and it stands to exert tremendous impact on the students' achievements (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Moreover, the family is the primary agent of education in the child. Thus, the way the child lives, the food he/she eats and his/her lifestyle is mainly influenced by the family. The type of family system the child is exposed to could influence his academic achievement in school (Keith et al., 1993; Abudu & Fuseini, 2013). Academic success of a child depends on what parents do at home. Njoku (2014) posits that the educational pursuit of every child is relatively determined by the pattern of family they come from. Parents who fail to assist and guide their children through every stage of development in life may have to contend with poor academic performance sooner or later and the development of unwholesome behaviors, as foundation to the success or failures in any child is laid upon the family and at the initial stage in life.

Becoming a single parent through divorce can impact negatively on children compared to two parent families. The intact, married family delivers fundamental education benefits to children. Studies show that divorce can negatively impact children's achievement and attainment in school (Abudu & Fuseini, 2013). Generally, broken homes may present a very serious danger to the emotional and spiritual adjustment of child for instance which impinges on the child's academic achievement. For instance, students under emotional heartache and stress at home often have negative emotions that interfere with concentration during the school day (Anyakoha, 2016). Spirituality influences students' relational distractions within the school environment especially those not aligned with an Islamic worldview. Since religious practice has benefits in areas such as sexual restraint, the child of divorce/single mother may lose this protection which may influence their performance in school (Ellis et al., 2003).

In summary, review of existing studies show that children in single-parent households score lower than children in two-parent households, on average, on measures of academic achievement (Amato, 2005; Brown, 2010). Some observers have claimed that the rise of single-parent families (as reflected in high rates of divorce and non-marital childbearing) is

the primary cause of school failure and related problems of delinquency, drug use, teenage pregnancies, poverty, and welfare dependency which have effects on school performance (Blankenhorn, 1995; Fagan & Iglesias 1999; Pearlstein, 2011; Popenoe, 2009). Such children act out their anger, frustration and hurt. They may get into trouble in school or fight more with peers and teachers leading to expulsion or suspension from school. In the past decades, some studies have shown that children of single motherhood due to divorce present lower academic motivation and performance if compared to children of intact families. In more concrete terms, children of divorced parents would be less capable of finishing school projects, face more challenges concentrating in complex tasks, present worse academic results in languages and mathematics and lower level of responsibility (Kelly, 2000; Abudu & Fuseini, 2013).

Although the research suggests that children from single parents may experience a variety of problems ranging from psychological disturbances to diminished social relationships and poor academic performance, the type, severity and persistence of these problems may be moderated by other factors. Some of the factors include age at the time of divorce and child's resilience in one-parent family, learning environment such as number of teachers, teachers' commitment, extra tuition, number of teachers, among others (Yaw, 2016).

The specific objectives of the study will be, to determine the effect of emotional foundation on child education performance in Islamic faith based schools in Mombasa County; to examine the effect of spiritual foundation on child education performance in Islamic faith based secondary schools in Mombasa County and to propose interventions for assisting students from single mother families.

1.1 The Problem of the Study

There is a global awareness of the importance of the home environment on students' academic achievement (Amato, Paterson & Beattie, 2015). In Kenya, there are increasing rates of marital instabilities which indicate the change in community values and norms concerning marriage and family life (Musua, 2016). Cases of single motherhood have been on the rise and the Muslim community is not an exception despite the paucity of research on the same.

While single parenthood has not been found to affect the school achievement of children in the United States (Amato et al., 2015), in other countries, it has been found to influence the well-being and development of children including their academic performance. Children from single motherhood may experience physical, emotional, social and academic challenges which in turn affect their academic performance. Consequently, this may bring about less engagement in school work and other activities, missing lessons, dropping out of school, being suspended or expelled from school in comparison to children from nuclear families (Abudu & Fuseini, 2013; Anyakoha, 2016).

A persistence of the above outcomes of single parenting is likely to usher in numerous social, psychological, religious and economic crises that weigh down on the productivity of a nation if unchecked. Various studies have been conducted globally, across the continent and regionally in assessing the influence of single parenthood on academic performance (Amato et al., 2014; Njoku, 2014; Kimani, 2007). However, neither of these studies targeted the site of study nor the population of Islam faith-based schools, hence the purpose of this study.

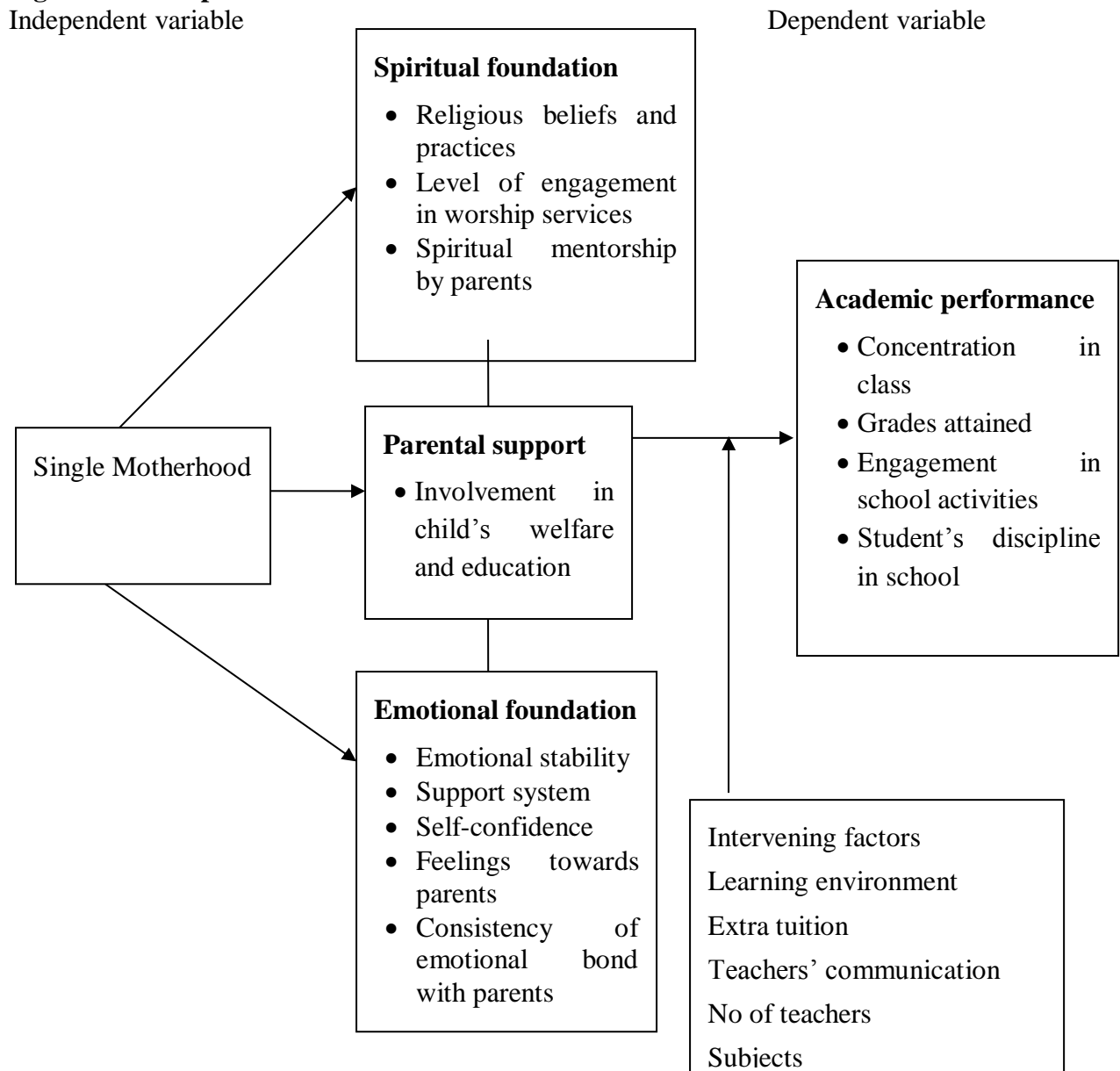
Therefore, this study seeks to determine the influence of single parenting on child academic performance in Islamic faith based secondary schools in Mombasa County.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 1 is a representation of the conceptual framework for this study. It demonstrates the relationship between the study variables diagrammatically.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



The study aims at determining the influence of single motherhood on child academic performance in Islamic faith-based schools in Mombasa County. Family background has been shown to impact on children's educational success. Single motherhood can significantly affect children's educational achievement through various channels related to their emotional and spiritual wellbeing that are given through parental support. Parental support involves any form of involvement of the parent towards the wellbeing of the child.

The spiritual wellbeing encompasses any activity that is related to the child's faith as imparted by the parent. The indicators for spiritual wellness are subscription to religious beliefs and practices, engagement in worship services, and spiritual mentorship by parents. The emotional foundation includes any activity that promotes the child's emotional wellbeing. The indicators for the emotional foundations are emotional stability, support systems, self-confidence, feelings towards parents and consistency of emotional bond with parents.

On the other hand, performance, which is the outcome of parenting, involves the child's mastery of school activities. Its indicators include concentration in class, grades attained in tests, engagement in school activities, and the child's discipline. While, the emotional and spiritual foundation aspects of parental support have a direct influence on a child's academic performance, there are other factors that may affect the performance of a child and which may not be included in this study and they are: learning environment, extra tuition, number of teachers, teachers' communication and the type of subject.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a case control study design. The total number of Muslim secondary schools in Mombasa County was 27 (Association of Muslim Schools in Kenya, office January 2016). The study targeted 20 students, 2 principals, 2 class teachers, 2 guidance and counselling teachers and 10 parents. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the 10 students from single mother families and 10 students from both parent families. 2 principles and 2 class teachers from each school were also selected and 2 guidance and counselling teachers. 10 parents (5 from each school) were selected to participate in the study. Simple random sampling was used to select the control group of students from both parent families. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview guides. The questionnaires were self-administered to the students in Muslim secondary school children in Mombasa County. The data collected was subjected to quantitative as well as qualitative analysis. The quantitative data was prepared in readiness for analysis by editing, handling blank responses, coding, categorizing and keyed into statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 22 computer software for analysis. The quantitative data on the other side was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in bar graphs, pie charts, and percentages. The qualitative data gathered from the interviews was analysed using content analysis where findings were presented in a narrative form under themes that reflect the study objectives. To determine the relationship between variables, the researcher used the Pearson's coefficient.

Response to County and Country Need

While there are many other causes of single motherhood, the Islamic faith permits divorce among its faithful under certain conditions. This leaves a number of women as single mothers adding to their burden of parenting. The coastal region of Kenya has large numbers of Islamic

faithful compared to any other part in the country. By studying the influence of single motherhood on children's academic performance, this study will be an eye opener for possible interventions for assisting the children to be efficient in their academic performance both in the site of study and the entire country. The Muslim community has highly contributed to the education sector in Kenya by erecting learning institutions across the country. Most of these institutions are largely run under Islamic principles. As a way of empowering them in their endeavour to support many children in achieving academically, this study will provide useful insights that may not have been envisioned before.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Respondents Characteristics

4.1.1 Respondents (students) Level of Study

From the Table 1, it is evident that all respondents (students) interviewed were in form 2 and form 3. Form 2 student were at 50% while form 3 were at 50%.

Table 1: Level of Study

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	form 2	10	50.0
	form 3	10	50.0
	Total	20	100.0

4.1.2 Students' age

Table 2 shows that most students interviewed were aged between 16 years, 17 years and 18 years old. Those who were 16 years old were at 50%, followed by 18 years at 30% and then 17 years. The population of students with 16 years is higher than other ages because most students at this age are in either form 2 or 3.

Table 2: Students' age

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	16 years	10	50.0
	17 years	4	20.0
	18 years	6	30.0
	Total	20	100.0

4.1.3 Respondents Gender

Table 3 shows the outcome got when the respondents gender was run through SPSS. The gender results showed that male were 50% and female 50%. It is therefore evident that the questionnaire response was fairly distributed among the respondents.

Table 3: Gender

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	male	10	50.0
	female	10	50.0
	Total	20	100.0

4.1.4 Respondents' family structure

As shown in the Table 4, Students' family structure was equally distributed across the divide. Children from single motherhood were at 50% and children from intact family were 50%. The interview was in form of questionnaire. The focus group discuss include 6 teaching staff and 10 parents from single motherhood families.

Table 4: Family Structure

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Single parent family	10	50.0
	Intact family	10	50.0
	Total	20	100.0

4.2 Major pointers of influence of single motherhood on academic performance among students from single motherhood family in Islamic faith-based schools in Mombasa County

4.2.1 Emotional Foundation on Academic Performance in Islamic faith-based schools in Mombasa County

The Table 5, chart 1 and chart 2 shows the results of experimental group (children from single motherhood) while table 6, chart 3 and chart 4 shows the results of control group (children from intact families) and how their emotional foundation impact academic performance. Table 5 which is a correlation between emotional foundations of children in experimental group impacts their academic performance. The significance level in two tailed is at 0.25 indicating that emotional foundation of children from single parenting have high significance in their academic performance. The same information is portrayed in charts 3 and 4 which represent children emotional foundation taking missing parents as an example compared to academic performance.

Table 5: Correlation Results between Emotional foundation and academic performance

		I miss my parents	Academic performance
I miss my parents	Pearson Correlation	1	.250
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.486
	N	10	10
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	.250	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.486	
	N	10	10

Figure 2: I miss my parents

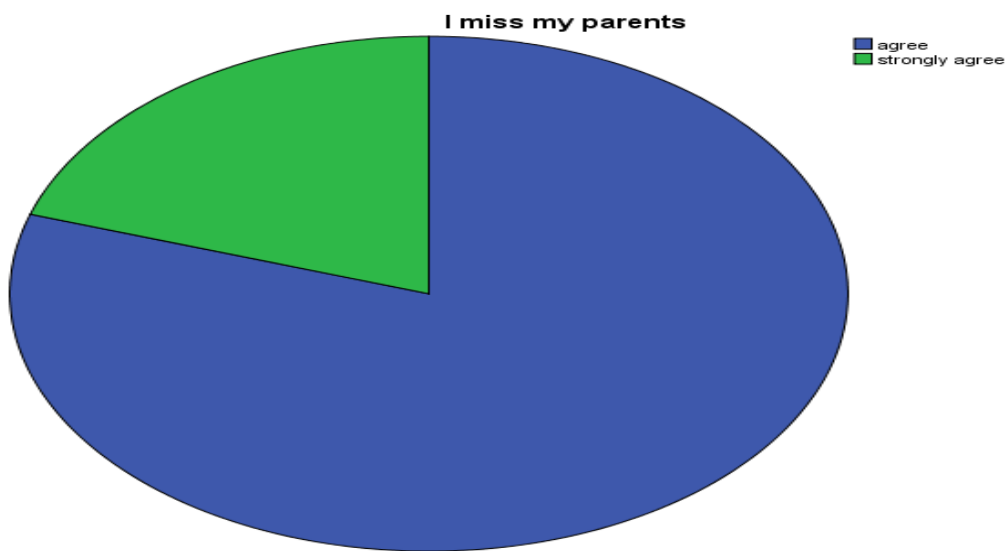


Figure 3: Academic Performance

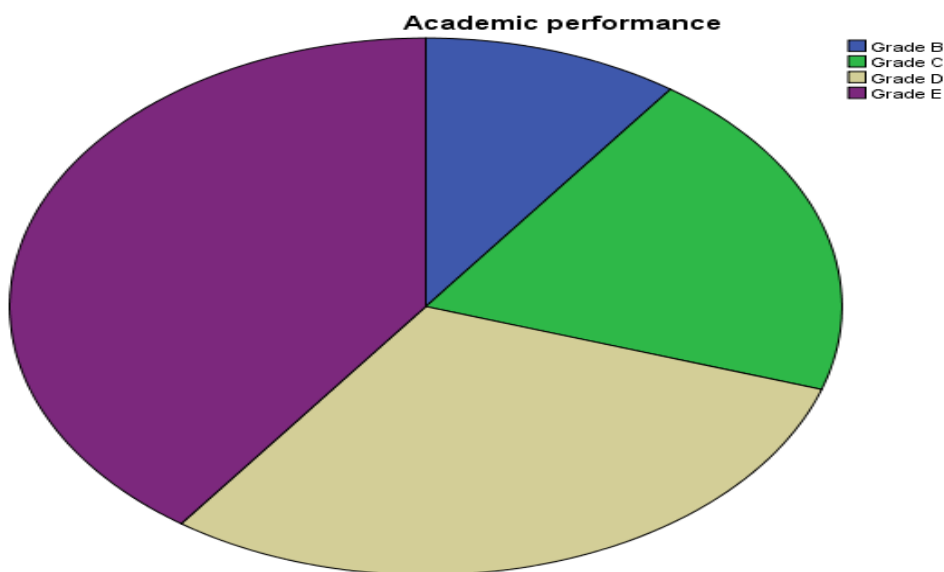


Table 6 indicates results from control group on emotional foundation and academic performance. The significance in this control group is at 0.673 which show there is no significance between emotional foundation and academic performance in this group. This is to indicate that there is high significant impact of emotional foundation on academic performance among children from single motherhood as compared to children from intact families. Charts 3 and 4 also represents the same comparison in order to bring out clearly how missing parents affects child’s academic performance. Most of students scored B and C compared to students from single motherhood where majority scored E and D. children from single motherhood cited poor academic performance on their unstable emotional foundation.

Table 6: Emotional Foundation Does Not Affect Academic Performance

		I miss my parents
I miss my parents	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	2.400
	Covariance	.267
	N	10
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	.153
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.673
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	.600
	Covariance	.067
	N	10

Figure 4: Effect of missing parent

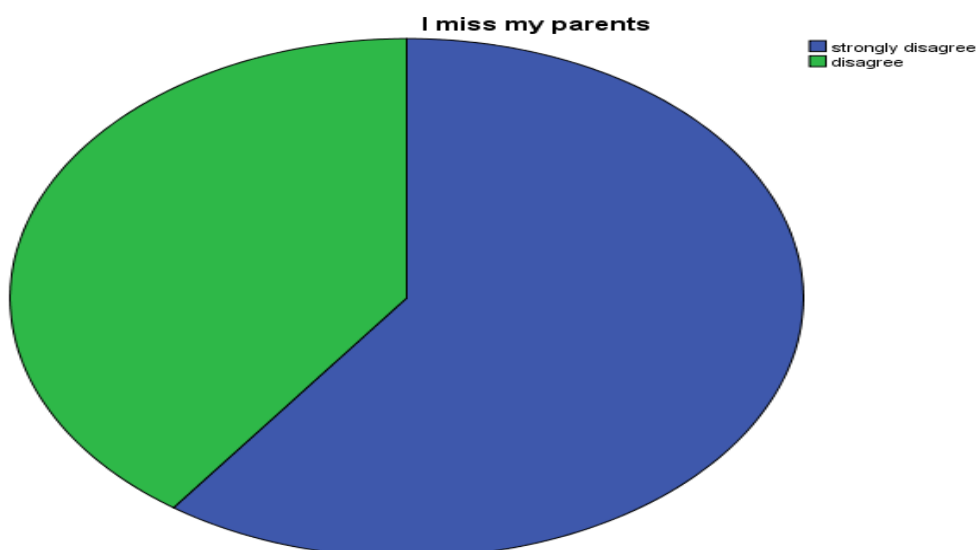
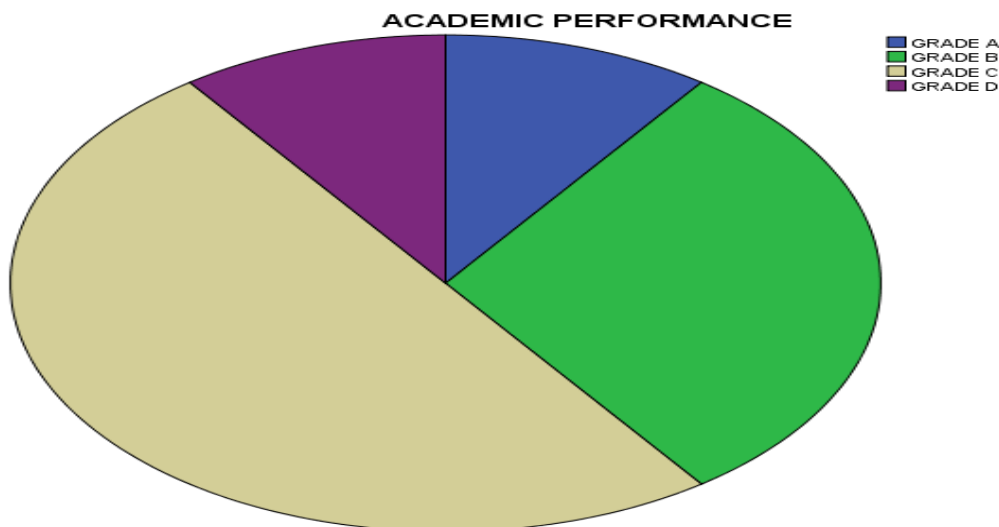


Figure 4: Effect on academic performance



4.2.2 Spiritual foundation on academic performance in Islamic Faith-based Schools in Mombasa County

From Table 7, bar chart 1, pie chart 5, table 8, bar chart 2 and pie chart 6, it was found that children from both experimental and control groups attributed their academic performance to their spiritual belief in Allah. 60% of the participants from experimental group strongly agreed that Allah makes helps them in academics. Also, from control group 70% strongly agreed that Allah makes them succeed in their academics.

Table 7: Spiritual Foundation on Academic Performance

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Agree	4	40.0
	strongly agree	6	60.0
	Total	10	100.0

Bar chart 1: Effect of Spiritual Foundation on Academic Performance

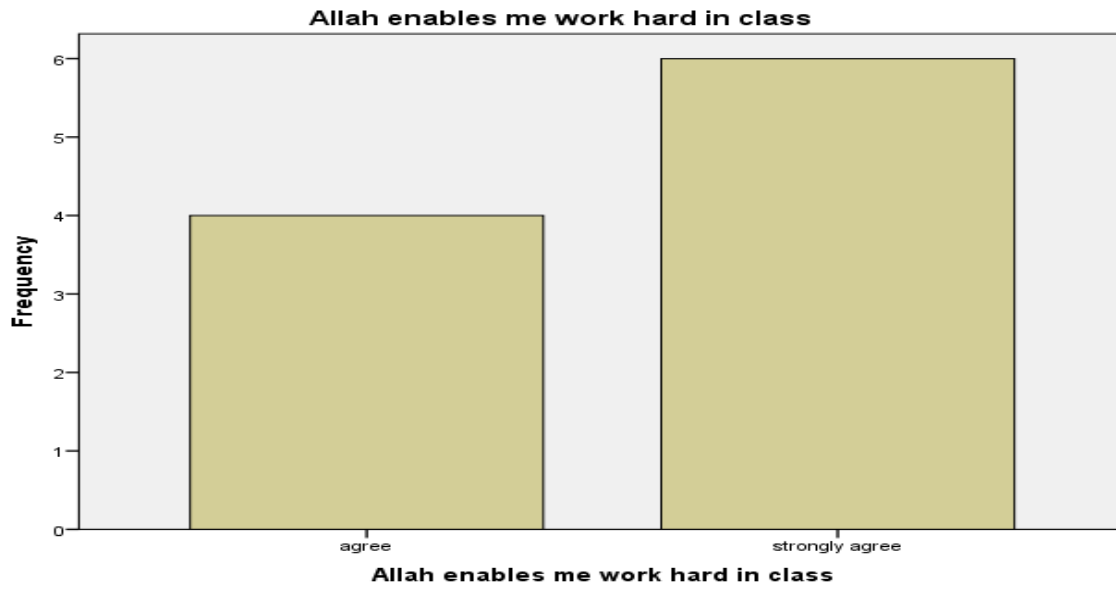


Figure 5: Effect on Faith on academic performance

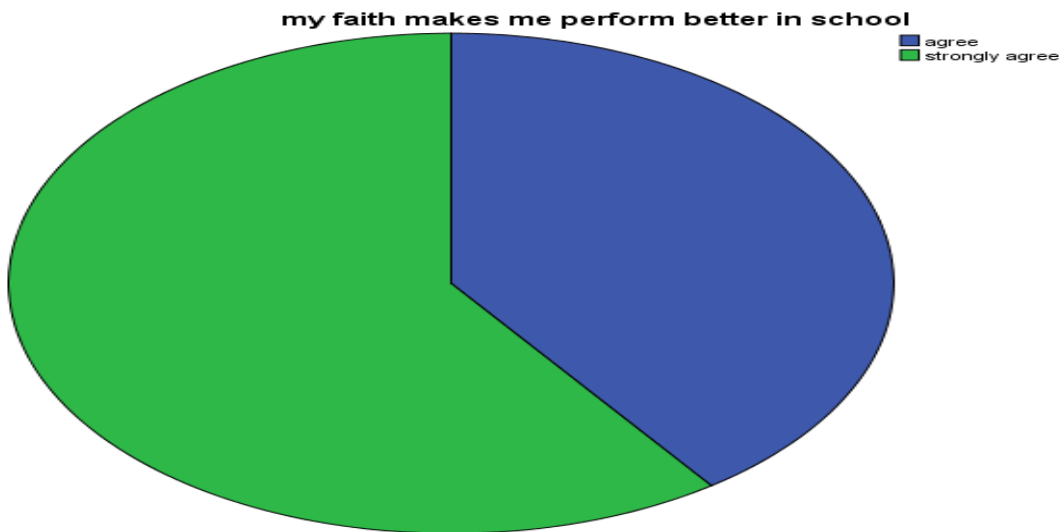


Figure 6: Effect Spiritual Foundation on Academic Performance

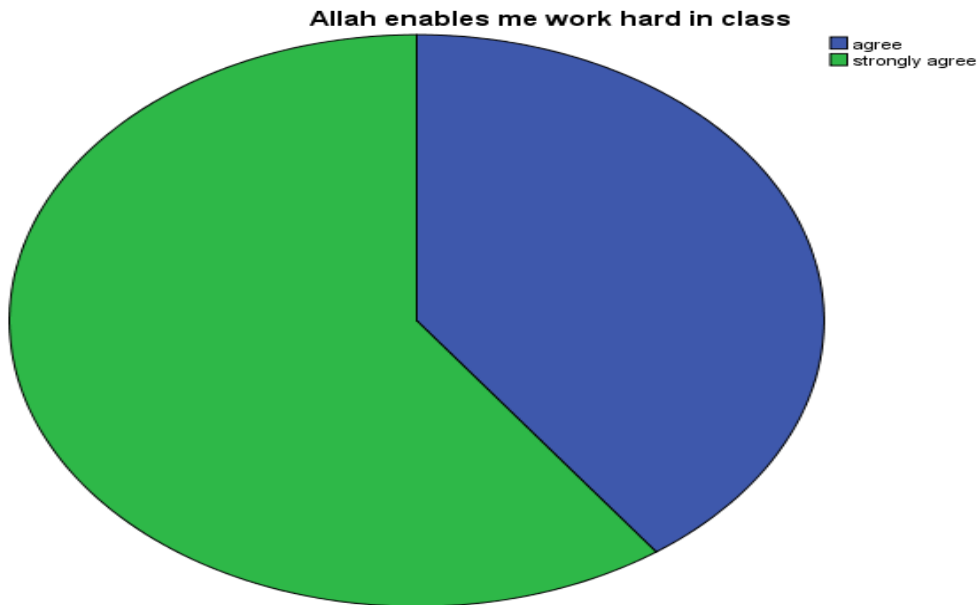


Table 7: Results from Control Group on Spiritual Foundation on Academic Performance

		Allah enables me work hard in class			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	1	10.0	10.0	10.0
	strongly agree	9	90.0	90.0	100.0
Total		10	100.0	100.0	

Bar chart 2: Results from Control Group on Spiritual Foundation on Academic Performance

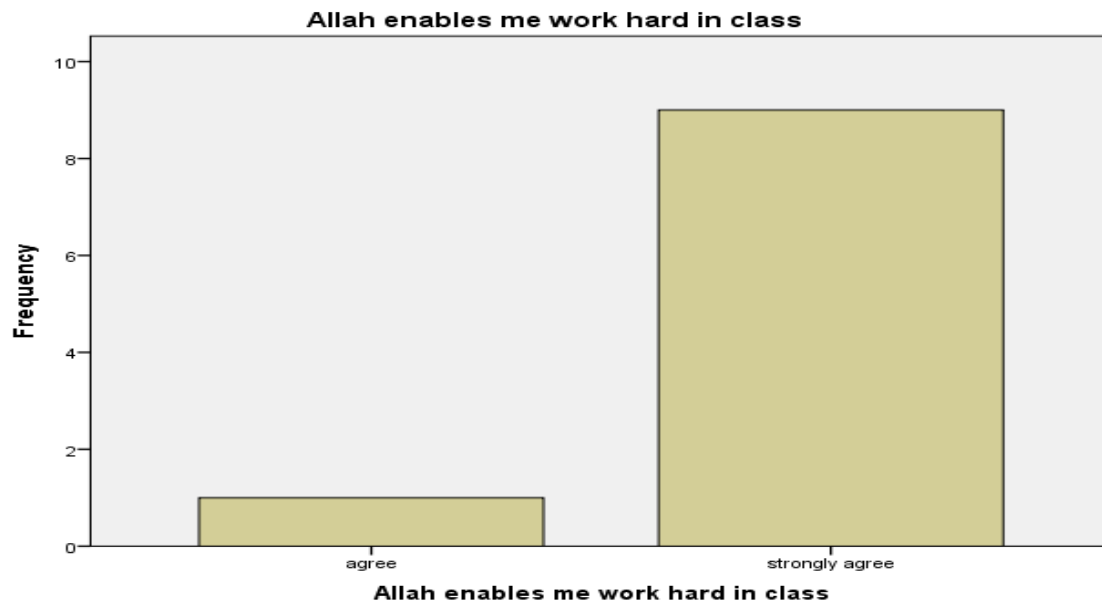
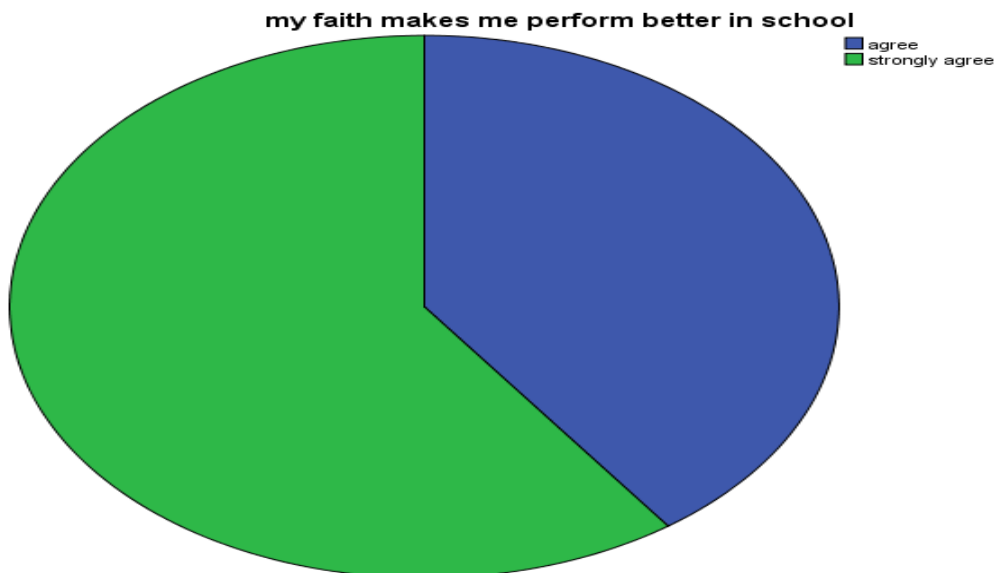


Figure 7: Results from Control Group on Spiritual Foundation on Academic Performance



4.2.3 Behavioral foundation on academic performance in Islamic Faith-based Schools in Mombasa County

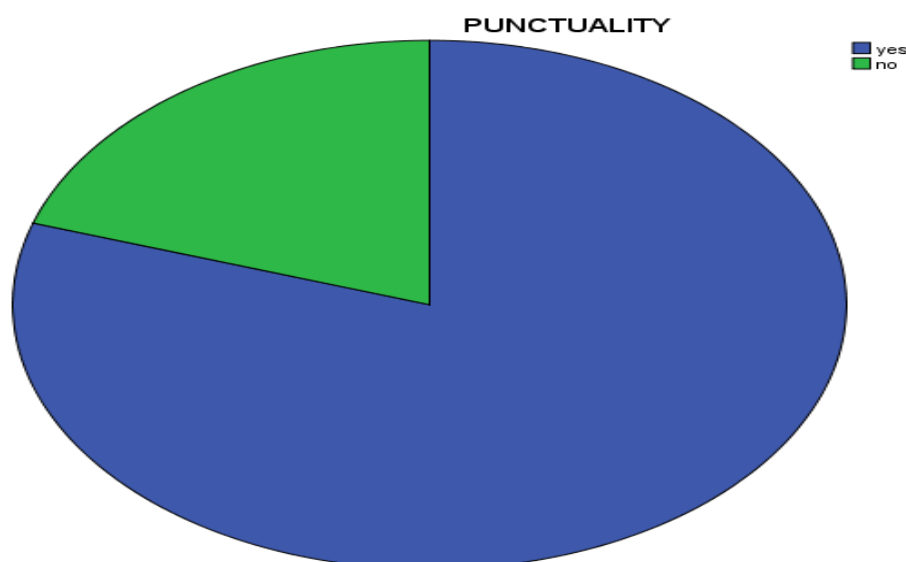
As indicated in table 9, 50% of children from single motherhood have problems of behavior while in school with only 10% who are don't have problems with school rules and regulations. Pie chart 6 also shows that most of children from single motherhood have behavioral issues in school. In the control group, 40% had no issues related to indiscipline

with only 10% having behavioral problems at school. From the pie chart 8, most of children from intact families are always punctual in class which enables them to perform better. Children from single motherhood families have behavioral problems which in turn influences their academic performance negatively compared to children from intact family.

Table 10: Experimental Group Respondents' Behavioral Foundation on Academic Performance

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Yes	4	40.0
	No	3	30.0
	3	1	10.0
	4	1	10.0
	5	1	10.0
	Total	10	100.0

Figure 8: experimental group respondents' behavioral foundation on academic performance



In the focus group discussion whereby 2 principles, 2 class teachers, 2 counseling and guidance teachers and 10 parents with five from single motherhood family and five from intact family indicated that there was significant influence of single motherhood on academic performance of the child. They reported that children from single parent families performed poorly in exams compared to children from both parents. There was also the observation that it is difficult to handle children from single families because some were on drugs and bad companies. Despite their poor participation during madrassa lessons, spiritual support from parents encouraged children to depend on Allah as well as uphold their faith. In this focus group, it was proposed that children manifesting such issues should be referred for counseling for support rather than always punishing them. On top of that, it was suggested that their family profile should be recorded during admission for assistance throughout the school life as this will help in improving their performance.

Parents whose families were intact noted that they both motivated their children to perform better in school. They believed that praying together and sitting together helped them to discuss issues important to their lives. They agreed that taking time together with the children was helpful because it boosted their confidence and sense of belonging. Some noted that domestic conflict distresses the child which negatively affects their performance. Despite the fact that both parents encouraged their children, most of them performed well when parents were not in conflict. Mothers were more influential than fathers in the family although the role of the father was very important so conflict affected the children both at home and in school. Due to this, parents ought to follow up the performance of their children to ensure that they offer the needed support. Building the faith of the children was instrumental in forming good performance of the children.

Most single mothers became single by choice after neglect from their husbands but they feared stigma from the society and never came out for support from national bodies such as FIDA. They noted that children suffered most from the effects of divorce and these effects affected them in their school performance. Most single parents noted that their children were depressed due to the lack of father figure and absence of their support. Most of them agreed that they needed training to understand themselves better as well as support their children in their social and school lives as well. They also saw the need for spiritual support for their children because it encouraged them in life especially in school. Some mothers noted the need for discipline to control some problem behavior which may affect their school performance and behavior.

5.0 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussions

In assessing influence of single motherhood in child academic performance in school, the study findings indicate that, single motherhood has significant impact on child academic performance. From the study findings, emotional foundation was found to have a strong influence on a child's academic performance. The participants from single parent families showed a higher emotional disconnection with their family compared to children from both parent families. Similarly, the score for children from single motherhood families showed that their performance was more affected compared to that of both parents. Family stress which affects the children's emotional wellbeing especially from the single motherhood families affects the performance of the children compared with those of both parents.

While children from single motherhood experience more emotional strain compared to those in both parent families, children from both types of families agreed that their faith influenced their performance at school. Most of them strongly agreed that they were able deal with school and family challenges through the practice of faith. At the same time, their faith was a source of motivation for them to work hard and achieve their goal. There was, therefore a strong correlation between spiritual foundation and academic performance. When asked to expound how the performance was affected most of them said that '*...my performance is positively affected....*' '*my belief in Allah makes me confident...*' These are indicators that Islamic faith offers a strong foundation for academic performance of students in both families.

The findings from deputy principals, class teachers and school counselor confirm the findings from the children from the different families. They reported that children from single parent families performed poorly in tests and exams compared to children from both parents. There was also the observation that it is difficult to handle children from single families because some were on drugs and bad companies. Despite their poor participation during madrasa lessons, spiritual support from parents encouraged children to depend on Allah as well as uphold their faith. In this focus group, it was proposed that children manifesting such issues should be referred for counseling for support rather than always punishing them. On top of that, it was suggested that their family profile should be recorded during admission for assistance throughout the school life as this will help in improving their performance.

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The academic performance of children from both single motherhood families and both parents was largely disparate. Children from single parent families were likely to exhibit problem behavior at school compared to children from both parent families. For example, most of them agreed that they get punished for not completing assignments or for not accomplishing assigned tasks. Others would be also likely to pick fellow students items such as books and pens without permission. While some children from both parents had similar scores to those from single motherhood families, the average score on problem behavior was lower for children from both parents.

Conclusions

From the study findings, most children from single motherhood families performed poorly in school and manifested problem behavior. However, most of them believed that emotional support from their parents as well as spiritual support can help them cope better. Due to this, it is recommended that Islamic faith-based schools should first of all have a counseling

department where students with psychological issues emanating from their families can be referred. Spiritual foundation should be empowered by ensuring that they get spiritual support both at home and at school. At the same time, the admission should ensure that they collect the student family profile to understand better their psychological needs and support.

Because parents play a role in the performance of their children, schools ought to organize seminars for the parents to enlighten them on the challenges facing their children. They should also ensure that parents follow up on the school performance of their children to ensure that they support them where necessary.

Divorce is a very devastating event to both parents and children. From the findings of the study, it should be discouraged and only given on extreme events where it is unavoidable but not just because simple decisions from one or both of the parents. While this cannot be forced into the Islamic religion, appeals should be made by those dealing with children undergoing the challenges of coping with parental divorce so as to minimize it.

Recommendations

The study recommends that teachers should give more attention to children from single motherhood to enable them cope and be able to compete with children from intact families. In addition, teachers, Imams and parents should ensure counseling services are provided to them in order to adjust to the academic environment.

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