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KENYA JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING,  
ECONOMICS & MANAGEMENT  
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**CAUSES OF FATHER ABSENCE AND HOW IT AFFECTS ACADEMIC  
PERFORMANCE OF THE BOY CHILD IN KCSE IN SUNEKA DIVISION, KISII  
COUNTY, KENYA**

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**Key Words**

***Father absence,  
academic  
performance, boy  
child,***

**Abstract**

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*This study was set to ascertain the causes of father absence and how it affects the academic performance of the boy child in KCSE in Suneka Division, Kisii County. The objectives of this study were: to find out the grades scored in KCSE by boys whose fathers had died; to find out the grades scored in KCSE by boys whose fathers were away for studies; to determine the scores of boys whose parents were divorced; to ascertain the academic performance of boys whose fathers were away due to employment. The social learning theory by Albert Bandura guided this study. The study employed descriptive survey approach. The target population from which the sample was drawn consisted of 3000 students enrolled in secondary schools. The division had 33 public secondary schools: 3 girls' schools, 2 boys' schools and 28 co-educational schools. Purposive sampling was used to sample two boys' schools and 28 co-educational schools. Form 3 and 4 students were sampled to participate because they had been in school longer. The study purposively sampled 900 students using random sampling technique from 10 schools (an average of 90 students per school; 50 form threes and 40 form fours). The researcher also interviewed 10 Principals and 10 guidance and counselling teachers; one from each sampled school, giving a total population of 920. The data was collected using questionnaires and interview guide. The students' questionnaire collected qualitative and quantitative data which was analysed using descriptive analysis. The findings showed that various indicators of father absent households like employment, business, death, separation, divorce and studies to a great extent affected the grades scored in KCSE by the boy child in Suneka Division, Kisii County. The findings showed that boys from father absent households performed poorly compared to boys from father present homes. However it was also noted that there were boys from father absent households who performed well and scored high grades due to the efforts of their mothers as well as their fathers who were away. Most of the boys from father absent homes faced challenges like: lack of school fees, lack of motivation, inadequate basic needs, lack of appreciation and lack of revision materials among others. This affected the grade they scored in KCSE. These findings may help the guidance and counselling teachers who may understand the effects of father absent households on the boy child in their schools and enhance counselling. The education officers may also use these findings to try to sensitize the teachers and parents in their sub counties on the importance of fathers being close to their sons. Principals may also understand how to handle boys from father absent households in their schools. The ministry of education may as well undertake to train and post counsellors in schools to help boys from father absent households cope with father absence especially in case of death where they have no control.*

### **The Background of the Study**

According to 2006 estimates, over 12.9 million children were reported in single-parent homes with 10.4 million children living with single mothers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). With such a large proportion of our society's children experiencing a single-parent household, mostly in single-mother households, it is imperative to understand the effects of growing up in a single-mother household with absent-fathers for any reason may have on the development and success of children in academics.

There is an increasingly high number of homes with absent fathers in our society today resulting from either divorce, separation of married couples with children, non-marital births, due to hospitalization, active service in the army forces, leaving home to find work, imprisonment or death of the father. Children with absent fathers were reported to be most vulnerable and problematic, (Wark, 2000; Parker, 1991). They often had problems both in school and at home (Balcom, 1998; Fagan, 1999), behavioural and educational problems (Bryant, 1997). Father absence and low levels of paternal investment appeared to have negative effects on children's educational attainment (Amato & Gilbreth 1999; Coley 1998; Pong et al. 2003; Jones 2004). Most studies, however, were limited to Western industrial societies where nonlocal households predominated and father absence was strongly associated with lower socio-economic status, limited resource access, and/or social stigma. These social contexts represented only the minority of kinship and household systems worldwide, yet among

psychologists these were wide that teenage boys from father absent homes were under functioning compared to boys from father present homes, and empirical results showed positive correlations between high quality father-son relationships and boys' improved grade point average (Jones 2004).

The number of families with absent fathers increased significantly from 0.57 million in 1971 to 1.6 million in 1996 (Brown, 2001). Over 1/4 million children in the United States lived in lone parent families, where the families with absent fathers made up about 92 per cent (Brown, 2001). While children who lived in the families where two parents were present, reported positive emotional and psychological development (Coltrane et al, 1998; Corneau, 1991; Lansky, 1992), those with absent fathers reported to lack emotional stability, as absent fathers negatively influenced a child's activities like attitude to the future and the level of self-appraisal (Goldberg, 1995; Herzog et al, 1971; Phares, 1992; Sills, 1995), to mention a few.

In a Swedish study, individuals with divorced parents during childhood had significantly lower educational attainment in adulthood level and field of education combined with logged annual earnings in adulthood; about one year less of schooling compared to individuals whose parents did not separate during childhood (Bjorklund & Sundstrom 2005). Another study in Sweden found that children with absent fathers had lower educational attainment, were more likely to drop out of school, and had lower academic

aspirations than children from father present homes (Murray & Sandqvist 1990). According to Chase-Lansdale (1995), in the United Kingdom, the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), he stated that Britain's record on family breakdown was the worst in Europe. The absence of fathers had become an issue of special concern to the CSJ. Three quarters of households on social housing estates in the UK were headed by lone parents - usually mothers. Only 15% of social-renting households were headed by a couple with children. Nationwide 15% of babies were born without a resident biological father, and approximately 7% were born with no registered father on their Birth Certificate. The consequences for children were toxic. CJS had collated the evidence and conclusively demonstrated that children who grew up without fathers, in a one parent environment, were 75% more likely to fail at school (Chase-Lansdale (1995).

Recent examination of family trends in the U.S. utilizing data from the 2003 Annual Social and Economic Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS) that compared trends between 1970 and 2003 reported that 26% of the population in family groups consists of single-mother and absent-father families (Fields, 2004). Out of the 12 million single-parent families, 10 million are headed by single-mothers. Although this is not parallel with the estimated projection by Bumpass and Sweet (1989), the numbers are still large. When the 10 million single-mothers were categorized into subgroups indicating their marital status, 4.4 million mothers had never been married,

just slightly over 3.5 million mothers were divorced, 1.8 million were separated from their husbands, and 416,000 mothers were widowed. Bumpass and Sweet (1989) noted that historically, parental death was the main cause of single parenthood. During the first half of the twentieth century, rates of single parenthood remained the same, but the causes of single parenthood changed during the 1950s when rates of parental death decreased by two-thirds while marital disruption, such as divorce, increased threefold. However, the 1970s experienced a steep increase in rates of divorce which levelled off in the 1990s (Fields, 2004), increasing the total rate of single-parent households.

Alison LaFortune found that there was evidence to suggest that fathers pushed academic achievement more than mothers. Mothers were more likely to be the nurturers, while fathers focused on goals related to school and future careers. A father could have such an impact on school success that children with absentee fathers were more likely to miss school and to undervalue academic goals, which in turn lowered their chance of progressing on to a more accomplished career, according to Rosenberg.

Hearing a father's firm, deep voice encouraged compliance from the child, according to Bradford Wilcox, director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia, as cited in a Deseret News article entitled "Fatherless America?" Having a father in the picture gives children much needed structure in their lives, and that could lead

to a more disciplined child in the classroom. That might be why children raised apart from their fathers tended to “exhibit lower academic performance than those raised with their fathers” (Swihart& Brigham, 1982). Furthermore, a boy modelled and identified in his father more than in his mother. It appeared that the absence of the father deprived children of numerous learning opportunities. High levels of father involvement had been shown to significantly predict school achievement and to contribute towards positive school attitudes in children (Flouri et al. 2002; Flouri& Buchanan 2004); cause and effect relationships were not clear from these, however. Independent of mother’s care, father’s care was associated with fewer behavioural problems and better academic achievement in grade-scholars (Aldous & Mulligan 2002; Coley 1998).

Children from father absent homes were more likely to drop out of high school and to score lower on measures of academic achievement than children from father present homes (Hetherington et al.1983; Astone&McLanahan 1991). Similarly, teenage boys from father absent homes were under-functioning compared to boys from father present homes, and empirical results showed positive correlations between high quality father-son relationships and boys’ improved grade point on average (Jones 2004). Researchers in other fields, such as sociology and economics, had found similar results. Cooksey &Fondell (1996) analysed the impact of father’s time and family structure on pre-teen and teenagers’ educational attainment and found that pre-teens living with both biological

parents had higher academic achievement than those living in single-parent households or households with only one biological parent and one step-parent.

In a Sweden study individuals with divorced parents during childhood had significantly lower educational attainment in adulthood (level and field of education combined with logged annual earnings in adulthood); about one year less of schooling compared to individuals whose parents did not separate during childhood (Bjorklund&Sundstrom, 2005). Another study in Sweden found that children with absent fathers had lower educational attainment, were more likely to drop out of school, and had lower academic aspirations than children from father present homes (Murray & Sandqvis1990). Australian children with divorced parents also ended their schooling nearly one year earlier than children with married parents (Evans et al.2001).

Children need both a mother and father in their lives, and each plays a role in academic achievement. Fathers who are not living with the child's mother can specifically plan time to be with the children. Kruk says there is a need for fast, low-cost, effective ways for non-residential parents to have their court-ordered parenting time enforced. Seeking out allies in the pursuit of quality time with their children is a way that fathers can try to be more of a presence in their children's lives, and influence their attitude and choices regarding academics, notes Rosenberg.

It is gathered that the absence of a parent is probably associated with a decrease in total parental involvement, which in turn is related to poor school or academic performance. In African setting, it is believed and clearly seen that the absence of fathers has a particular negative socialization influences which may be detrimental or dangerous especially for male children. A daily sketch publication "Causes and Cures of Poor Performance at West African School Certificate Examination (WASCE)" in 2006 identified and categorized problems responsible for students' poor performance to problems of teachers, problems of inadequate facilities in the schools, problem traceable to students, problems caused by parents and society at large and problems of government policies and low funding of the education sectors. (Ajila&Olutola, 2007).

Trebolo (2012), reports that as early as age three, children's ability to adapt to classroom routine appears to be influenced by their parents' marital status. For instance, three and four year old children growing up with their own married parents are three times less likely than those in any other family structure to experience emotional or behavioural problems such as attention deficit disorder. Baumirind (2005) also stated that children living with their own married parents are more likely to be more involved in literacy activities than children from single-parent homes. Not growing up with their own married parents appears particularly damaging for young children because the cognitive and social behaviour developed early on present throughout childhood

affecting the course of effective learning or good academic performance.

It has been critically observed that the environment in which the child comes from can greatly influence his academic performance at school. Although, the home environment or the family has been recognized as having a lot of influence on the academic performance of students, socio-economic status and educational attainment of parents too needs to be critically looked into. Conflict appears to be an important influence in a number of adverse outcomes including behaviour problems. Reduced parental attention is usually associated with separation. The prevailing anti-social behaviour such as telling lies, cheating during examination, exaggeration of facts, stealing, lack of respect for common property, sexual abuse, drug abuse and truancy which are very rampant among the secondary school students could be traced to parental separation.

Morrel (1999) stated that most men in South Africa seldom attended the birth of their children and often did not acknowledge their children as theirs. They said that fathers in South Africa frequently failed to be involved in their children's lives and that in the 1990s of 22000 children born in the Chris Hani Baragwanath hospital, 50% of them had no male support. They also concurred with Dobson (2002) who said that within South Africa, literature on men showed that there was a crisis of masculinity. This was measured by the high rates of suicide among men, declining academic performance of boys and changes in the workplace



that challenged the hierarchical entitlement of men. They asserted that especially young men in South Africa were in trouble.

Richeter (1999) stated that, the latest available data about fathers in South Africa, showed that the proportion of fathers who were absent and living had increased between 1996 and 2009, from 42% to 48%. Over the same period the proportion of fathers who were present decreased from 49% to 36%. A racial dimension was evident in trends of absent fathers. African children under 15 years had the lowest proportion of present fathers in 2009 at 30%, compared to 53% for colored children, and 85% for Indians, and 83% for whites, (Richeter, 1999). The proportion of African children under the age of 15 years with absent living fathers increased between 1996 and 2009 from 45% to 52%. There was also an increase for colored children (from 34% to 41%), and for white children (from 13% to 15%). The proportion of children with absent living fathers decreased only among Indians (from 17% to 12%). A rural-urban dimension was also evident, with 55% of African rural children under the age of 15 having absent living fathers compared to 43% of African children in urban areas, (Richeter, 1999).

Hamilton 1997 said that a father's child rearing differed from that of a mother and that it promoted achievement motivation. However it may differ in that not all children raised apart from their fathers exhibited low academic performance. Father absence is one of the major challenges facing families in the world today. It has been a major

concern because most fathers are away from their families due to either: death, employment, studies, divorce and separation among others. Most of these families where fathers are absent have children in secondary schools. The problem is that boys of these families look towards their fathers for role modelling to no avail.

In Kenya, despite significant progress made by Kenya in reducing gender gaps in school enrolment, considerable gender differences in performance remain. For instance, in the 2011 KCSE results, out of the top 100 students nationally, 34 were female compared to 66 male students. Similar results were mirrored at county level where only in three counties did girls outnumber boys in the top 10. The same trend was reflected for schools with only three of the top 10 schools being girls' schools. Similarly, just three of the top 10 students nationally were female students ranking fourth nationally (Odhiambo, 2012). These performance discrepancies translate to gender imbalances in transition to university and other tertiary institutions. In Meru it was found that girls outnumber boys in school attendance but boys outperform girls in KCSE (Karuti, 2013).

The boy child's academic performance in KCSE in Suneka Division has remained low over the years and is on a downward trend (sub-county Academic Committee Kisii south 2012). Table 1 shows the mean scores of the boys in the sub-county compared to others in the county for three years (2010 to 2012).

**Table 1 : Sub County mean scores for boys in KCSE in Kisii County from 2010 to 2012**

Year	Sub County mean			
	Gucha south	Gucha	Kisii central	Kisii south
2010	6.6	6.3	7.1	3.6
2011	6.4	6.3	6.5	3.4
2012	6.5	6.3	6.9	3.2
<b>Average mean in 3 yrs</b>	6.5	6.3	6.83	3.2

**Source: Kisii county education records**

The results showed that KCSE performance in Kisii south sub county stagnated over the three years and the sub county was last in all the three years and that it was the lowest in the county. Kisii Central remained the highest in the three years. Gucha had constant performance over the years which were relatively high (a mean of 6.3). These trends may be a result of several factors. These factors could only identified by conducting this study.

The current study was concerned with the boy child raised in father absent household and its effect on their academic performance. These

researches discussed were done many years ago. The time lapse may have seen some changes in the family set up .This study was to try to investigate current family setup, particularly father absent households and their effect on the boy child's academic performance. The area of study was Suneka division, Kisii South Sub-County, Kisii County found in Nyanza Region of Kenya, East Africa Region in the African Continent. This was because research findings by District Academic Committee Kisii south (2012) revealed that the academic performance of the boy child had remained low relative to other sub-counties within the county.

**Table 2: Sub County mean scores for girls in KCSE in Kisii County from 2010 to 2012**

Year	Sub County mean			
	Gucha south	Gucha	Kisii central	Kisii south
2010	4.6	4.3	5.1	3.8
2011	4.4	4.4	5.5	3.4
2012	4.5	4.8	5.8	4.0
<b>Average mean in 3 yrs</b>	4.5	4.5	5.5	3.7

**Source: Kisii county education records**

### **The Statement of the Problem**

Father absence is one of the major challenges facing families in the world today. In Kenya it is equally a rampant phenomenon as most studies indicate. Munini 2010 showed that single parenthood had influenced preschool children in their academic performance. Okero, 2014 in his study on *'The influence of father absence on locus of control and academic performance among secondary school students in Kisii Central'*; found that boys whose fathers were absent performed poorly in their academic work compared to those whose fathers were present in the region.

It has been a major concern because most fathers are away from their families due to either: employment, studies, divorce and separation among others. Divorce, death, abandonment and alcoholism are all forms of absence, which nevertheless affect children's development differently whereby Suneka Division in Kisii County was not an exception. The age at which children lose their father is significant since it influences their perception of males and females, the world as well as their emotional, social and academic advancement (Krohn&Bogan, 2001).

In the mid-nineteenth century, fathers increasingly moved out of home for economic reasons. The same case applies in Suneka Division Kisii County where men move out to look for employment as well as do business to meet their needs. Men came to spend less and less time in a parental role as they came to be seen primarily as economic

providers for the family (Griswold, 1993). A major consequence of this shift was a change in role from being active and present dominant influence in the family to being physically absent and intermittent dominant influence. Fathers lost the regular opportunity to parent, while children suffered the loss of their fathers. For growth and development of a child's personality, it is desirable for both parents to be around. Children emulate the behaviour of the parent they identify with, usually of similar gender (Gohm et al. 1998). Thus, role learning for a son will be more difficult if the father is absent from home. Fathers' absence from the home creates tensions, family break-ups, disciplinary and motivation problems, which affect children's academic progress (Gohm, 1998). The study by the Sub county education Committee Kisii South 2012 indicated that the boy child's academic results were very low and were on a downward trend over the years.

Most of these families where fathers are absent have children in secondary schools which would have contributed to the downward trend in performance. This would be a similar case for Suneka Division, Kisii County. Boys from these families look towards their fathers for role modelling to no avail. The boy child's academic performance in KCSE in Suneka Division had remained low over the years and was on a downward trend. This study was set to ascertain the effects of father absent households on the academic performance of the boy child in KCSE in Suneka Division, Kisii County.



### Objectives of the Study

- i. To find out the grades scored in KCSE by boys whose fathers had died in Suneka Division, Kisii County.
- ii. To find out the grades scored in KCSE by boys whose fathers were away because of studies in Suneka Division, Kisii County.
- iii. To determine the scores of boys whose parents were divorced in Suneka Division, Kisii County.
- iv. To ascertain the academic performance of boys whose fathers were away due to employment in Suneka Division, Kisii County.

### Literature Review

#### Divorced Parents

Other studies support the notion that children in divorced single-mother households perform lower on educational measures and have lower levels of educational success (Biblarz&Gottainer, 2000) than other forms of singleness. Although the results tend to lean towards lower educational outcomes for children with divorced mothers, still remains open for further examination due to findings that suggest that children with widowed mothers fare worse in terms of educational achievement.

At its core, the fatherhood crises stemmed from the physical disappearance of fathers from families (Horn, 2002). Two major demographic trends had contributed to the rise in father absence including the increase in divorce rates and the increase in unwed childbearing. The divorce rates in the United States remained the highest in the world

with an estimated 40 to 50% of all marriages ending in separation or divorce (Horn, 2002). Such statistics affected approximately one million children each year. The latter part of the twentieth century saw a dramatic upsurge in unwed childbearing. After remaining below five percent for decades, the proportion of births that occurred out of wedlock rose to 600 percent from 1960 to 2000 (Kalb et al., 2001). A significant portion of research has been devoted towards understanding the way in which parental separation, specifically father loss, impacts on the educational attainment of boys and girls, whether in similar or different ways.

The United States was becoming an increasingly fatherless society ( Horn, 2002). The decline of fatherhood was one of the most basic and unexpected trends of their time (Popenoe, 1996a). Blankenhorn (1995) stated that the decline of fatherhood was the most harmful demographic trend of that generation. As stated by President George W. Bush in June, 2001 at the National Fatherhood's 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit on Fatherhood, he said that over the past four decades, fatherlessness had emerged as one of their greatest social problems. Children who grew up with absent-fathers could suffer lasting damage. They were more likely to end up in poverty, drop out of school, became addicted to drugs, had a child out of wedlock or ended up in prison. Fatherlessness was an important factor in these things (Horn, 2002).

More positive father-child relationships were associated with reduced risk of engagement in multiple risky behaviours. Even though having a father with an authoritarian parenting style was associated with an increased risk of engaging in delinquent activity and substance use, the negative effect of authoritarian parenting was reduced when there was a positive father-adolescent relationship. Permissive parenting style also predicted less risky behaviour when the father-child relationship was positive. The positive influence of the father-child relationship on risk behaviours appeared to be stronger for male than for female adolescents (Carrano, 2006).

In Sweden individuals with divorced parents during childhood had significantly lower educational attainment in adulthood (level and field of education combined with logged annual earnings in adulthood); about one year less of schooling compared to individuals whose parents did not separate during childhood (Bjorklund&Undstrom, 2005). It was also found that children with absent fathers had lower educational attainment, were more likely to drop out of school, and had lower academic aspirations than children from father present homes (Murray &Sandqvis, 1990). Australian children with divorced parents also ended their schooling nearly one year earlier than children with married parents (Evans et al., 2001).

A study revealed that youths who had experienced divorce, separation or a non-union birth had

significantly higher levels of behavioural problems in school than did youth who had always lived with both biological parents. In contrast, youth living in stepfamilies or single-parent families were both more susceptible to school-related behavioural problems than youth who had always lived with both biological parents (Tillman, 2007).

Studies also indicated that students living in father-absent homes were twice as likely to repeat a grade in school; 10 percent of children living with both parents had ever repeated a grade, compared to 20 percent of children in stepfather families and 18 percent in mother-only families (Nord, 2001). Students in single-parent families or stepfamilies were significantly less likely than students living in intact families to have parents involved in their schools. About half of students living in single-parent families or stepfamilies had parents who were highly involved, while 62 percent of students living with both their parents had parents who were highly involved in their schools (Nord, 2001).

Horn, (2002) indicated that children who lived absent from their biological fathers were, on average, at least two to three times more likely to be poor, to use drugs, to experience educational problems, than those who lived with their married, biological or adoptive parents. They were also likely to engage in alcohol and drug abuse (Kalb et al., 2001). Lack of both parents equally led to adolescent pregnancy and childbearing (Barber, 2000 &Kalb et al., 2001), juvenile delinquency (Kalb et al., 2001), mental illness (Kalb et al., 2001), and suicide (Biller, 1974) were also the

outcome when the father was absent. Alongside the growing numbers of absent-fathers in our society, some people were asking its impact to the boy child. That's why the current study was conducted to ascertain the impact of absent father on academic performance of the boy child. The reason was that there was deteriorating academic performance of boy in the area of study and no research had been conducted on what caused it.

Flouri, Buchanan & Bream (2002) studied the involvement of absent-fathers in their children's attitude towards education. They found that involvement of fathers not residing with the child in the child's school increased the child's positive attitudes towards school. The researchers concluded that father involvement could be a protective agent for children to shield them from failing in school.

### Research design

This study employed descriptive research design technique. Descriptive research design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect information which described the current status of the population with respect to one or more variables (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999).

### Research Instruments

Data was collected using questionnaires for: students, guidance and counselling teachers and principals' interview guide. Questionnaires are tools of data collection which provide comparable data from all subjects since the same questions

must be asked. Questionnaires were most suitable research instrument for descriptive research design.

### Results and Discussion

The student population was analysed and presented in the table as shown:

**Table 3 : The student population**

School	No. of boys	No. of girls
Botoro Secondary	150	90
Gesero Secondary	180	120
ItiboElck Boys	80	0
Kiabusura Secondary	98	50
Itierio Boys	872	0
Igonga secondary	200	80
Isamwera secondary	150	100
Ekerubo secondary	150	90
Iruma secondary	350	100
Bogitaa secondary	70	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>2300</b>	<b>700</b>

### Causes of Father Absent Households in Suneka Division, Kisii County

The data was obtained using questionnaires for students, guidance and counselling teachers and an interview guide for principal to schools and with the help of the guidance and counselling teachers and the principals, boys with father absent were identified and issued with questionnaires . The findings which showed various indicators of father absent households and the academic performance of the boy child from these homes were discussed in this chapter. The results were presented in this section using descriptive statistics, frequency tables and percentages and they were organized on the basis of the objectives of the study.

**Table 5: Grades scored by boys whose fathers were present in Suneka division, Kisii County**

Grades	No. of respondents	%
A	2	0.71
B	100	35.71
C	150	53.57
D	20	7.14
E	08	2.86
<b>Total</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>100</b>

In total 280 boys were interviewed. Grade A was scored by 2; those who scored B were 100, grade C was scored by 150; while grade D and E had 20 and 8 respectively. This showed that majority of these boys scored grade quality grades A to grade C; those who scored grade D and E was 28 out of a total of 280.

#### **Absent fathers due to divorce and separation**

The objective sought to determine the scores of boys who were staying with their mothers because their parents were divorced in Suneka Division, Kisii County. Some of the parents divorced when the boys were very young while others divorced when they were old enough in upper primary or secondary school. The scores of boys whose parents had divorced were summarized in table 7.

**Table 7: Grades scored by boys whose fathers were away due to divorce in Suneka division, Kisii County**

Grades	No. of respondents	%
A	0	0
B	5	10
C	20	40
D	10	20
E	15	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

The findings showed that the boys whose parents had divorced were 50. Their scores were as follows: grade A had none; grade B had 5 which was 10%. Those who scored grade C were 20 while grade D and E were 10 and 15 respectively. The highest number scored grade C with 20 boys out of 50 which translated to 40%. This was followed by grade E with 15 boys out of 50 which were 30%; and the lowest scored grade was B with 5 equivalents to 10%. These boys reported that they had various challenges like lack of school fees, lack of enough revision materials, and lack of motivation from parents and sometimes did a lot of work at home. These challenges made them not perform well however there were a few who said that these challenges made them work hard so that they would not remain in their situation forever. These were the boys who attained the high grade of B. Those who scored C said they would have scored higher if they had been motivated or if they had enough revision materials. Those whose parents were separated had the following scores as indicated in table 8;

**Table 8: Grades scored by boys whose mother and father had separated in Suneka division, Kisii County**

Grades	No. of respondents	%
A	0	0
B	50	16.1
C	80	25.8
D	100	32.3
E	80	25.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>100</b>

The findings in table 8 showed that boys who lived with their mothers because of separation did not score quality grades in exam. None of them scored grade A. Those who scored grade B were 50 out of a total of 310. Grade C was scored by 80 while those who scored D and E were 180. Most of the boys whose parents had separated said that they faced various challenges in school such as: lack of school fees, lack of enough revision materials and lack of motivation from their parents. Their mothers tried but their effort was limited. Those who scored grade B had their mothers struggle so hard and even sacrificed greatly to ensure that they remained in school. Occasionally mothers bought presents for them when they performed well or when they improved; this motivated them to work hard. These results showed that majority of these boys scored D and E, which was quite low.

When these boys were sent away for school fees, they could not catch up later own with the rest when they reported back. Form threes added that some of them opted to drop out of school due to lack of school fees; however others persevered through to form four. The other challenge they had was lack of revision materials as well as lack of books like the literature books and “fasihi” books in Kiswahili. Others lacked even tools to use in class like geometrical sets, calculators among others. These contributed to the poor grades in subjects that required these tools. This also reflected on their results in these subjects as shown in the table 9.

**Table 9: Grades in subjects that required the special tools for boys from father absent Households**

Grades	Mathematics Chemistry	Physics	
A	0	1	0
B	5	20	0
C	70	70	50
D	100	100	60
E	135	119	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>150</b>

The findings in table 9 showed that, in mathematics and physics no boy scored grade A. In mathematics 5 scored grade B, 70 scored C and 100 scored D while 135 scored grade E. Chemistry scored one A, 20 boys had B, 70 had C and D and E was scored by 100 and 119 respectively. Those who did physics were very few. Their grades were equally the lowest. None of the boys scored neither grade A nor B, theirs grade started at C with 50 boys. Those who scored grade D were 60 and 40 E. Besides the low grades obtained, the number of boys who took the subject was small, 150. Most of the boys feared it by saying that it was hard and therefore they had a negative attitude.

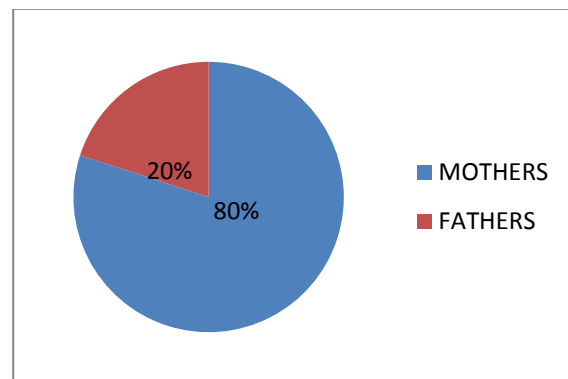
In cases of separation the fathers left the children with their mothers. According to Gusii culture, children are maternal hence they had to be with their mothers who were to take full charge including: monitoring of the academic performance, payment of fees, discipline issues and the general upbringing. Other student respondents, 25% did not know the reasons their fathers were not involved in their academic performance and general upbringing. When they inquired they were not told the reason by either their mothers or their fathers. Nobody was ready to

disclose the reason to the boys. This situation left the boys in a state of father hunger which led to various effects, such as behavioural problems, developmental deficits and depression. This in turn had effect on their academic performance and personal relationships (Wineburgh, 2000).

From the above views of respondents, it could be concluded that father absence was real in Suneka Division, Kisii County. A boy needed a father to model on. There were fathers who were chronic absentees and those who visited home frequently but were still absent in other aspects. Both had effects on the academic performance of the boy child. Mothers contributed a higher percentage to their son's academic performance. Most boys, (60%) reported lack of paternal guidance and counselling. In some cases the mothers did not fully provide the needs of their children so they ended up lacking essentials like textbooks, food among others. Even if their mothers paid fees, it was never paid on time. This led to them missing school in some instances as they were sent away for fees and books like the set books for languages.

Despite the negative outcomes reported, 40% of students who grew up with an absent father performed well, often due to the tremendous efforts of their mothers. In addition, many stepfathers or part-time fathers contributed to them in countless ways. Figure 3 shows the contribution of fathers and mothers to the academic performance of the boy child in Suneka Division Kisii County. These were drawn from the responses of students on the percentage

contribution of each parent to their academic performance.



*Figure 6: Contribution of parents to their boy children's academic performance in Suneka Division, Kisii County*

From the results in figure 6, mothers' contribution on the boy child's academic performance in Suneka Division was 80%. This was because they were mostly close to their children. They encouraged them, provided basic needs, paid fees, attended meetings in school and they went through their sons report forms. They also advised their sons on their academic progress and keenly looked into the weak areas and were able to chart the way forward. This helped in their improving academically. The father's contribution was 20% which was low compared to the mothers'. This was attributed to the fact that fathers were always away from home because of the reasons highlighted earlier.

The researcher found 80% of the boys to have reported that father absence made them lack school fees, lacked learning materials, their emotions were affected, had nobody to check on their academic performance, performed other duties that were



supposed to be performed by their fathers. Others got stressed because they missed their fathers. Wineburgh (2000) asserted that, the absenteeism of a father had a severe effect not only on the livelihood of a child but also their cognitive abilities. Children who never met or had very little contact with their fathers at an early age were left wondering why their fathers were not a part of their lives. They began to think that they were the ones to blame or were always questioning the reasons for their fathers' absence. Wineburgh (2000) came up with a term 'father hunger'. In cases of divorce, the boys were psychologically affected and did not want to mention their names of origin. This was because most of them stayed with their uncles, grandparents or step fathers where their mothers were married later on.

There were however, (5%) of respondents who reported positive aspect of father absence on the boy child's academic performance. Those who were away due to employment, business and studies paid fees for their sons on time from the money they earned. They also motivated their children by buying rewards for them when they performed well academically or when they improved. Whenever they visited home, they were loving and caring to the family and this motivated the children to work hard in school. These fathers assigned duties to their sons while they were away and kept following to find out whether it was done. They provided guidance and counselling to their children when they visited home or through phone calls. The children were also free to talk to their

fathers at any time. These fathers were role models to their children. They were present in their families though they were away physically; they were always in touch with their children and their academic progress. When all these were done, the respondents reported fair and good academic performance and also their level of discipline was high. Jones (2004) said that the academic performance and the hindrance of psychological separation affecting adolescent boys were compared between those who had a resident-father and non-resident fathers. When compared, adolescent males who lived in households with a resident-father were functioning more along the lines of normal development as opposed to those males who had a non-resident father. However those adolescent males who still maintained the same values and attitudes as their fathers were likely to perform at par academically with their peers.

The absence of a father had the following impact on the boy child's academic performance: Lack of school fees, Lack of role model, Lack of basic needs, given a lot of work at home, Lack of guidance and counselling, Lack of appreciation, Lack of motivation from fathers. These were then summarized in figure 7 below.

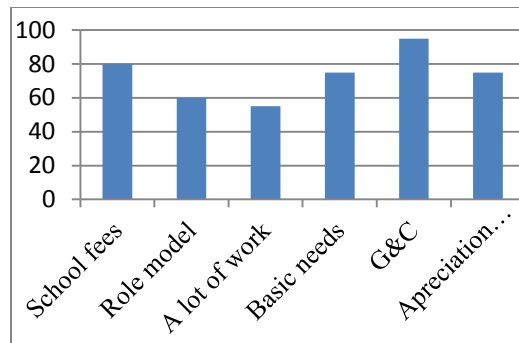


Figure 7: Impact of father absent households on the boy child in Suneka Division Kisii County

The results in figure 7 showed that, 80% of the respondents were affected in their academic performance by lack of school fees. Their fathers did not pay fees; a mother struggled to pay but was not enough and was never on time. This led to the boys being sent home from time to time; hence they missed a lot which in turn made them perform poorly in their academics. Those who lacked role models were 60%; they ended up struggling on their own. Sometimes they had to look to their teachers or the significant others who did not have enough time for them. These boys looked towards their fathers for role modelling to no avail, and this had effects on their academic performance.

Boys who did a lot of work at the expense of their academics work were 55%. Most of the work would have been done by their fathers; like: slashing around the compound, repairing the fence, tending cows among others. This work took most of their time that would have been for studying and doing assignments. When they settled down to study, they were already tired and did very little if any. When it came to exams they scored very low grades in KCSE because of shoddy preparations.

Respondents who lacked basic needs were 75%. What the mothers provided was not enough; while some did not have the means completely. The greatest percent of the respondents, 95%, cited lack of guidance and counselling from their fathers as an effect. This was because most fathers were never at home and those who were there did not care about the welfare of their children including their academic performance. There were also 75% of respondents who lacked appreciation. Whenever they performed well, they were never recognized, never praised or received any reward. This lowered their morale and self-esteem. They felt demotivated and this affected their academic performance in KCSE.

The impact of absent fathers is adverse on the academic performance of the boy child. To some extent this made the boy child to take up roles of their fathers at the expense of their academic performance. For progress in the academic performance, the presence of a father is very important. Fathers need to be involved in their children's academic performance. Mothers should simply come in to supplement what the fathers do; their contribution should not supersede that which fathers do. However, in cases where the fathers may not be available at all the mothers should support their children fully. Where possible assign their children father figures like uncles, grandfathers if present, male family friends or their male teachers. This will help the boy child to grow holistically and hence have a balance in their academic performance.

## **Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Summary**

The study was based on the causes of father absence.

### **Conclusion**

On the basis of the data analysed according to responses to research questions, which were in turn based on research objectives, the following were major conclusions. The phenomenon of father absence in Suneka Division, Kisii County is real. The absence of fathers was felt because of the responsibility placed on them by society.

The research deduced that father absence has had several effects on the academic performance of the boy child in KCSE in Suneka Division Kisii County. Topping the list is that boys from such families lacked the basic needs which would have enabled them settle in school. Most respondents reported that children from these homes did not have adequate role models and were affected psychologically which in turn affected their academic performance. This in turn affected their cognitive ability which had adverse effects on their academic performance. Those who reported positive outcome in father absent households were minimal compared to those who reported negative effects. This led to the conclusion that father presence would have great positive impact on the boy child's academic performance. Efforts should be made by all stake holders to try and eradicate the negative impact of father absence on the boy child's academic performance in Suneka Division,

Kisii County. From the responses it was clear that father absence could not be done away with completely. The phenomenon was there in the society and not much had been or could be done about it. This calls for strategies of coping with it through intensive sensitization and guidance and counselling programmes.

### **Recommendations**

Following findings of this research, the following recommendations were made in order to alleviate or reduce challenges being faced due to Father Absent Households in Suneka Division, Kisii County.

- i. The NGOs, community based organizations and schools should team up to campaign against father absent households by educating the boy child and sensitizing the community from time to time on the effects of father absence on the boy child's education in order to help modify their attitude towards the issue of father absence. This can be done by collaboration of the schools' guidance and counselling departments with stakeholders. In the community, it can be done through seeking audience in social meetings and gatherings like churches and sports gatherings.
- ii. The government through the Teachers Service Commission should deploy well trained and qualified counsellors in order to provide quality guidance and counselling services to the boy students who are affected by Father Absence

Households; in an effort to retain them in education system and also improve their academic performance.

- iii. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development should incorporate content on Father Absence Households in subjects like CRE, Social Studies and English through Poetry in schools in an effort to impart boys with knowledge on the phenomenon.
- iv. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with stakeholders should establish boy child empowerment programmes to help cope with father absence. This can be done through the establishment of culture days and clubs in schools to train the boy child in life skills. This will offer information on how to resist challenges that come from Father Absence.
- v. Father Absence' should be considered as one of the themes in either Drama or

Music Festivals or in both. This will help sensitize the nation on the Effects of Father Absence Households on the Academic Performance of the boy child, and ways of coping with it.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Based on the findings of this research, the following are suggestions for further research:

- i. Research should be carried out on the effects of Father Absent Households on the Academic Performance of the girl child in KCSE in Suneka Division, Kisii County.
- ii. A study should be carried out on the effects of Mother Absents Households on the psychosocial wellbeing of a child.
- iii. A similar study should be conducted in different sub-counties in the country especially in the other forty six counties to verify the existence of father absent households and its effects on the academic performance of the boy child.

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