

**EFFECTS OF DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS
STUDENTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN HABASWEIN SUB COUNTY,**

WAJIR COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The family being one of the most fundamental units of the society has a bearing on one's psychological, physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Negative patterns of parental behaviour tend to be dominant in their children's lives. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to find out the effects of dysfunctional families on secondary school students academic performance in Habaswein Sub County in Wajir County, Kenya. It specifically sought to determine the effects of parental conflicts, on the academic performance of secondary school students in the Sub County. The study was guided by Abraham Maslow's Theory of Needs and Burke's Identity Control Theory. Descriptive survey research design was used targeting 703 students and 72 teachers from public secondary schools in Habaswein Sub County. Systematic random sampling was used to obtain a sample size of 251 respondents who participated in the study. Data was collected by the researcher using questionnaires. Piloting of the questionnaires

was done in order to assess validity and reliability of the instruments. Instruments reliability was determined using the test-retest method and reliability coefficients of above 0.70 was obtained. Data was analyzed with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0. Descriptive statistics involving means, modes and standard deviations, and inferential statistical methods involving Pearson's Product Moment correlation and multiple regression analysis, was used to analyze the data, which was then presented in tables. The findings revealed that frequent parental conflicts in dysfunctional families adversely affected their children's academic performance in Habaswein Sub County. A good number of students hailing from such families eventually and often discontinued with school when their parents separated. It is recommended that education stakeholders in the area provide the schools with adequate counselling facilities so as to enable students experiencing conflict in their families to cope with the situation.

Key words: Home Socialization, Parental Guidance, Parental Conflicts, Public Secondary school, Students Academic

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Education contributes to economic growth of a country through creation of new knowledge, as well as, diffusion and transmission of knowledge. Highly educated individuals become influential people in the industry and society (Goodman & Gregg, 2010). As such the demand for education is increasing by the day for both the government and industry. The job opportunities once available to less educated individuals are becoming scarce as more employers are raising their employment standards. The demand for college graduates is high and persons with high school qualifications are being gradually replaced in the workplace. As the job market changes, individuals of all races and backgrounds should have the skills, education, and opportunities to compete at the same levels. This indicates why education has become increasingly important to future generations. The Kenyan Government has been of the view that education is the key to promoting economic, social and individual development and has made significant investments in this sector (Kimenyi, Mwabu & Manda, 2006).

Through strategic partnerships with stakeholders and its policy instruments, the country has over the years managed to achieve significant watersheds in, not only educating its populace to higher

levels, but also in developing and reforming the education sector. This has led to narrowing the gap in terms of access and affordability of education. Among the successes in the education sector, are the introduction of the Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 and the introduction of the Subsidized Secondary Education. The result has been the increase of enrolment to surging proportions and also reduction of drop outs. With these achievements under its belt, stakeholders are now focusing on addressing the aspect of quality education and ensuring improved academic performance of students, Ministry of education (2010).

Majority of students who proceed to secondary schools in Kenya annually fail massively with about, 60 per cent of those sitting the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations scoring below 49 per cent (C-) (Ministry of Education, 2010). These performance trends considerably reduce their chances of progressing with higher education and build more meaningful careers, thus, only few of the students attain post-secondary education, despite the huge resources spent on education. Concerning this latter aspect, research emphasis has largely been on school based factors with little being said on home-based factors such as the family type of the students. Students generally, at any given school setting, come from diverse backgrounds with marked socio-economic disparities. Evidently, the family being one of the most fundamental units of the society has a bearing on one's psychological, physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

The home environment ought to naturally provide a good matrix for the holistic development of the child. This may have a significant impact on the child's educational attainment. The environment within the family offers special learning conditions for the child and can thus positively improve the development. The home environment is very important especially for young children, and concrete activities for example, reading aloud are, very stimulating. It has been shown that a stimulating environment can affect the development even stronger than the socioeconomic origin (Espy, Molfese & DiLalla, 2001). This study, therefore, undertakes to examine the students academic performance through the dichotomy of healthy and dysfunctional family backgrounds.

Most families have some periods of time where functioning is impaired by stressful circumstances, such as, death in the family, a parent's serious illness, divorce, loss of household

income, violent parental conflict and prolonged substance abuse by a parent. Healthy families tend to return to normal functioning after the crisis passes. A dysfunctional family is a family in which conflict, misbehaviour, and often child neglect or abuse on the part of individual parents occurs continually and regularly, leading other members of the family to accommodate such actions. Family dysfunction can be any condition that interferes with a normal and healthy family functioning. In dysfunctional families, however, problems tend to be chronic and children do not consistently get their needs met. Children sometimes grow up in such families with the understanding that such an arrangement is normal. Dysfunctional families are primarily a result of co-dependent adults (Bancroft, 2002), and may also be caused by addictions, such as drug and substance abuse, or sometimes an untreated mental illness (George, Hansen & Schoon, 2007). Some dysfunctional parents may project their experiences with their own dysfunctional parents on their families, thus, emulating or over-correcting their experiences. In some set-ups, a "child-like" parent will allow the more aggressive parent to abuse their children (Harkness & Lumley, 2008). A common misperception of dysfunctional families is the mistaken belief that the parents are on the verge of separation and divorce. Unlike divorce, and to a lesser extent, separation, there is often no record of an "intact" family being dysfunctional. As a result, friends, relatives, and teachers of such children may be completely unaware of the situation. While this is true in a few cases, often the marriage bond is very strong as the parents' faults actually complement each other. In short, they have nowhere else to go. However, this does not necessarily mean that the family's situation is stable. Any major stressor, such as relocation, unemployment/underemployment, physical or mental illness and natural disasters can cause existing conflicts affecting the children to become much worse (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). In addition, a child may be unfairly blamed for the family's dysfunction, and placed under even greater stress than those whose parents separate.

Dysfunctional families have no social, financial or intellectual bounds. Nevertheless, until recent decades, the concept of a dysfunctional family was not taken seriously by professionals, such as, therapists, social workers, teachers, counsellors and clergy, especially among the middle and upper classes. Any intervention would have been seen as violating the sanctity of marriage and increasing the probability of divorce, which was socially unacceptable at the time. Historically, children of dysfunctional families were expected to obey their parents (ultimately the father), and to cope with the situation alone (Block & Krebs, 2005).

Family dysfunction is known to have adverse effects on the child's social skills. This may be both at home and at school. In dysfunctional families, negative patterns of parental behaviour tend to be dominant in their children's lives. When problems and circumstances such as parental alcoholism, mental illness, child abuse, or extreme parental rigidity and control interfere with family functioning, the effects on children can sometimes linger long after these children have grown up and left their problem families. Adults raised in dysfunctional families frequently report difficulties in forming and maintaining intimate relationships, maintaining positive self-esteem, and trusting others. They fear a loss of control, and deny their feelings and reality (Coohey, Renner, Hua, Zhang & Whitney, 2011).

Children of dysfunctional families, either at the time, or as they grow older, may also lack the ability to be playful, or childlike, and may grow up too fast (Brown, Fang & Florence, 2011). In many cases, some of the older children have their childhood abruptly interrupted and end up becoming surrogate parents for their siblings. This puts tremendous stress on the growing child who has to continue with inescapable quasi-parental duties, while coping with his /her education. Conversely they may grow up too slowly, or be in a mixed mode, such as, being well-behaved, but unable to care for themselves. They also have the tendency to manifest moderate to severe mental health issues, including possible depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts (The Sydney Morning Herald, 2010). Some become addicted to smoking, alcohol, and/or drugs, especially if parents or friends have done the same. Some of these children bully or harass others, or become easy victims thereof - possibly taking a dual role in different settings.

A good number of these children grow up in denial regarding the severity of the family's situation and have mixed feelings of love-hate towards certain family members. Some end up becoming sex offenders, possibly including pedophilia. Most of these children, as they grow up, have difficulties in forming healthy relationships within their peer group, usually due to shyness or a personality disorder. They tend to spend an inordinate amount of time alone watching television, playing video games, surfing the internet, listening to music, and other activities which lack in-person social interaction. Most of them often feel angry, anxious, depressed, isolated from others, or unlovable and may have speech disorders related to emotional abuse (Harkness & Lumley, 2008). They have a general distrust of other people or even have paranoia and become juvenile delinquents, easily turning to a life of crime - with or without dropping out

of school, and possibly enlisting as gang members as well. They have low self-esteem or a poor self-image with difficulty expressing emotions and struggle academically at school or their academic performance declines unexpectedly, among other things. The present study, therefore, seeks to take a closer look at the effects of family dysfunction on students academic performance in a selected context.

In public secondary schools in Wajir County, in the North Eastern part of the country, the academic performance of students has been dismal for the past five years with the mean scores ranging from D- to C- in nearly all schools. Table 1.1 shows the typical results of schools KCSE performance from 2010 to 2015 in Habaswein Sub County, Wajir County where the present study will be carried out.

Table 1 KCSE Performance of Secondary Schools in in Habaswein Sub County

Grade (Year)

School	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Hon Khalif Girls Secondary School	Y	D	D-	D	D+
Senior Chief Ogle Girls Secondary School	D	D+	D-	D	D+
Habaswein Mixed Day Secondary School	-	-	D	D+	C-
Ademasadija Mixed Day Secondary School	-	-	-	D	C-
Habaswein Boys Secondary School	D+	Y	D+	D+	C-

Source: County Education Office Wajir

It is evident from the data in Table 1.1 that the academic performance of secondary schools in KCSE in Wajir County has been unimpressive for quite a long time. These low performance levels may not secure them admission into most tertiary learning institutions to even pursue

diploma courses. This has been attributed to a number of factors but mostly school based factors like teachers' unwillingness to teach in the area and home-based factors such as the socio-economic status of the student's family and parents disposition towards education, especially when it comes to educating girls. However, previous researches have not successfully linked family dysfunction to students' academic performance. This study, therefore, will seek to examine dysfunctional families' characteristics and their effects on academic performance of students in secondary schools in Wajir County, Kenya. (MoEST County Education Office report 2017)

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Research suggests that family dysfunction can have a significant impact on child development, including its future educational prospects. The worrying performance of students in Kenya, especially, in high schools has not been linked with family dysfunction in spite of the fact that a considerable number of these students hail from families which can be characterized as dysfunctional. A number of families in Kenya that did not have both parents present was 55% and these families had a high likelihood of being dysfunctional. Characteristically, the secondary school cycle in Kenya involves students in their adolescent stage. Adolescents tend to be very sensitive to their environment as they undergo both physiological and psychological changes. Dysfunctions in the environment and especially the family can significantly change their view of the world and that of themselves and, subsequently, impact their decision making and performance in various tasks. Although the family environment remains critically important during late childhood and early adolescence, relatively little is known about how specific family interaction risks, in particular, parents' marital functioning, shape youths' academic functioning. Therefore, this served as motivation for the present study.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find out the effects of dysfunctional families on secondary school students academic performance in Habaswein Sub County, Wajir County, Kenya

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were;

- i. To assess the effects of parental quarrels on secondary school students academic performance in Habaswein Sub County, Wajir County.
- ii. To determine the effects of parental physical violence and its effect on secondary school students academic performance in Habaswein Sub County, Wajir County.
- iii. To assess the effects of parental separation on secondary school students academic performance in Habaswein Sub County, Wajir County.
- iv. To investigate where secondary students prefer to stay when conflicts at home become unbearable.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of a Dysfunctional Family

George, Hansen and Schoon (2007)) describe a dysfunctional family as a family experiencing conditions that adversely interfere with healthy family functioning. Characteristically, dysfunctional families are families that are unable to recover from the adversity and continue in the dysfunctional path for a prolonged period of time or totally fail to recover unlike healthy families. Children often hail from such backgrounds with the assumption that their experiences are normal despite the fact that the manifest maladaptive behaviour in the general society, such as, the school setting.

In the latter half of the twentieth century in almost all industrialized countries, increasing proportions of children have experienced family dysfunction, with divorce replacing parental death as the main cause. These trends have, in many countries, provoked concern because correlational evidence suggests that the changes are associated with disadvantages for the children involved. Most research on family dysfunction and its consequences come from the United States, however, evidence from several nations has demonstrated that, on average, children who experience family dysfunction fare poorly across a wide range of adolescent and adult outcomes, including educational attainment, economic security, and physical and psychological well-being (Amato and Keith 1991a, 1991b; McLanahan and Sandefur 1994; Rogers and Pryor 1998; Sigle-Rushton and McLanahan 2004).

Although many outcomes have been linked to family structure in childhood, the association between family dysfunction and educational attainment may be especially important. Poor educational outcomes may initiate processes that lead to other kinds of disadvantages and contribute to persistent differences in physical and psychological health, relationship stability and economic well-being (Educational Statistics Norway, 2005) later in adulthood.

Previous research has shown that there exists developmental differences of children from different social classes (Ermisch, 2008). For instance, a British Cohort Study established that children are already stratified by social class in a standard test of intellectual and personal development at 22 months and this stratification becomes even more extreme in later years (Feinstein, 2003). He also finds that having a low rank at an early age does not matter greatly for a child's future position in the distribution unless the child is low in SES as well. As a result, Feinstein argues that controlling for SES, the preschool score, still matters. Nonetheless, as well as, influencing early ability, family background plays a tremendously important role in determining the continued ability development of UK children. These differences even rise through the years (Feinstein, 2003). He concludes that this leads to a strong advantage of early intervention programmes. However, these programmes are likely to be very expensive.

Many studies have been done on the correlation of family structure and educational attainment. Some, particularly, examined the effect of family structure on high school graduation rate. For example, Boggess (1998) found that living in a mother-headed household or a stepfather-mother family has a negative effect on education levels due to a decreased level of resources. However, when controlled for economic status, it was established that the effect of these types of households on education is not significant. While income and available resources seem to outweigh the family structure variable in this study, living in a single-headed family is likely to be the cause for the lower economic status. Garasky's (1995) findings also show that family structure impacts children differently depending on the age of the children. The first few years of a child's life are the most important to have a stable family structure. However, as a child ages, the type of family structure becomes less critical to the child's educational attainment. They receive more of their education outside of the home, in schools. Hence, family structure is less critical in determining the level of education attained by older children. In addition, children's age affects how they handle experiences. Consequently, as children mature, they are better

equipped to handle divorces, separations, and the experiences of living in single headed households.

A study by Yongmin (2011) on the effects of family structure type and stability on children's academic performance trajectories, examined data from more than 8,000 children to compare academic growth from kindergarten to fifth grade among three types of traditional families and three alternative forms. The study evaluated a combination of factors — structure, transitions, family financial and social resources, and child outcomes — at various points in time. The study established that; consistent with some previous research, children in non-disrupted single-parent and disrupted two-biological-parent families saw slower academic growth relative to both non-disrupted two-biological-parent and non-disrupted stepfamilies. It also established that non-disrupted single-parent families that had structural stability saw academic benefits for children over time compared to unstable alternative families with multiple disruptions. Income and parental education at the time children began kindergarten had significant and positive relationships with a child's growth in mathematics, while slower academic progress in alternative and disrupted families was either “completely or partially attributable to a shortage of financial, human, and parenting resources in these families” at the time of kindergarten. Finally, controlling for resource levels at the time of kindergarten, the differences between traditional and most types of alternative families were reduced to a “non-significant level.” Only disrupted families with multiple transitions continued to show a less positive performance trajectory. However, most of these studies have involved younger children and the effects of the family dysfunction phenomenon on the academic performance of the adolescent in high-school have yet to receive considerable research attention.

2.2 Parental Conflicts and Children's Academic Performance

In families where there are high levels of conflicts and animosity between parents, children are at a greater risk of developing emotional, social and behavioural problems, as well as, difficulties with concentration and educational achievement. Frequent and intense conflict or fighting between parents also has a negative impact on children's sense of safety and security which affects their relationships with their parents and with others. Parental conflict that focuses on children is also linked to adjustment problems, particularly when children blame themselves for

their parents' problems.' Good quality parenting', that is parenting that provides structure, warmth, emotional support and positive reinforcement, has been found to reduce the impact of conflict (Hobcraft, 2000).

According to Afifi and Macmillan (2011), parental separation often initially leads to an increase in parental conflict and anger, although for some families the level of conflict reduces when parents do not see each other regularly. The level of conflict between parents usually reduces significantly in two to three years after separation, although it remains high in approximately ten per cent of families. Research has found that following separation and divorce, children from affected families are twice as likely to have emotional, social, behavioural and academic problems compared to children from families that are still together (Dalgard 2007). However, this may not be the case in all families. The increased risk of poor adjustment in children may partly be due to high conflict and other problems in the family before the separation. This may affect the child/ren's ability to cope with the separation. High levels of conflict and ill feelings between parents following separation has also been found to have a negative impact on children's adjustment following their parents' separation.

The type of post-separation conflict that has been found to have the worst effect on children is that which occurs when parents use children to express their anger and hostility. Children who are placed in the middle of their parents' dispute (by either parent) are more likely to be angry, stressed, depressed or anxious, and have poorer relationships with their parents than children who are not used in this way (Krokstad, Kunst & Westin, 2002) as cited by Steele (2009). In school, the effects of the background of the student may be manifested in different forms such as loss of concentration, shyness, aggressiveness, lack of confidence, withdrawal and even having abnormal affections for certain individuals or objects. All these may result in impaired academic performance of the child. For adolescents-most of who happen to be high school students-though, the effects of inter-parental conflict can be more pronounced as they are also grappling with other emotional challenges concerned with discovering their true identity.

The types of parental behaviours that have been identified as being highly problematic are: asking children to carry hostile messages to the other parent, asking children intrusive questions about the other parent creating a need in the child/ren to hide information, creating a need for the

child/ren to hide positive feelings for the other parent, and demeaning or putting down the other parent in the presence of the child/ren. Children should feel able to talk openly about their lives to both parents, but not feel obliged to do so. They should also feel safe when expressing their feelings regardless of which parent they are with. Children who blame themselves for their parents' fighting have also been found to be at greater risk of poor social and emotional adjustment following their parents' separation (Kelly, 2012). The risks to child development associated with exposure to family violence do not necessarily stop following their parents' separation due to the ongoing risk of family violence and its impact on parenting practices. Other factors identified as having a negative impact on how children adjust following their parents' separation include: the psychological adjustment of the parent/s after separation the quality and type of parenting received by the child/ren. In addition, the nature of the relationship between parent/s and the child/ren, the loss of important relationships changes in family structures, such as parents re-partnering and a reduction in financial resources also affect child development.

Characterized as a risk factor, inter-parental conflict that is hostile, intense, and unresolved has been associated with maladaptive outcomes such as increased youth problem behaviours and diminished closeness in parent-child and sibling relationships (Buehler et al.1997; Grych et al., 2004). Previous research focusing on academic outcomes have suggested that adolescents who experience interparental conflict are more likely to demonstrate lower academic achievement, although not all studies have found significant effects. Thus, interparental conflict can be considered a stressor, wherein youth who experience higher levels of interparental conflict are more likely to experience negative outcomes. However, acknowledging the link between an interparental conflict stressor and specific maladaptive outcomes does not explain how interparental conflict is associated with negative youth outcomes. This leads to the question, do some children have advantages that are not available to other children with differing backgrounds? In educational and economic studies, it has been found that background variables including family income, family type, family size, and parents' education are determinants of the amount and quality of education children receive over their lifetime. It is evident that familial and parental factors can either benefit or harm the chances of children receiving an education and excelling in a scholastic environment. Nevertheless, child factors such as age, social networks, aptitude and emotional stability may also have their own effects in his scholastic achievement.

Cardiff University (2005) carried out a family study in South Wales, to assess the long-term impact of inter-parental conflict and parent-child relationships on children's emotional, behavioural and academic development among high school students. Their findings suggested that the quality of relations between parents, not only affects children's long-term emotional and behavioural development, but also affects their long-term academic achievement. In particular, the study established that family factors exert a real influence on children's emotional and behavioural problems, as well as, their academic achievement. The study also revealed that children living in a family environment marked by frequent, intense and poorly resolved conflicts between parents are at greater risk for deficits in academic achievement than children living in more positive family environments.

Researchers, Thapar, Harold, Rice, Langley and O'Donovan (2007) found that the way in which children understood the conflicts between their parents had different effects on their emotional and behavioural problems. Where children blamed themselves for the conflicts between their parents, they were more likely to have behavioural problems, such as anti-social behaviour. But if their parents' fighting or arguing led to a child feeling threatened, or fearful that the family would split up, the child was more likely to experience emotional problems, such as depression. According to the researchers, the impact of everyday conflict between parents on their children's behaviour and mental health is driven by how the children understand the problems in the relationship, as well as, the nature of the conflict itself. These disagreements include; hostile relationships between parents, poor parenting practices, negative parent-child relationships and maternal depression. The research also found that girls may be at higher risk for depression when their parent's relationship is hostile or there is a negative mother-child relationship. Depressive symptoms displayed by daughters resulted in increases in parent-to-child hostility from both mothers and fathers. This could perhaps explain why the dropout rates among school-going girls in certain communities in the developing world were higher than that of boys.

Thus, it is evident that parental conflict has a considerable impact on the child well-being; his psychological make-up and socialization. These left unaddressed could be problematic in the future and affect the child's behavioural patterns, sense of good judgment and ultimately his/her performance in several undertakings. Since the child is entitled to education and good education could help break the pattern of failure in the individual, it will be important to examine how

parental conflict interferes with the child's academic performance, especially at the adolescent stage where he/her is in high school.

2.3 Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Abraham Maslow's theory is the most influential in understanding the learners' basic needs. These basic needs are essential in helping the learners to perform. According to this theory, there are certain minimum requirements that are essential to decent standards of living which are known as physiological needs (Kendrick et al., 2010). These include food, shelter, health and clothing. They are primary needs and have to be catered for before other needs such as security and shelter, sense of belonging and affection, love, esteem and finally self-actualization, are pursued. It is expected that in line with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, when needs are met or fulfilled, learners are generally happy and contented. When the atmosphere at home and in school is conducive, learning goes on smoothly and the learner can attain his goals in education to the maximum desirable limits. The reverse is true in that when needs are not met or fulfilled, there is discontentment (Tay & Dienar, 2011). This theory will provide insight on the developmental needs of the learner, such as, material needs, emotional needs and social needs which are normally provided in the context of the family. These were examined for their effects on academic achievement of the learner hailing from a dysfunctional family set up where the learner is deprived of these needs.

2.4 Identity Control Theory

Identity Control Theory is a theory in sociology concerned with the development of personal identity. The theory advanced by Burke (2007), aims at explaining nature of peoples' identities in relation to their behaviour within a social structure. An individual's identity is rooted in their social structure. The basis of creating the Identity Control Theory was on the traditional interaction between people and their behaviour and how those behaviours shaped the individual's identity. Identity Control Theory entails an individual's identity and the feedback of their identities from those around them. Under the Identity Control Theory, individuals display a particular behaviour based on approval or disapproval of others. Individuals may change their opinions about themselves and their identity if they do not like the responses given by others in order to achieve a positive outcome. This theory advances the notion that lack of proper social

systems and control within a community organization, may lead to emergence of deviant behaviours and failure to achieve certain set goals. Its control aspect maintains that all people are capable of violating the laws and norms that modern society presents many opportunities for all immoral and illegal activities to take place (Burke, 2007). In the case of children from dysfunctional families, it is clear that their social matrix has already been eroded at home and regaining it is not guaranteed. However, they have more control over the identity they choose to assume, especially during their adolescent years when they are in high school. In other words, the way they choose to identify themselves with their predicaments is expected to play a big role in determining their academic achievements. This theory will also provide some theoretical perspective on how the experiences of the student in a dysfunctional family eventually modifies his/her behaviour within social groups and its ultimate effect on his/her academic performance.

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory and the Identity Control Theory will provide insights into the psycho-social needs of the child progressing along the educational ladder and the identity he/she assumes as a result of his/her experiences in a dysfunctional family set up.

3.0 Research Design

The study used descriptive survey research design. A descriptive survey research design involves the selection of a sample of respondents and administering questionnaires or conducting interviews to gather information on variables of interest. In a survey design, information is collected from respondents about their experiences and opinions about a particular topic under study in order to generalize the findings to the population that the sample is intended to represent (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). This design is the most appropriate for obtaining factual and attitudinal information or for research questions about self-reported beliefs, opinions, characteristics and present or past behaviours. The suitability of the design to this study is in the sense that the researcher sought to obtain descriptive and self-reported information on the effects of dysfunctional families on secondary schools students' academic performance in Wajir County Kenya.

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Parental Conflicts and Students' Academic Performance in Habaswein Sub County

The study's first objective was to assess the effects of parental conflicts on secondary school students' academic performance in Habaswein Sub County. To measure the influence of this objective, the school principals, guiding and counseling teachers as well, other teachers and students were asked to respond to several statements pertaining to parental conflicts among secondary school students'. A 5 point Likert scale was used to rate responses of this variable and it ranged from; 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The following subsections presents and discuss findings from the school principals, teachers and students, respectively, regarding this variable. This section as well as the subsequent sections have treated the responses from principal, guiding and counseling teachers as well as other teachers as one group (teachers) and students as another group.

3.1.2 Principals' and teachers views on parental conflicts and students' performance

Table 2 Teachers Views on Parental Conflicts and Students' Performance

	SA	A	N	D	SD
Statement	Freq(%)	Freq(%)	Freq(%)	Freq(%)	Freq(%)
A good number of students I teach often come to school stressed citing physical violence between their parents	2(9)	15(68)	3(14)	1(5)	1(5)
Some students also say that their parents quarrel a lot at home, hence, they cannot have peace in their homes	9(41)	9(41)	1(5)	2(9)	1(5)
Some of the students in our school prefer staying in school rather than home due to parental conflicts	3(14)	11(50)	5(23)	2(9)	1(5)

Some of the students in our school prefer staying with their friends and relatives rather than home due to parental conflict	8(36)	13(59)	1(5)	0	0
Some of the students complain about their parents violent behaviour and ended up being raised by one parent	2(9)	16(73)	4(18)	0	0
Some of the students have been forced to discontinue with school due to parental separation	11(50)	8(36)	3(14)	0	0
Some students under the care of a step parent often perform poorly citing stress in their lives due to conflict between their parents	10(46)	12(54)	0	0	0

The school principals, class teachers and guiding and counselling teachers from secondary schools in the area were first asked to give their views concerning the effects of parental conflicts on students’ academic performance. The findings are presented in Table 2.

The results in Table 2 indicate that, the respondents strongly agree that, students often come to school stressed citing physical violence between their parents as indicated by the principals and teachers (77%). Most (82%) reported that their students also told them that their parents quarrelled a lot at home, hence, they had no peace in their homes. As such, some of the students in the schools preferred staying in school rather than home due to parental conflicts (64%), however, almost all students from dysfunctional families seemed to prefer staying with their friends and relatives rather than home due to parental conflict (95%). It also emerged that some of the students complaining about their parents violent behaviour ended up experiencing family break-up and being raised by one of the parents (82%). Quite a number of these had reportedly been forced to discontinue with school due to parental separation (86%). Other findings suggest that there was unanimous (100%) agreement among the principals and teachers that some of

students under the care of a step parent often perform poorly citing stress in their lives due to conflict between their parents.

3.1.3 Students’ Views on Effects of Parental Conflicts on Their Academic Performance

The students of secondary schools in the area were also asked to rate statements describing the effects of parental conflicts on their academic performance. The findings are summarized in Table 3. The findings in Table 3 suggest that most students agree that, their parents often quarrel in their presence and this affected their concentration in their studies (56%). However, the physical violence between the student’s parents did not necessarily force the students to flee from their homes (47%). Most (86%) of the students preferred staying in the school rather than home due to parental conflicts. A similar number of students (87%) from dysfunctional families preferred staying with their friends and relatives rather than home due to parental conflicts. Majority (55%) of the students claimed that the separation of their parents greatly affected their concentration in school work. Other findings indicated that most (44%) of the students received threats when they tried to intervene in their parents’ conflicts and this placed them under a lot of stress.

Table 3 Students’ Views on Effects of Parental Conflicts on their Academic Performance

SA	A	N	D	SD	
Statement	Freq(%)	Freq(%)	Freq(%)	Freq(%)	Freq(%)
My parents often quarrel in my presence and makes me lose concentration in my studies	44(22)	67(34)	54(27)	17(9)	16(8)
My parents at times get physically violent with each other forcing us to flee from our home	19(10)	49(25)	20(10)	92(47)	18(9)
I prefer staying in our school rather than	83(42)	87(44)	12(6)	4(2)	11(6)

home due to parental conflicts					
I prefer staying with their friends and relatives rather than home due to parental conflict	78(39)	94(48)	8(4)	6(3)	11(6)
The separation of my parents greatly affected my concentration in school work	68(34)	42(21)	24(12)	32(16)	31(16)
At times one of my parents threatens me when I try to intervene when they have conflict and this places me under a lot of stress	30(15)	58(29)	57(29)	25(13)	27(14)

It is evident from the findings of the parents and students' views that first, most of the students hailed from families characterized by verbal conflict among parents than physical violence. This made the students home environment quite stressful for them and even affecting their concentration in class. Further, in cases of parental separation, some students entire academic life was interrupted as they opted to drop out of school altogether. Thus, it is quite evident that parental conflict was impacting negatively on the student's academic performance. These findings concur with previous research findings by Steele (2009) who found that children who are placed in the middle of their parents' dispute (by either parent) are more likely to manifest loss of concentration, shyness, aggressiveness, lack of confidence, withdrawal and even having abnormal affections for certain individuals or objects in school leading to poor academic performance. Similar findings were also arrived at by Long et al., (1987) and Unger et al., (2000) whose study focus was on adolescents who experience interparental conflict. Their studies established that adolescents with such family backgrounds were more likely to demonstrate lower academic achievement. Further, the finding on the effect of parental separation as a result of conflict on the academic performance of the student agrees with Yongmin-Sun, et al (2011) study which revealed that parental separation resulting from conflict and the subsequent changes in family structure type and stability affected children's academic performance trajectories.

The study also carried out a correlation analysis to determine whether parental conflicts significantly affected secondary school students’ academic performance in Habaswein Sub County. The results are given in Table 4

Table 4 Correlation Results for Parental Conflicts on Students’ Academic Performance

		Parental Conflict	Academic Performance
Parental Conflict	Pearson Correlation	1	-.551**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	218	.000
	N		218

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results in Table 4 suggest that parental conflicts significantly affected secondary school students’ academic performance in Habaswein Sub County ($r = - 0.551, p = .000$). further, the result indicates that the relationship was strong and negative relationship implying that increases in levels of parental conflict were very likely to lead to poor academic performance among the secondary school students. This finding supports those of Dalgard et al. (2007) and Krokstad et al., (2002) as cited by Steele (2009) who found that conflict among parents and the resultant separation and divorce, led to academic problems among children from dysfunctional families compared to children from families that are still together

3.2 Summary of the Findings

With regard to the effects of parental conflicts on secondary school students’ academic performance in Habaswein Sub County, the findings revealed that a good number of students often come to school stressed citing physical violence between their parents as indicated by the principals and teachers. The lack of peace at home due to the frequent quarrels made most students prefer staying away from home most of the time with most opting to stay with friends and relatives or in the school compound. It also emerged that some of the students whose parents

often engaged in violent behaviours towards each other at home ended up experiencing family break-up and were eventually raised by one of the parents. Quite a number of these students were later forced to discontinue with schooling due to parental separation. The findings also revealed that some of students under the care of a step parent tended to perform poorly owing to stress in their lives due to conflict between their parents.

3.4 Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, it was established that frequent parental conflicts in dysfunctional families adversely affects their children's academic performance in Habaswein Sub County. In particular, stressful home environment characterized by physical violence and frequent quarrels between the students and the parents often result in lack of peace at home causing most students to prefer staying away from home and often opting to stay with friends and relatives or in the school compound. A good number of students hailing from such families eventually discontinued with school when their parents separate.

3.5 Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn with regard to the study findings. The education stakeholders in the area should seek to provide the schools with adequate counselling facilities so as to enable students experiencing conflict in their families cope with the situation and not feel their plight is neglected.

3.6 Suggestions for Further Study

The effect of dysfunctional families on their children's future orientation

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