The perceived challenges undermining the transition of preadolescent boy- child into adulthood in Juja Sub- County, Kiambu, Kenya: An Action Focused Survey

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Abstract

The parents, faith based organizations, government departments, researchers, media and communities in Kenya are concerned about the status of the boy child as reflected in the declining performance in national exams, school dropout, engagement in drugs and substance abuse, crimes, unlawful gangs and child labour. This study was conducted with the objective of establishing the root causes of the perceived challenges facing the preadolescent boy child. The study used descriptive research design. Data was collected using in-depth interview. The study targeted 300 boys aged 6-14 years. Purposive sampling was applied and collected data analysed qualitatively in prose to ensure the accuracy of the participants' information. The study revealed that the boy-child has challenges in the family, school and community. In schools the boy-child challenges include; weak school bonding, neglect by teachers and school administrators, declining academic performance, harsh disciplinary measures compared to the girl child, teachers negative attitude toward the boy-child. In the community; negative attitude toward the boy- child, retrogressive cultural values, harsh disciplinary measures compared to the girl- child, failure for leaders to implement the children law and policies in defence of the boy-child. The study revealed that there is no gap in legislations and policies concerning the boy-child welfare but limited enforcement of law and policies in protecting the boy-child. Study recommend initiation of affirmative actions to create awareness of the emerging challenges of the boy-child in our modern society, early intervention programs to address boy-child challenges from the preadolescent stage of development, empowerment fathers on effective mentorship of the boy-child, strengthening the family unit at the immediate environment that nurtures the boy- child and collaboration with media, faith based organizations, education institutions, national and county governments in enhancing the well being of the boy-child. Further studies can be conducted on challenges of the boy- child during early, mid and late adolescence, the perception of community about the Boy- Child as gender and role of faith based organization in the mentorship of the Boy- child.

Key words: Perception, Challenges, Transition, Preadolescent boy-child, Adulthood

INTRODUCTION

The place of the boy child and man in the society is changing at a frenetic pace. When we see drunken men lying along the roadsides, hear stories of men buttered by women, hear of men abusing their children, committing suicide, homicide and crimes, one

thing becomes evident that all started from the roots. The men related challenges in our contemporary Kenya are a manifestation of a flawed system that requires urgent multidimensional interventions. The plain truth is that the current crises facing the boy-child need to be perceived as a national crisis that requires well thought, practical and scientifically researched interventions. It is time to accept the fact that a functional society requires both functional men and women. The country must retrace root of the imbalance to be able to come up with strategies of stabilizing the boy-child.

According to the National Gender and Equality Commission 2015 report on the status of the boy-child in Kenya perception that the boy child is being excluded in the gender equality is valid. The commission recommends more research to be carried out to identify factors in the various counties that contribute to marginalization of the boy-child to guide in priotising intervention programs and strategies. This is the main rationale behind conducting this research in Juja Sub-County.

One assumption of this study is that early intervention can be an effective way forward in addressing the challenges facing the boy child. Transitions are milestones events for children and have definite effects on their

development and behaviour. Boy-child transition into adulthood should be perceived as a process Kamore (2017). The preadolescence stage can anchor the boy child by creating a foundation for stable transition into adolescence and later adulthood. Preadolescence begins at the age of 9 and continues up to 14 years when the boys are pursuing their primary level of education.
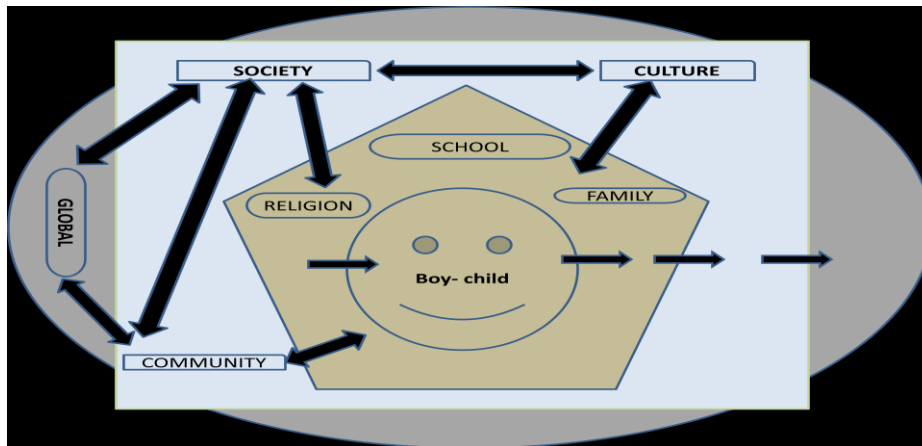
The challenges of the boy child have not gone unnoticed by scholars, popular media, and the public. This study therefore is based on a comprehensive review of scientific literature on the strengths and challenges that affect boys ages 10 through 18 locally and globally. The purpose of the study is to present research-based information about the factors that influences the boy-child transition into adulthood and suggest practical and scientific solutions that can enhance the wellbeing of boys in Kenya. Researchers' may not have all the answers to the boy-child problems but there is great opportunity to prepare boys to develop their capabilities, reach the potential, and achieve successful transition to adulthood.

Studies conducted on boy-child challenges suggest rigorous evaluation of youth development programs to examine whether the programs work to produce desired outcome. The studies further suggests implementation of multilevel interventions

that reduce risk factors while simultaneously promoting protective factors thus increasing the likelihood of sustained positive results for Bernat, & Resnick (2006). This is what this study intends to achieve by exploring boy-child challenges from diverse perspective like family, religion, school and community in general. We need the boy child just like we need the girl child, for successful continuity of the society. There is need to go back to our societal values. We need to re-define them right from the individual to the family unit;

LITERATURE REVIEW

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

from organizational units to the national situation Mwangi Wanjumbi (2011)

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To establish the perceived challenges undermining transition of the preadolescent boy–child into adulthood in Juja Sub – County

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the perceived challenges undermining the transition of preadolescent boy-child into adulthood in Juja Sub-County.

Source: https://www.learning-theories.com/bronfenbrenners

This theory was developed by psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner. The ecological systems theory explains how human development is influenced by different types of environmental systems. The theory emphasized that the developing child is involved in a series of

environmental systems that interact with one another and with the child to influence development. This multi- layered ecological system includes the microsysytem, mesosysytem,

exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory looks at child's development within the context of the system of relationships that forms his or her environment. As the child grows, interactions become more complex as the child engages with numerous individuals, as well as groups, cultures, subcultures, and governments, to mention a few.

Microsystem is the innermost circle of layer of the ecological theory. The prefix "micro" comes from the Greek for "small," and is the first and most immediate layer of the nested systems. This layer includes those individuals and experiences that directly influence the child. The microsystem is the system closest to the child and the one in which they have direct contact. It represents the context in which the child lives and interacts. Relationships in a microsystem are bi-directional meaning how children react to the people in this layer will determine how the child is treated. This layer includes the influence of parents, siblings, peers, teachers and neighbours. This is the most influential level of the ecological systems theory.

Mesosystem is the second layer encompassing the different interactions between the characters of the microsystem. The mesosystem refers to the interrelatedness of components of the microsystem. The mesosystem is where a person's individual microsystems do not function independently, but are interconnected and assert influence upon one another. These interactions have an indirect impact on the child. For example, the child interaction with his family, school and peers. The Peers interact with the family and the school, the family interacts and the teachers or school administrators. In order for an interaction to be considered part of the mesosystem, it has to be a direct interaction between two aspects of the microsystem that influences the development of the child.

The exosystem is the third layer, and contains elements of the microsystem which do not affect the child directly, but may do so indirectly.The exosystem includes those settings that influence the child's development but with which the child has no direct interactions. The exosystem refers to a setting that does not involve the child as an active participant, but still affects him. This includes decisions that have bearing on children, but in which they have no participation in the decision-making process. An example would be a child being affected by a parent receiving a promotion at work or

losing their job or parents separate or divorce. Children are indirectly affected by the parents' financial strain and stress.

The macro system represents the values, ideologies, laws of the culture or society. Social rules and ideologies distinguish one culture or country from an- other, as well as different subcultures within a single country. The prefix "macro" comes from the Greek for "large," and is used because this system was thought to be all-encompassing.

Chronosystem can change all other ecological levels from the microsystem to the macrosystem. The child and his environment undergo changes over time. Some changes are the result of the child's maturation or unexpected circumstances, such as illness or an accident. Other changes are due to external factors such as the birth of a sibling, divorce, or a change in school or home location.

Psychosexual theory of development

The psychosexual theory of human development was developed by Sigmund Freud in1905. He asserted that human personality develops through five stages marked by an area of sexual satisfaction as the child grows. The five stages include; oral, anal, phallic; latency and genital. The theory asserts that a growing person needs to move progressively from one stage to the next for proper personality development. The preadolescence stage covers the latency stage. Freud postulated that the stage begin from the sixth year of growth to puberty. At these stage children characteristic ways of behaving are established Ewen (1993).

During the latency stage the oedipal storm subsides. Children turn to the world of school and peers to learn the social and technical skills that will allow them eventually to take their place as responsible and effective citizens in their society. During the preadolescence the boy child is able to concentrate on cognitive development and on building relationships with peers. Ryckman (2004). This should be the appropriate time for the father figures to nature close relations with the boy-child and mentor them as they navigate school and relate with peers. This stage is important in the development of social and communication skills and self-confidence.

Erikson psychosexual theory

The Theory was developed by Erik Erickson a psychologist. He asserted that that human personality develops through eight stages each characterized by a specific psychosocial problem or "crisis". The stages include oral –

sensory (birth to 1 year) basic trust vs. mistrust, muscular – anal (2-3 years) autonomy vs. shame and doubt , locomotors-genital (4-5 years) initiative vs. guilt, latency (**6-12 years**) industry vs. inferiority, adolescence (13-19 years) identify vs. role confusion, middle adulthood (25-65) intimacy vs. isolation and late adulthood 65 to death) Ego integrity vs. stagnation. The focus of this study is the latent stage which Erickson refers to as industry versus inferiority. The key task of the boy child at this stage is to develop competency Ryckman (2004).

Boys in this stage are in primary school and are expected to master new academic skills and social skills necessary to interact with their classmates. In schools boys learn that they can achieve the recognition of teachers, parents and peers by producing things (industry). On the other hand if boys are ridiculed or punished for their efforts or they find that they are incapable of performing at a level commensurate with teachers' and parents' expectations they develop feelings of inferiority and inadequacy about their own capabilities. The mentorship of the boy-child at this stage is crucial in developing confidence needed for positive transition through adolescence as they achieve identity. A balance between competence and modesty is necessary. Success in this stage will lead to the virtue of **competence** and self-esteem in the boy-child.
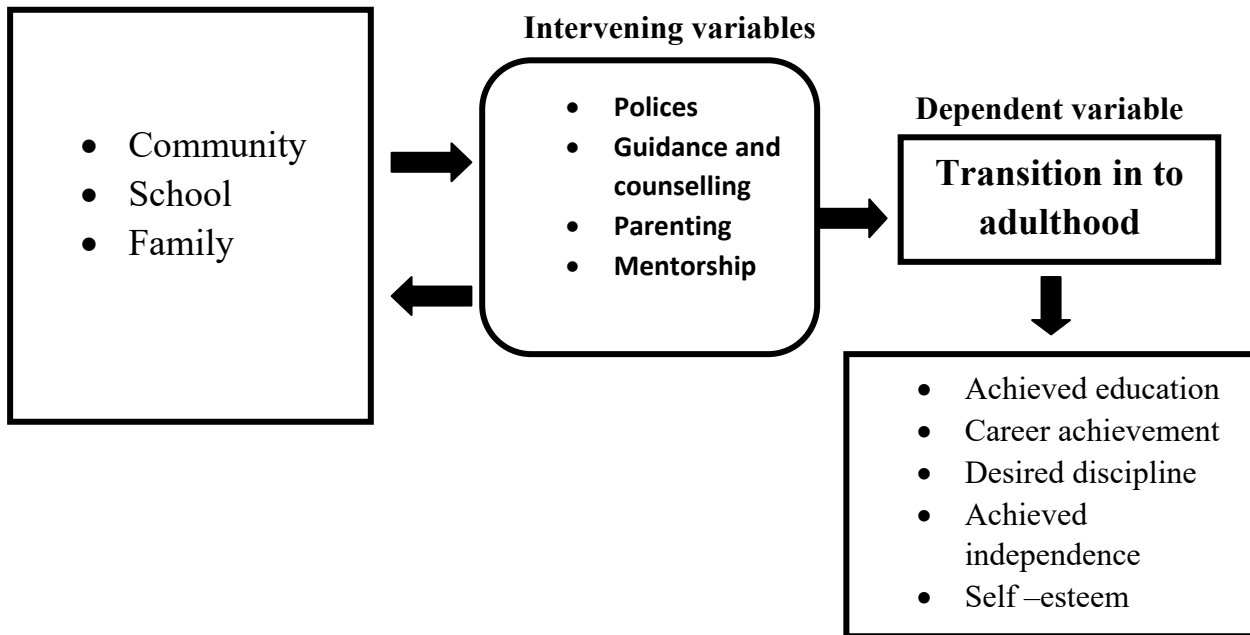
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework is a research tool intended to assist to researcher to develop awareness and understanding of the situation under scrutiny and to communicate this Kombo & Tromp (2006). A conceptual model is a way of relating factors that tend to influence a particular outline in a more pictorial model or diagrammatic way Orodho (2009). The conceptual frame work figure 1 used represents the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The independent variables of the study include global trends, community, school and family. The dependent variable is the transition of into adulthood

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Independent variables

Intervening variables

- Community
- School
- Family

- Polices
- Guidance and counselling
- Parenting
- Mentorship

Dependent variable

Transition in to adulthood

- Achieved education
- Career achievement
- Desired discipline
- Achieved independence
- Self –esteem

Research methodology

The study applied descriptive research design which involves collection of data from a population to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables Mugenda and Mugenda (1999). The research design was preferred because of its appropriateness in collecting data from the respondents in natural setting. Purposive sampling was used in selecting 300 boys in class 5, 6, 7 and 8 aged between ages 8-14 years. Data collection was done using focused groups discussion guided by carefully selected open ended questions. The data collected was purely qualitative but thematically analyzed and presented in prose form to ensure the originality of the information obtained from the participants

and enhance validity and reliability of the study. The right to privacy and confidentiality was guaranteed.

Support for early intervention program for preadolescent boy-child

Early intervention programs can be effective in helping the preadolescent boy child transition into adolescents and adulthood. A study conducted to examine the long term effects of a universal intervention program on elementary school students from a high crime urban area. The researchers created an intervention with 3 conditions. One hundred forty-nine students received the full intervention through teacher training, child social and emotional skill development and parent training from 1st through 6th grade, 243 students received the intervention in 5th and 6th

grade only, and the 206 students in the control group received no intervention. The study findings indicate that when compared to the control group, students in the full intervention group were significantly less likely to be sexually active; less likely to have fathered a child, and have significantly higher levels of school achievement. These results suggest the potential positive effect of early prevention and intervention programs in molding children behaviours Hawkins, Catalano, Kosterman, Abbott & Hill (1999).

The importance of early intervention program is further supported by another study conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the Coping Power Program, as a preventive intervention for preadolescent boys in 4th and 5th grade with aggressive behaviour and their families. The intervention program addressed deficits in social competence, self-regulation, school bonding, and positive parental involvement. One year following the intervention, the evaluation found that the Coping Power Program produced lower rates of covert delinquent behavior among boys than among boys in the group that did not receive the program Lochman & Wells (2004).

Developing boy – child supporting programs

Development of effective programs geared toward changing the entire society's attitude toward the boy child can be a long term intervention strategy of addressing the boy-child challenges. A critical review of 526 youth development programs that were geared towards social system change found that 64 percent of the interventions attempted some type of system-wide change involving schools, families, or community-based organizations. The interventions goals were to foster personal and social skills in children and adolescents. The study established that attempts to change social systems affecting children and adolescents can be successful. The study suggest components of youth development programs may be used to enhance the family and school environment and modify parenting practices and connect young people to prosocial adult role models through mentoring relationships, and after school programs. Durlak, Taylor, Kawashima, Pachan, DuPre, Celio (2007).

Influence of the family on the preadolescence boy - child

Studies conducted on the relationships between parental mentorships and adolescents' engagement in sex revealed that low levels of parental monitoring and friends who use drugs were associated with higher odds of being sexually active. The study

encourages communities and families to take a more active role in their children's lives, and emphasize the importance of monitoring adolescents of both genders Mandara, Murray & Bangi (2003).

Parents have great role in encouraging preadolescent boy child participation in out of school activities. One study conducted in America revealed that Parental support and mentorship significantly predicted whether the youth participated in extracurricular activities and religious activities Huebner & Mancini (2003). A study on positive single parents' households on the development of children and adolescents revealed that a consistent family routine and a mother's firm parenting were significantly and positively related to adolescents' constructive use of their free time Dworkin & Gillman (2001). Parental supervision and encouragement may have a protective effect against adolescents becoming friends with delinquent youths. Nebbitt, Lombe, & Lindsey (2007)

Studies were conducted in San Francisco to investigate the relationship between parent-son interactions at home and the child's behaviour and academic achievement at school and on the father's impacts on preadolescent boy child. The studies revealed that positive interactions between parents were

related to higher academic achievement in their sons. Positive father-son interactions at home influenced the child's positive behaviour in class, which influenced academic achievement. Fathers who reported satisfying marriages had sons with less aggressive classroom behaviour and more positive academic achievement (Feldman & Wentzel 1990, Weinberger & Munson (1990).

Parents' involvement is crucial in influencing the boy –child academic performance in school. This is evidenced by a meta-analysis of 41 studies that examines the relationship between parental involvement and the academic achievement of urban elementary school children. The study results indicated that greater parental involvement, as defined by parental participation in the educational processes and experiences of their children, was related to the greater academic achievement of children, as measured by overall academic achievement, grade point average, and standardized tests. Although this relationship held for boys as well as for girls, overall, the parental involvement showed somewhat greater effect for boys than for girls Jeynes (2005).

Fathers can greatly influence the academic performance of the boy-child. A study examining the effect of fathers' residency,

psychological separation from the father, the quality of the father-son relationship, and the frequency of contact with the father on boys academic performance. The study established that boys living in father-resident homes performed better academically than boys living apart from their fathers. However, the quality of the relationship between father and son was a much stronger predictor of academic performance than resident status; whether or not they resided with their fathers, boys performed better academically when they had frequent contact with their fathers and when their attitudes and beliefs were similar to those of their fathers Jones (2004)

Community influence on preadolescence boy-child

Community has great influence on the preadolescent boy child transition into adulthood. A study was conducted in the state of Kansas to evaluate the community initiatives impacts on the child development using three primary strategies: (1) multimedia campaign, (2) technical assistance and support of local communities, and (3) minigrant opportunities. Results of the study established that the community initiatives achieved positive outcomes in raising awareness of positive adult-youth interaction and youth involvement in decision making. The initiative

was especially successful in creating an environment that helped adults have a better understanding of youth and become more accepting of youth and their ability to become involved in new ways. Ealey,Wituk, Schultz, Usher, Meissen, & Pearson(2006).

Natural mentoring of the preadolescent boy in community context

The preadolescent boys can benefit from natural mentoring in the community. This is evidenced by a study that established that children can benefit from natural community mentoring program in environments where they associate with adults such as school, youth organizations such as boys clubs, community service, and faith based organizations. Interactions of children with adult mentors in natural environments can have intellectual, social, physical, psychological, and emotional benefits Hamilton, Hamilton, Hirsch, Hughes, King & Maton (2006)

Influence of religion on preadolescent boy –child

Parents have a great role in influencing the preadolescent boy participation in religious organizations. In a study exploring the predictors of adolescent participation in religious organizations revealed that

participation in religious activities was shaped by having parents who were married and participate in religious activities well as well as having friends who also participated female (Huebner & Mancini 2003, Larson, Dworkin & Gillman 2001).

Religion can play a significant role in preventing the preadolescent boys' engagement in risky behaviours. A was study conducted to determine whether and to what extent religion plays a role in buffering risk behaviours in adolescents such as substance use, truancy and sexual activity targeting youth aging between 11 to 18 years. The study found that teens who placed a high value on religion and religious participation were less likely to engage in risky behaviours, irrespective of age or other social and demographic factors Sinha Cnaan & Gelles (2007). However the study does not give information on how religious teachings are internalized and shape behaviour. The study recommends prevention programs that collaborate with local religious congregation are significant in supporting healthy youth development.

A study was conducted to investigate how faith-based organizations around the world use faith, religion, and spirituality in serving homeless youth in Los Angeles, California; Mumbai, India and Nairobi, Kenya. The study revealed that faith and religion play important roles in the way faith-based organizations function by providing clients with a moral code of behaviour, hope for the future, and direction. In addition, the study found positive outcomes of religious programs such as changes in a client's feelings, environment, status, skills, knowledge, School bonding is important for healthy development of preadolescent the boy-child. A scientific study carried out on school bonding and the healthy development of young people established that strong school bonding was associated with less tobacco, alcohol and drugs use, low rates of criminal involvement, gang memberships and dropping out of school. The positive effects of school bonding extended to high-risk groups in particular, including aggressive boys Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming & Hawkins (2004). Some of the factors contributing to school connectedness include; (1) feeling cared for by teachers and staff (2) inclusion in school decision making behaviour and attitudes Ferguson, Dabir, Dortzbach, Dyrness, & Spruijt-Metz, (2006)

Influence of the School on the boy-child

In a study on students' assessment of a school-based support group for emotional and

behavioural problems involving students between ages 14 to 19, who were experiencing emotional distress and behavioural problems. Students met for discussions in classroom settings for 50 minutes each week during the school year to talk about school and home related issues and ways to cope with stressful situations. At the end of the 3-year implementation period, data were collected from 131 participants, assessing the effects of the discussion groups on their schoolwork, relationships with others, and how they felt about themselves. Students reported developing new ways to deal with problems, increased self-esteem, and an increased ability to support friends. The study recommended development and implement school based support programs targeting behaviour change among students Wassef, Mason, Collins, OBoyle & Ingham (1996)

Boy child school dropout is attributed to early risk factors at home and school. Researchers have established factors that are likely to influence boy – child dropout from school which include; (1) social (i.e., poverty status, family dynamics, change in the family, sex, and race) (2) academic (i.e., repeating a grade, special education services) (3) personal (i.e., parental support, student attitude) (4) early disruptiveness and (5) perceived poor academic performance and The findings may

help to identify key points that are primed for dropout prevention and intervention programs (Alexander, Entwisle & Kabbani 2001, Vitaro, LaRocque, Janosz & Tremblay 2001)

The reward and motivation by teachers can motivate the boy-child to love and excel in learning as evidenced by a study conducted to examine the effect of external rewards on students desire to learn and do well in school. The study revealed that boys received significantly fewer rewards from parents as they aged whereas girls' parental rewards remained stable. However, boys responded more strongly to rewards from teachers than from parents and performed better and reported high academic goals Davis, Winsler & Middleton (2006).

Peer influence and boy- child behaviours

The peer relationships can greatly influence the boy – child behaviours. One study conducted targeting African- American 8th graders boys revealed that adolescents who were victimized by peers manifested increased drug abuse, aggression toward others, or delinquent behaviour Sullivan, Farrell & Kliewer (2006). The peer pressure significantly predicts participation of the boy-child in nonschool clubs and activities Huebner & Mancini (2003).

Mentorship of preadolescent boy child

The preadolescent boy child can benefit greatly from mentorship. A mentor can guide and model positive behaviour for the boy-child. A study was conducted in Columbia to evaluate the effectiveness of mentorship programs in influencing youth educational achievement, health and safety and social and emotional developments. The study results result show that mentored youth have better school attendance, attitudes and social interactions Jekielek, Moore,Hair & Scarupa (2002).

Research further indicates that boys seemed to benefit more from mentors who taught specific skills, versus those who tried to foster an emotional relationship. Boys who were recommended to receive mentors generally needed a male role model, and the relationships had a good rate of success. In one study, over 70 percent of men who were mentored as a child considered their mentor a significant adult in their life. However, mentoring programs should be clear about their goals and match mentors with youth carefully and appropriately Darling, Bogat, Cavell, Murphy, & Sánchez (2006).

Relationship between prosocial and antisocial behaviours in preadolescent boys

Encouraging the preadolescent boys to engage in prosocial activities can greatly deter them from involvement in antisocial activities. In a study was conducted to explore the relationship between prosocial and antisocial behaviours in youth. Prosocial activities included sports, organized activities, volunteering, and religious activities. Antisocial activities included substance abuse, stealing, and lying. The study finding show that youth who engaged in prosocial activities especially sports, were less likely to use drugs or participate in delinquent behaviours and were more likely to participate in other prosocial activities. Youth who were involved in substance abuse were more likely to engage in other delinquent behaviours. Duncan, Duncan, Strycker, & Chaumeton (2002).

The findings correspond to another study conducted in high –crime area of Worcester, Massachusetts that evaluated the strategies to keep young people constructively occupied by participating in organized team sports. The study established that children and adolescents who participated in the organized sports teams reported higher levels of self- esteem and fewer sports – playing boys reported using marijuana than boys with no involvement in

team sports McHale, Vinden, Bush, Richer, Shaw & Smith (2005)

Culture influence on the preadolescent boy – child

The cultural belief and practices greatly affect the preadolescent boys. An assessment carried by the National Gender and Equality Commission covering Kiambu, Kakamega, Kisumu, Embu, Garissa, Kericho, Mombasa and Kilifi established cultural beliefs and practices greatly influence the preadolescent boys transition into adulthood negatively. The traditional society perceives the preadolescent boy (8-10 years) to "a man" expected to contribute in the provision basic needs in the household. Due to increased individualism today's society has no corporate role in upbringing of the children. Many adults therefore will watch the boy- child go "wayward" and do nothing about it NGEC (2015).

According to Kamore (2018) in study conducted to investigate the declining performance in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in Embu county, the boy child is adversely affected by retrogressive cultural practices in the county such as Boys are neglected by their fathers, engagement in child – labour, early marriages and early initiation

that make the boy –child feel mature Kamore (2018)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The boys were given opportunity to open up and share the challenges they face at home, school and community. The following were the challenges of the boy- child as revealed by the participants.

Perceived challenges of preadolescent boy in Family

The participant revealed many challenges facing them in the family. The responses are clear evidence that families are contributing greatly to the frustration of the boy child. Family is the immediate environment of the boy child to grow and develop competency and self esteem. The fathers are perceived as a big let down to the boy-child. Many of the boys complained about being neglected but their fathers who are ever busy or absent from home. Two boys shared their sympathetic experiences with their fathers as follows;

" My father is always busy and when he comes home early does not have time for me. We rarely even communicate and don't feel his presence"

"Our home is managed by our mother because dad keeps travelling according to the nature of his profession. When I an faced with difficult

life challenges I mostly revert to my peers for help and most of the time I get misguided"

The boys revealed their weak bond with their fathers, fear of the fathers and fathers supporting the mothers in suppressing them as key father related challenges. This observation correspond with an observation published in standard paper (2010) that one of the single biggest contributing factor for boy child crisis has been the failure of the Kenyan man as a husband, a father and a role model. Role models men have failed their women and children by failing to lead the family unit as protectors, providers, spiritual advisers and role models. As a result, women have been forced to play a double role because most men play no role in the upbringing of their children. Their children's perception of the role of a male is, therefore, distorted and blurry.

The boys perceive the family attitude toward them as negative. Many boys expressed displeasure since they are perceived as naughty, irresponsible and mostly discriminated in the family. They compare themselves lowly to their sister because of the treatment accorded by parents as evidenced by the parents' discrimination in the provision of basic needs and overprotection of the girls. One boy said

" In our family I do not think anyone cares about my welfare. When my sisters ask for items they are provided for immediately while I am always told to wait. "

Other challenges expressed by the participants are; fear of sharing their challenges with parents, doing more hard work at home and displeasure of sharing beds with their sisters and being embarrassed in their presence. When boys do something wrong at home the parents tend to deal with them more harshly while they deal with their sisters mildly and gently when administering punishments. All these challenges partly explain why boy child experiences low self –esteem in the family.

Perceived challenges of preadolescent boy in School

The study established that the boy-child school bonding is weak. Boys in primary schools do not feel cared for by the teachers and their issues at school are ignored. The boys are labelled naughty and irresponsible by the teachers and are not considered for leadership responsibility. A boy reported that in their school the pupils' president and deputy are girls and out the whole prefect body only two are boys. The participant expressed their concern about attention and

protection accorded to the girls in school. A boy narrated his sad experience in school.

> "In standard one up to three I use to be position 1 but currently my academic performance has been declining. It has become difficult for me to appear among the top ten students. My teachers do not give me attention. When I consult teachers take too long to give me help but girls are helped immediately. This frustrates me"

The participants expressed their concern about the attitude of teachers when administering punishment to the boy-child. Teachers tend to be harsher to the boys even for minor offenses but mild to the girls. Boy –child is perceived as generally difficult, indiscipline and naughty. The situation is made worse by the girls ganging against the boys. One boy shared his personal experience as follows;

> "In our school it is difficult for a boy to say anything. Girls gang to shout the boys down and their reactions are supported by teachers. When boys report to teachers they are told to be men and no action is taken"

The boy-child does not feel cared for by the teachers. The participants revealed that some of the boys are dropping out of school and some abuse drugs and substances including alcohol. According to the respondent school dropout is further caused by family challenges, bullying and lack of school fees. This is evident that school bonding for the boy-child is wanting and requires intervention to retain the boys in schools and help them love education. Teachers play a significant role in helping the boy-child achieve strong school bonding (Catalano *at el* 2004, Ferguson *et al* 2006).

Perceived challenges of the preadolescent boys in community

The boys interviewed expressed their concerns about the community attitude toward the boy-child. Community has general attitude that boy child is strong and can service on his own. The girl child is perceived as weak and accorded all the attention and support. The boys felt that many community organizations and institutions focus their attention on the girl child. One boy expressed his concern about the protection accorded to the girls and wondered why boys are treated lowly yet they are children too. The participants felt the boy child as a gender is perceived as naughty, irresponsible and rejected by the entire society.

The role of the church in helping the boy child is wanting. The boys felt that their fathers are not good role models on spiritual matters. According to the respondents some parents do

not go to church but expect their children to go to church always. One boy made a joke

"Can a blind man lead another?"

The parents who participate in religious activities can influence his son to love and participate in religious activities well as well (Huebner & Mancini 2003, Larson, Dworkin & Gillman 2001).

Others preadolescent boy- child challenges observed

The participants revealed their low esteem as boys caused challenges the boy – child at home, school and community. The boys expressed lack of self awareness on sexuality. One question that was raised consistently was "When is the right time to get a girl friend?"

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The preadolescent boy- child has many challenges from the family, school and community. In the family the boy child challenges include; absent fathers and weak father-son relationship, discrimination of in provision of basic needs, harsh disciplinary measures by parents, fear of sharing their challenges with parents, families negative attitude toward the boy-child and humiliation of the boy-child in presence of their sisters. In

schools the boy-child challenges established by this study include; weak school bonding, neglect by teachers and school administrators (the do not feel cared for), declining academic performance, harsh disciplinary measures compared to the girl child, teachers negative attitude toward the boy-child (perceived as naughty and irresponsible). In the community the challenges of the boy child include; community negative attitude toward the boy-child, retrogressive cultural values, harsh disciplinary measures compared to the girl-child, failure for the leaders to implement the children law and policies in defence of the boy-child. The boy- child in preadolescent is suffering from low self- esteem and lack of self awareness due lack early boy-child mentorship programs. The study established that there is no gap in legislations and policies. The analysis of legal and policy documents such as Children act (2001), Education act (2013), Constitution of Kenya (2010), The national gender and Equality act (2011) among others, revealed fair representation of the boy-child welfare. The challenge is discriminative enforcement of law and policies in protecting the boy-child.

Recommendations

1. Initiate affirmative action to create awareness of the emerging challenges of the boy-child in our modern society.

2. Initiate early intervention programs to address boy-child challenges from the preadolescent stage of development.

3. Initiate affirmative action to empower fathers on effective mentorship of the boy-child.

4. Carry out affirmative action to strengthen the family unit at the immediate environment that nurtures the boy- child. The initiative should target parents in the faith based organizations and education institutions, focusing on the legal responsibility of parents in enhancing the well being of the boy-child.

5. The Ministry of education and Teachers service commission to support the empowerment of guidance and counselling teachers on strategies of addressing the challenges facing the boy-child in schools.

6. Cooperate organizations, companies and Non Governments to support the campaigns in support of the boy-child especially the socially and economically challenged.

7. Create boys centres to offer free professional counselling and psychotherapy services for the boy- child and their families in various counties.

8. Media to help in creating awareness of the importance of boy-child mentorship, counselling services and parenting skills targeting the fathers.

9. Organize country wide seminars, workshops on gender equality, children rights and family values targeting community and religious, leaders, school heads, teachers and parents.

10. Initiate and support boy- child peer counsellors clubs as an intervention to advocate and support the boy-child. It is self condemnation to argue that counsellors comprise only of a small percentage of those who can rectify the situation, because it is us, who have created an artificially scarce helping resource by legally restricting help to a specific role and not teaching children the fundamentals of helping others Rolsyn and Rachel (1913). Boys given training on peer counselling can be of great help to their peers in schools.

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