

Single Parenting and Children's Academic Performance in Primary Schools in Embu East Sub County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Most single parents are ostracized by their communities, and this has profound impacts on their children's academic performance. This study is based on the effect of single parenting on the children's academic performance in primary schools in Embu East Sub County, Kenya. Specific objectives include: investigating the effect of a single parent's income on the children's academic performance; examining the effect of a single parent's educational level on the children's academic performance; and determining the effect of a single parent's social support on the children's academic performance in primary schools in Embu East Sub-County in Kenya. The study was guided by human development theory. The study applied a descriptive survey research design, and 388 respondents were selected using cluster and simple random sampling techniques. Furthermore, 34 key informants, mainly teachers, government officials, and local leaders, are also integrated into the study using purposive and convenient sampling in order to provide in-depth information. Descriptive data analysis was carried out in the form of frequencies and presented in frequency distribution tables, while inferential analysis was also done in the form of correlation and regression. The correlation analysis findings showed that income had a +0.853, education level had a +0.832, and social support had a +0.737 strong and statistically significant correlation with academic performance. Regression analysis also showed that all the social and economic factors had a positive effect on the academic performance of the children. It is recommended that the stakeholders focus on increasing income levels, encouraging educational prospects and accomplishments, and nurturing robust social support systems.

Keywords: Academic Performance, Educational Outcomes, Embu Sub-County, Parental Income, Primary Schools, Single Parent

1. INTRODUCTION

Being the only parent involved in children's lives may lead to many challenges that may likely have a negative effect on a child's academic outcome. For example, financial constraints may restrict educational resources such as instruction, instructional materials, and extracurricular activities, which are critical to enhancing academic achievement. This may also affect a parent's ability to provide a learning environment, a fit, well-fed family, health care, and safe housing. This can lead to increased stress, depression, and anxiety, which can affect parents' ability to provide emotional support and create a nurturing home environment (Hinojosa, Bright, & Nguyen, 2019). A study carried out by Zhou et al. (2020) revealed that single mothers in the UK had lower levels of education and lower earnings than partnered mothers, which limit their children's access to resources such as books, technology, and extracurricular activities that support academic performance. The impact of single parenthood on children's academic performance in primary schools is complex and varied. While some studies (see, for instance, Raley & Sweeney, 2020; van Bodengraven, 2021) have reported negative results, others have shown no significant differences between children from single-parent households and those from two-parent households.

Similar to other contexts, studies indicate that single parents in Kenya are more susceptible to unemployment or underemployment, possess lower educational levels, and have reduced household incomes when compared to two-parent households. Clark et al. (2023) specifically found that single mothers in Kenya were more likely to face unemployment and possess lower educational attainments compared to single fathers. Moreover, single-parent households in Kenya often experience higher poverty levels and lower incomes compared to their dual-parent counterparts. Research by Abuya et al. (2019) revealed that children from single-parent households in Kenya exhibited

weaker academic performance levels during their primary schooling compared to those from two-parent households. These children were also more prone to grade repetition and school dropout. Conversely, Awino et al. (2022) found no significant differences in academic performance between children from single-parent households and those from dual-parent households in Kenya.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The existing literature has strived to cure the knowledge gap on the relationship between a single parent's socio-economic attributes and a child's academic success. For instance, De la Peña et al. (2019) stated that children of single parents and adolescent mothers are segregated in their communities, and this affects their children's learning. Similarly, Simons and Steele (2020) contended that the academic performance of teenagers from one-parent families is low because of low guidance and behavior modeling at the family level.

Single-parent families in Kenya have been largely overlooked in terms of research, particularly compared to the vast amount of attention given to high-income countries. Embu East sub-district has no specific data on the number of single-parent households, but half of all children in Kenya, as disclosed by the 2022 Kenya Population and Health Survey, do not reside with both biological parents. Likewise, the 2019 national census showed that the number of families headed by single parents in Kenya increased significantly in the past decade. The percentage of families headed by single parents rose from 25.1% in 2009 to 38.2% in 2019 (Kenya Demographic and Health Survey [KDHS], 2020), with Embu East Sub County registering 12,020 single parents. These single parents in Embu East Sub County face socio-economic challenges that affect the academic performance of their children. This suggests that the traditional family structure in Kenya is changing and that more and more children are being raised by single parents. Therefore, it was important to undertake an empirical study that aimed at providing more information on the state of the Embu East sub-county, given the paucity of information on local statistics.

Several studies have examined the relationship between socio-economic factors and academic performance in Kenya. For example, a study by Kiruy et al. (2020) found that parental income, education level, and occupation significantly affected academic performance in Kenyan primary schools. Parental involvement in their children's education positively affects academic performance. Although the study provided an insightful empirical exposition, there was little attempt to examine children from a single-parent family structure. This is the gap the current study seeks to fill. In addition, Baraiywo (2019) found that parental education, income, and occupation significantly affect the academic performance of children in Kenya. However, the study did not differentiate between single-parent households and two-parent households, which limits its relevance to the present study. Parental education and income have also been observed as significant predictors of academic performance in Rwanda (Mutabeshya & Sikubwabo, 2022). However, the study did not examine the effect of single parenthood on academic performance, and the findings may not be generalizable to the Kenyan context. Research by Kimaru et al. (2020) in Kiambu County, Kenya, did not establish any significant statistical difference in the academic performance of children from single-parent families and those from both-parent families, implying that children's academic performance has nothing to do with the type of family. Therefore, it was important to study the effect of socio-economic factors of single parents on their children's academic performance in primary schools in Kenya, using a case study of Embu East Sub-County in Kenya, to establish whether this contradiction holds.

11. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

2.1.1 Human Development Theory (HDT)

This theory is vital in comprehending the correlation between individual development and socio-economic development. Since human knowledge and education are vital elements of human development, formal educational outcomes are a vital indicator of one's academic performance. Mostly in African settings, many socio-economic factors such as income, family conflict, family involvement in child development, lack of shelter, food, and family structure have significantly affected the academic performance of school-going students, especially from poor and single-parent households (van Bodengraven, A., 2021). This study explores the importance of HDT in accepting these socio-economic aspects that have a likelihood of affecting academic accomplishment amongst school-going students and single-parent students (Bago, 2022). Therefore, according to Adeyeye (2023), this theory places emphasis on human development across the globe by emphasizing the role played by socio-economic factors in shaping people's rights and competences. In the context of this study, this theory was used to examine the effects of single parents' socio-economic status on their children's academic accomplishments. For instance, this theory identifies that

socioeconomic aspects considerably affect children's access to resources, educational opportunities, and overall development. This will at the end affect their drive to development and ability to make life choices and grab opportunities that are indispensable to social development (De Haas, 2021). Thus, single-parent families have a high likelihood of facing challenges in providing for the basic needs of their children and giving academic assistance with assignments, school parent meetings, talent identification, and emotional support (Van Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020).

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

Ngusa and Gundula (2019) found out that kids from lower-income single-parent households had a high likelihood of performing poorly in school as compared to kids from single-parent households with higher income. Their findings further showed that children in low-income single-parent households have more challenges that hinder them from effective learning, for instance, a lack of books, low motivation, and inappropriate attire for some school activities. It is possible that the effect of income may be greater in the long run, as children in lower-income single-parent households may have more difficulty accessing appropriate education and resources as they grow older. A similar study conducted by Mugumya et al. (2023) in Uganda found that parents from higher socioeconomic status and higher levels of education were more likely to engage in educational activities with their children, such as providing basic needs, academic communication, academic decision-making, infrastructure development and maintenance, the provision of a conducive learning environment at home, and the provision of adequate learning resources at home. However, the outcomes may not be replicable in the local Kenyan context due to varying socio-cultural elements like beliefs, religion, values, and others. Addressing this knowledge gap was the primary objective of the present study.

Sorkkila and Aunola (2020) found that the educational level of single parents is considered a significant socio-economic factor that can potentially impact the academic performance of children in primary schools. Highly educated single parents are often good role models for their children. They can actively encourage extracurricular activities, emphasize the importance of education, and set high academic expectations, which can positively affect children's academic achievement. Parental educational attainment can determine children's attitudes, motivations, and educational aspirations. They demonstrate the value of education through their own achievements and successes, motivating their children to strive for academic excellence. Children may be able to imitate their parents' educational background and aspirations. The study by Sorquila and Aunola (2020) did not examine the different ways in which the educational level of single parents may affect children's academic achievement. For example, it is possible that the effect of educational level may differ among children of different ages, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds. To address this gap, this study examined the mechanisms by which single-parent education may influence children's academic achievement.

Abuya et al. (2019), in their study in Kenya, confirmed the trends and results in other studies, specifying that the educational level of single parents was crucial to their children's academic outcomes. Correspondingly, Thuba (2019) showed similar results, indicating that single parents' level of education considerably predicted their children's academic attainment, whereby children of educated single parents had a high likelihood of excelling in examinations and other school-related activities. For example, it is possible that the effect of educational level may be mediated by a parent's ability to provide educational resources, a parent's expectations about their child's education, or a parent's ability to help their child at home.

Mishra (2020) found that children of single parents in Germany increased their academic achievement when they received social support from family, friends, and teachers. Studies have suggested that such social support may be protective for these children, reducing the negative impact of single parenthood on their academic achievement. The availability of social support was positively associated with the overall well-being of single-parent families and subsequently with higher children's academic achievement (van Bodengraven, 2021). This study underscores the importance of comprehensively examining the context of single parenthood, encompassing aspects like social support, to fully comprehend its influence on the academic performance of children. Nevertheless, despite the limited research investigating the connection between social support for single parents and their children's academic performance in Europe, substantial gaps persist in the literature. For instance, numerous studies have yet to explore the specific mechanisms through which social support influences the academic performance of children from single-parent households in Europe. Additionally, there's a paucity of research addressing the role of cultural factors in shaping the interplay between social support and academic achievement within single-parent families in the local context, a gap that the current study filled.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework highlights key aspects of socio-economic factors and how they relate to the performance of the children in order to comprehensively demonstrate a picture of the relationship. The socio-economic variables (income, education level, and social support) of single parents are the predictor variables, whereas the academic performance of the pupils is the dependent variable. Figure 1 indicates the relationship.

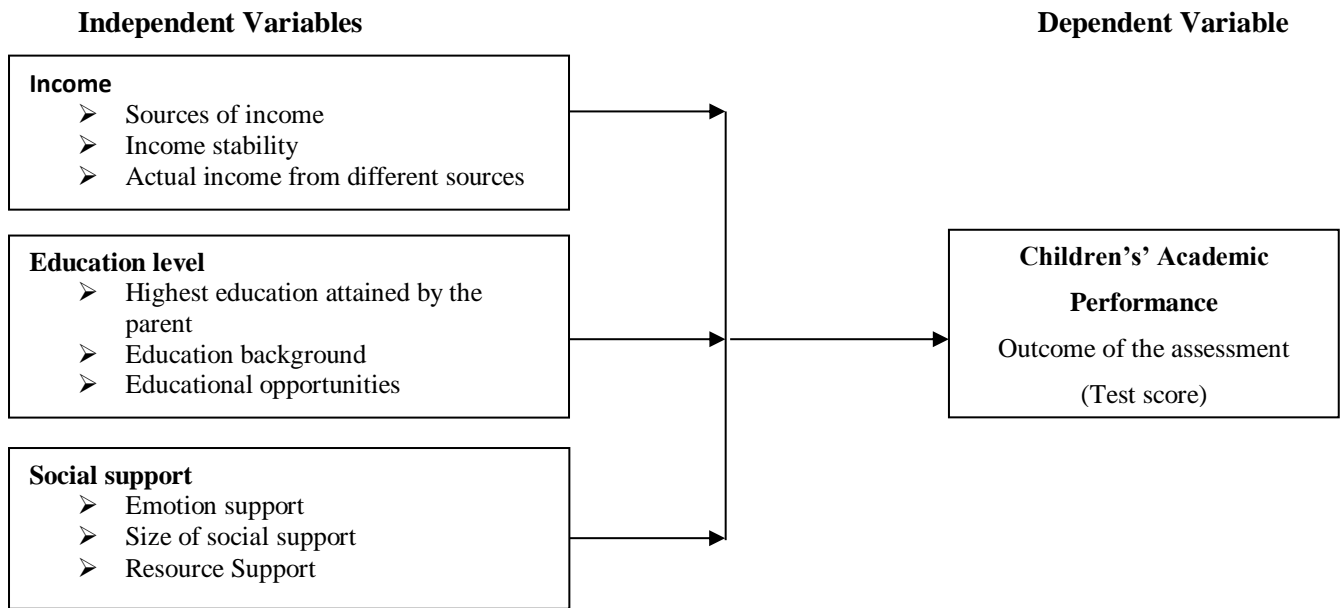


Figure 1
Conceptual Framework

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study applied a descriptive survey research design to establish the interplay between income variables associated with single parenthood and the academic performance of primary school children in Embu East Sub-County. The descriptive approach enhanced the depth of the research owing to the fact that it infuses narrative data when describing trends and patterns that emerge from quantitative data.

3.2 Study Site

The study was carried out in the Embu East sub-county in Embu County. It comprises two divisions, namely, Runyenje's and Kyeni's divisions. Runyenje's Division has 6 locations, namely: Kagaari North East, North West, South West, and Runyenjes East and West, while Kyeni Division has 5 locations, namely: Kyeni East, North East, Central, North West, and South. The Sub County has a population of 129,562 people, according to the National Census of 2019. Agriculture is the mainstay of Embu East Sub County and the livelihood of the people. Around 87.9 percent of the households are engaged in agricultural activities; the upper zone of the Embu East sub-county grows coffee and tea mainly, while the lower zone grows maize, beans, mangoes, macadamias, and avocados for their livelihoods.

3.3 Target Population and Sampling Techniques

The study targeted 12,020 single parents in Embu East Sub County. From the target population, 388 respondents for the study were determined using the Yamane (1967) for sample size determination. The study also included 34 key informants who provided detailed data for the study so as to triangulate the results: 10 teachers, 22 local leaders, and 2 government officials. The thirty-four key informants are justified in the literature by, among others, Mason (2010), who stated that 30 to 60 key informants are ideal for the purpose of reaching a saturation point where no new information can be generated.

3.4 Data Analysis and Presentation

This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis. The data from the interview guide was analyzed using narrative analysis. This method involves analyzing the stories or narratives that participants share in the interviews. Analytical techniques, including descriptive statistics, were used, involving frequencies, percentages, and medians. A multiple linear regression was used to establish the effect of single parents' income, level of education, and social support on the ratio scale test score of children's academic performance. The linear regression model used was:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \varepsilon,$$

Where Y= Child's academic performance, β_0 = represent the model Constant (intercept), β_1 = regression coefficient for income, β_2 = regression coefficient for education, and β_3 = regression coefficient for social support

IV. RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Demographic Attributes of the Respondents

This study focused on the gender of the respondents, level of education, marital status, age, and religion. The findings show that 68.8% of the respondents were female while 31.2% were male, which implied that there were more single mothers as compared to simple fathers in Embu East Sub-County. On the level of education, 87.5% of the respondents had completed their secondary school education, and at least half of them had attained post-secondary education. This implied that the respondents were in a position to read and understand the questions presented to them by the study. Additionally, the findings showed that most of the single parents were between the ages of 30 and 53. On their marital status, 37.5% of the respondents were separated, which led to their single parenthood. Also, 94.1% of the respondents were Christians, which implied that those attuned to the Muslim faith tend to stay longer in their relationships. The findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Category	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	31.2
	Female	68.8
Level of Education	Primary	12.5
	Secondary	38.1
	College Diploma	25.0
	Undergraduate Degree	18.8
	Post-Graduate Degree	5.6
Age of the respondents	18-23	1.8
	24-29	8.4
	30-35	12.5
	36-41	25.6
	42-47	20.3
	48-53	13.8
	>53	17.6
Marital Status	Widower	6.3
	Never Married	28.1
	Widow	18.7
	Divorced	9.4
	Separated	37.5
Religion	Christians	94.1
	Muslims	5.9

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

4.1.1 Single parents' income and children's academic performance

The study also sought to find out the link between parental income and children's academic performance. The findings are displayed in table 2

Table 2

Single Parents' Income and Children's Academic Performance

Statement	5	4	3	2	1	Median
To what extent do you think your source of income as a single parent is a major determinant of the pupil's performance?	175	60	15	49	21	5
To what extent do you think income stability is a factor on the quality of education of your pupil?	165	68	14	50	23	5
To what extent do you think the actual income from different sources determine the family wellbeing and performance' quality of education?	164	79	13	52	12	5
To what extent do you consider your income being permanent?	70	30	12	165	43	2
To what extent do you think your income enough to sustain the pupil/child in school?	65	25	19	155	56	2
To what extent do you think your family was financially stable when you and your partner were together	173	67	18	39	23	5

Table 2 reveals that a single parent's income variable was operationalized into six sub-variables. Analysis of the data indicated that the income of the single parent is a major determinant of the pupil's performance to a very large extent, as indicated by a median of 5. To a large extent, the study established that income stability is a factor in the quality of education of your pupils, as supported by a median of 5. From the data, the study established that the actual income from different sources determines the family's wellbeing and performance's quality of education to a very large extent, as evidenced by a median of 5. To a moderate extent, respondents considered their income to be permanent, as supported by a median of 2. To a small extent, respondents judged their income to be enough to sustain the pupil or child in school, with a median of 2. To a large extent, respondents stated that their families were financially stable when they were together with their partners, with a median of 5.

Overall, the computed median of 5 affirms that income largely influences the academic performance of children from single-parent family households. This implies that single parents would prefer improving their incomes, as it has a direct positive effect on their children's academic performance in school. It is possible to argue that single parents with high incomes are able to meet the needs of their primary school-going children in terms of purchasing their school needs, such as uniforms, textbooks, and the necessary stationery that would enable them to stay in school. Therefore, it is not surprising that most of the respondents implied a direct link between their income and their propensity to afford basic school items for their children. Learners who have access to schooling items are more likely to register better grades and performance compared to those who come from single-parent households without adequate income. In line with this information, a key informant had the following to say:

Higher single-parent income often translates to improved children's academic performance. Financial resources enable access to quality educational tools, tutoring, and a conducive learning environment (School Head-Teacher 1, 2022).

The above verbatim suggests that a single parent's high income levels translate to improved academic performance in children. This relationship is underpinned by the access to a range of educational resources that elevated financial means can provide, leading to enhanced educational outcomes. Notably, in households with greater income, single parents are better equipped to invest in an array of quality educational tools. The availability of interactive and informative resources serves to reinforce subject matter, hone skills, and foster a deeper understanding of academic concepts. This finding is in line with Amato et al. (2015), who reported that children from single-parent households with high incomes had better academic performance than those from low-income single-parent households because they had better access to reading materials that improved their reading comprehension and numeric skills.

From the foregoing illustrative quote, it can be deduced that financial advantage allows for engagement with specialized tutoring and enrichment programs. These personalized forms of instruction offer tailored attention and guidance, addressing areas where a child might face challenges. Additionally, participation in enrichment activities such as music lessons, art classes, or STEM workshops contributes to a more holistic learning journey, nurturing cognitive abilities and critical thinking skills. This result resonates with existing studies by Kshetri *et al.* (2023), who



stated that single parents with better incomes have the ability to offer extra learning platforms, such as the use of electronic gadgets. Notably, income is also associated with a conducive learning environment. Single parents can allocate resources to establish dedicated study spaces, provide access to essential technology, and create orderly environments for homework and study sessions (Tighe *et al.*, 2021). This environment minimizes distractions, fostering an atmosphere that promotes focused and effective learning.

The findings indicate that the majority of single parents lack adequate resources to pay for activities that go beyond traditional classroom physical learning. They cannot pay for school trips or other extracurricular activities that are crucial to the well-being of the children. This adversely influences their learning. In line with this view, a participant had the following to say:

The inability of parents from economically disadvantaged single-parent households to afford class educational trips and non-traditional classroom activities places these learners at a distinct disadvantage. Without access to these experiences, these students miss out on valuable hands-on learning opportunities, exposure to diverse perspectives, and the chance to develop practical skills outside the confines of traditional curriculum (County Education Officer 4, 2022).

The quote underscores how children from economically disadvantaged single-parent households are disadvantaged due to their inability to participate in class educational trips and non-traditional classroom activities. This lack of access deprives them of valuable experiential learning, exposure to diverse viewpoints, and opportunities to acquire practical skills beyond regular academic subjects, potentially exacerbating educational inequalities. It is therefore possible to argue that financial capacity extends to facilitating participation in extracurricular activities, amplifying the educational experience. For instance, children can engage in sports, clubs, or community groups that cultivate valuable life skills such as teamwork, time management, and leadership. While not directly tied to the classroom curriculum, these skills indirectly contribute to overall academic success. This result agrees with the perspective of Fan and Rue (2020), who stated that higher income enables opportunities for educational excursions and travel. Visits to museums, historical sites, science centers, and cultural events enrich a child’s understanding of various subjects, broadening horizons and enhancing their educational perspective.

4.1.2 Single Parents’ Level of Education and Children’s Academic Performance

Table 3

Single Parents’ level of education and Children’s Academic Performance

Statement	5	4	3	2	1	Median
Single parent with highest academic level determines their school selection for their children	74	154	18	42	32	4
Single parents with higher schooling levels select better careers for their children.	168	60	24	42	26	5
Single parent with highest academic level influence pupils’ academic excellence as a role model	64	162	15	38	42	4
Single parent with highest academic level frequently reviews the learner’s report card and this influence the learner’s outcome	68	130	10	65	47	4
Single parents with higher schooling levels assist their children with homework	165	65	11	53	26	5
Single parents with higher schooling levels are mostly involved in academic open field activities.	75	166	13	41	25	4

From Table 3, the descriptive statistical analyses of the six sub-variables of level of education showed that single parents with the highest academic level determine their school selection for their children to a large extent, as supported by a median of 4. Likewise, the study noted to a large extent that single parents with higher schooling levels select better careers for their children, which was supported by a median of 5. Similarly, the study established to a large extent that single parents with the highest academic level influence pupils’ academic excellence as role models, as evidenced by a median of 4. Notably, the study affirmed to a large extent that a single parent with the highest academic level frequently reviews the learner’s report card, and this influences the learner’s outcome (median = 4). Equally, analysis of the data suggested that single parents with higher schooling levels assist their children with homework to a large extent, as supported by a median of 5. Likewise, the study established to a large extent that single

parents with higher schooling levels are mostly involved in academic open field activities, as evidenced by a median of 4.

The overall median of 4 implies that the single parents agreed to a large extent that their level of education influences their children's academic performance. This implies that the educational level of single parents is considered a significant socio-economic factor that can potentially impact the academic performance of children in primary schools. To this end, it is possible to argue that a single parent's level of education is intertwined with their ability to understand the educational needs of their children, such as the school they attend, and by also being the first role models for the children. In line with this view, a key informant had the following to say:

I think my own education helps me understand what my child is going through in school. I remember facing similar challenges and knowing what it's like to learn certain subjects. It's like I can relate better and provide the right support because I've been there myself. Plus, I see myself as a role model for them. When they see me reading or studying, it encourages them to do the same. I even help them with their homework, and since I've been through it all, I can guide them better (County Education Officer 6, 2022).

The response from the county education officer illustrates how a single parent's personal educational experience influences their interaction with their child's schooling. The parent's own academic journey enables them to empathize with their child's challenges and provide tailored support. Additionally, the parent's role as a model for educational engagement is highlighted, as they encourage their children to emulate their study habits. This involvement extends to acting as a tutor at home, where the parent's prior familiarity with the subjects enhances their ability to guide their children effectively in their academic pursuits. The results emerging from the quote resonate with the views of Smith *et al.* (2020), who found that single parents' education level was a significant predictor of their children's academic performance, with children of single parents with higher education levels performing better than those with lower education levels since they are able to guide them to write their homework and supervise their learning. Equally, Okello and Kikomoko (2021) reinforced the same results that single parents' education level had a significant impact on their children's academic performance, with children of single parents with higher education levels performing better than those with lower education levels, specifically by being their first role models in their education pursuit.

Data established that single parents with educational qualifications are able to take or select performing schools for their children in addition to selecting better career subjects for their children (median = 4). This result was expected given that educated single parents may have solid knowledge about the education system compared to those with less education qualification. Notably, single parents with low educational qualifications are likely to work for more hours compared to those with high educational attainment. As a result of working longer hours, they spend less time with their children. Even when they have time, they may not meaningfully contribute to the school activities, such as homework or selecting courses or subjects, perhaps due to their limited knowledge. This information was affirmed by a key informant, who had the following to say:

Their limited educational background often necessitates longer work hours to support their children, which subsequently compromises their own opportunities for education. This dual role as both caregiver and breadwinner leaves single parents with insufficient time to pursue personal educational advancement. Consequently, this time constraint impedes their ability to engage in their children's education, hindering assistance with school work, homework, and the selection of appropriate career subjects (Social Services Officer 9, 2022).

The excerpt suggests that single parents often find themselves compelled to work longer hours to provide for their children, thereby sacrificing their own opportunities for education. This situation stems from the two-fold role they assume as caregivers and providers. As a result, the time constraints imposed by their demanding roles hinder their ability to further their education, leaving them with inadequate knowledge and resources to effectively support their children's academic endeavors. This circumstance creates a cycle of disadvantage where limited parental involvement in education negatively impacts the academic performance of their children. The lack of assistance with school work and homework and the inability to guide their children's career choices are likely to perpetuate lower academic achievement among these learners, emphasizing the disproportionate impact of the parents' low educational attainment on the educational prospects of their children. This result resonates with the views of Broussard *et al.* (2012), who stated that low-paying jobs performed by single mothers as a result of their low educational attainment are more likely to be unstable, which can make it difficult for single parents to plan for the future. This can add to the stress and anxiety that they are already experiencing. Information on the excerpt is also supported by Kalleberg (2011), who affirmed that single parents in low-paying jobs, perhaps due to their limited qualifications, may have to

work longer hours to make ends meet. This can leave them with less time to spend with their children and less energy to be involved in their children's academic lives.

4.1.3 Single Parents' Social Support and Children's Academic Performance

Table 4

Single Parents' social support and Children's Academic Performance

Statement	5	4	3	2	1	Median
To what extent do you believe that social support from family and friends positively influences your child's academic performance?	164	71	15	44	26	5
How much do you agree that having a strong social support network enhances your child's motivation and engagement in school activities?	69	160	20	33	38	4
To what degree do you feel that social support provides your child with the necessary resources and opportunities to succeed academically?	61	158	21	41	39	4
How strongly do you believe that social support positively impacts your child's self-esteem and confidence in their academic abilities?	70	133	16	59	42	4
How much do you agree that social support plays a significant role in reducing academic stress and promoting overall well-being for your child?	161	63	21	45	30	5
To what extent do you perceive that social support contributes to your child's academic achievements and overall academic success?	58	143	15	63	42	4

Table 4 shows descriptive statistical analyses of the six sub-variables of a single parent's socio-support. Respondents were of the opinion that social support from family and friends positively influences their children's academic performance, as supported by a median of 5. Likewise, respondents agreed to a large extent that having a strong social support network enhances their children's motivation and engagement in school activities (median =4). Similarly, respondents felt to a large extent that social support offers their child the necessary resources and opportunities to succeed academically, as seen from a median of 4. To a large extent, respondents believed that social support positively impacts their children's self-esteem and confidence in their academic abilities, as indicated by a median score of 4.0. Equally, respondents agreed to a large extent that social support plays a significant role in reducing academic stress and promoting overall well-being for their children (median =5). Notably, the study established to a large extent that respondents perceived that social support contributes to their children's academic achievements and overall academic success (median =4). Overall, a median of 4.0 affirms that social support is a key enabler of academic excellence for learners from single-parent households. For instance, it can help learners cope with stress, provide them with role models, help them access resources, feel connected to their community, and develop resilience.

The social togetherness can also help students feel connected to their community and create a sense of belonging. This can be especially important for learners who are feeling isolated or alone. In line with this view, a key informant had the following to say:

The imperative of providing social support to single parents is closely intertwined with their children's educational success, particularly in primary school. Our mentorship, community engagement, and tangible assistance programs build effective role models, strengthen family bonds, and directly enhance academic engagement. This direct link underscores how tailored social support can significantly boost academic performance among young learners (Social Services Officer 12, 2022).

The above quote stresses the critical connection between extending social support to single parents and the educational achievements of their children, with a specific focus on the primary school phase. Offering mentorship leads to the cultivation of positive role models among single parents, which empowers them to become educational inspirations for their children. This parent-child dynamic not only motivates children to prioritize learning but also strengthens family bonds. Community engagement initiatives reinforce the societal importance of education and create a sense of belonging within the community, bolstering a shared commitment to education and encouraging children to actively engage in their studies. Moreover, the provision of tangible assistance, including access to resources and participation in extracurricular activities, directly contributes to children's academic involvement. These resources



facilitate a conducive learning environment and equip learners with the necessary tools for academic success. This finding agrees with the perspective of Mishra (2020), who stated that social support can help children access resources that they need to succeed in school, such as tutoring, mentoring, and financial assistance. This can help them overcome any challenges they may be facing and achieve their academic goals.

4.2 Inferential Studies

4.2.1 Correlation Analysis

The findings in Table 5 indicate that all three independent variables of the study are positively associated with the child’s academic achievement. Single parents’ income has the strongest correlation with the child’s academic achievement ($r = 0.853$). The strong positive association between single-parent income and children’s academic achievement can be attributed to the multiple effects of economic stability on educational opportunities. Increased income tends to indicate improved access to educational resources, such as quality textbooks, supplemental materials, and instructional services, just as single-parent education ($r = 0.832$) is positively and strongly related to academic achievement.

Table 5
Correlation Analysis

		Academic Performance	Level of income	Education level	Social support
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	1.00			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	320			
Level of income	Pearson Correlation	.853	1.00		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035			
	N	320	320		
Education level	Pearson Correlation	.832	.0371	1.00	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026	.061		
	N	320	320	320	
Social support	Pearson Correlation	.737	.146	.132	1.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.025	.062	.051	
	N	320	320	320	320

The strong statistically significant relationship between a parent’s education and his or her child’s academic achievement may be due to the transmission of knowledge, values, and attitudes from parents to children. Parents with high levels of education tend to announce significant learning and academic achievement. This inherent appreciation for learning is likely to be passed down to their children, instilling a motivation to excel academically. Similarly, social support recorded a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.737$) with academic performance. This can perhaps be attributed to the pivotal role of a supportive ecosystem in creating a suitable learning environment. Social support extends beyond the immediate family to encompass peers, mentors, and community networks. Positive role models and mentors inspire children to value education and strive for excellence. Engaging with a supportive community offers a sense of belonging, reducing feelings of isolation and enhancing self-esteem, which in turn positively impacts learning.

4.2.3 Linear Regression

Table 6 indicates an ‘R’ of .804, which reveals that the three predictor variables have a strong correlation with academic performance. Additionally, an R-square value of 0.646 was obtained, suggesting that the study's independent variables (single parent’s income, education level, and social support) accounted for up to 64.6% of the variance in children’s academic performance in the Embu East sub-county. This means that other factors not part of the study accounted for 35.4% of the variance in academic performance.



Table 6

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.804 ^a	.646	.629	.621

a. Predictors: (Constant), Income, Education level, social support

From table 7, all the socio-economic factors of a single parent’s income, a single parent’s education level, and social support were found to have a positive effect on children’s academic performance, which was measured in terms of test scores. This is because their beta values are positive. Similarly, all three independent variables—single parent’s income, single parent’s education level, and social support—were statistically significant in predicting children’s academic performance, which was measured in terms of test scores. Therefore, holding all other factors constant, one unit increase in the income levels of single parents causes an increase in their children's academic performance by 0.735 units. At the same time, holding all other factors constant, one unit increase in the education levels of single parents causes an increase in their children's academic performance by 0.225 units, and also, holding all other factors constant, one unit increase in social support for single parents causes an increase in their children's academic performance by 0.064 units. The constant also has a p-value less than 0.05, which means that in addition to the three socio-economic factors, there are other socio-economic factors that were not covered in this study, such as neighborhood environment, access to learning resources, and many more, that can positively increase a single parent’s children's academic performance by 0.425 units but were not included in this study.

Table 7

Linear Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.425	.180		2.365	.020
	Education level	.225	.091	.181	2.474	.015
	Social support	.064	.077	.069	.831	.008
	Income	.735	.089	.663	8.271	.000

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that most single parents are faced with socio-economic and social problems that affect their children’s academic performance. Thus, this reinforces the vital role of parental involvement and social support in creating an environment of belonging and motivation for learners, ultimately enhancing their academic performance.

5.2 Recommendations

The study highlights the significant impact of various factors on academic performance in children from single-parent households. It recommends targeted financial assistance, skill-building workshops for parents, collaborative parental engagement programs, and mentorship/support programs to alleviate financial strains, enhance earning potential, and provide social support. These initiatives aim to create a supportive educational environment, positively influencing academic performance and overall well-being in such households.

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