

Influence of Adolescent Crisis on Girls' Academic Performance and the Implication of Counseling: A Case Study of Two Girls' Secondary Schools in Sabatia Sub-County

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Abstract

Adolescence is a transition period where all the human doubts, hesitations and uncertainties appear. In Kenya, secondary school girls' academic problems have been associated with adolescence crisis. In Western Region, particularly in Vihiga County a significant drop in school work, change in preferences or wishes to stop studying have been noted. The purpose of the study was to investigate the factors influencing adolescent crisis on girls' academic performance and the implication of counseling in Vihiga County, Sabatia Sub-county. The objectives of this study were to investigate: the influence of adolescent sexual behavior on academic performance in girls' secondary schools in Sabatia Sub-county; to establish the extent to which patterns of thought influence academic performance in girls secondary schools in Subatia Sub-County; to establish other problems some of the girls undergo that may influence their performance in secondary school in Subatia Sub-County, to examine the academic performance of girls secondary schools in mathematics and science subjects in Sabatia Sub-County, and establish the effectiveness of guiding and counseling services in assisting the adolescent girls in secondary schools and to examine the academic performance of girls secondary schools in mathematics and science subjects in Sabatia Sub-County. The theories that were used to explain the content include; psychoanalytic theory by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Cognitive theory by Piaget Jean (1936). The target population and unit of analysis in this study were girls' secondary schools, because they are best able to reflect the influence of adolescence crisis on academic performance. Data were collected by use of an interview schedule, consisting of both open and closed-ended items and an observation checklist. Quantitative data collected were analyzed using the statistical package for so-

cial sciences (SPSS). It was subjected to descriptive statistics. Frequencies, and percentages were used to describe, summarize and organize data. Qualitative data collected were organized, coded and analyzed. It was used to supplement, explain and interpret quantitative data gathered from the same setting. Findings of this study served as a contribution in the area of education as a whole and in particular to girls' secondary schools.

Keywords

Adolescence Crisis, Academic Performance

1. Introduction

Adolescent is the transition period between childhood and adulthood and the responsibilities and privileges are different from one stage to another [1]. Adolescents are somewhere in between; on one hand they are still closely tied to their parents and on the other hand spending more and more time with their peer group. This stage involves not just the physical changes of a maturing body, but also many cognitive, social and emotional changes. As to the effect that all these changes have on each subject there are very large individual differences. Some find adolescence a troubling period while others may find it normal stage with few difficulties [1]. Studies conducted in various countries across the world on how adolescence crisis influences academic performance revealed mixed results. In fact they show no apparent trend. Some studies show that adolescence crisis has a positive influence while others indicate that it has a negative influence [2].

In Kenya, academic performance has adversely been influenced by adolescent crisis more so, girls' secondary schools particularly in Western Province. It has also been found to be growing at the County, Sub-county level in the same region. In Vihiga County with reference to Sabatia Sub-county, academic performance to a large extent has been affected by the adolescence crisis. Five girls' secondary schools under study were affected. Significant drop in school work was noted in the above mentioned schools. The reasons for this are that, at the onset of adolescence, the girls get more concerned about their physical appearance, strong interest into the opposite sex, not having set their priorities right, negative perception about corrective measures and negative peer pressure [3].

In Africa and Kenya, adolescent crisis has both positive and negative effects on academic performance. From guidance and counseling section, it is evident that guidance and counseling have been introduced in secondary schools to focus on students' problems emanating from adolescence crisis [3]. Currently, no study has been done to determine the influence of adolescent crisis on academic performance of girls at secondary school level. The only study was conducted on the influence of male adolescent rebellion on academic performance in public secondary schools, Kenya [4]. Therefore, the present study attempts to delve into factors inherent to adolescence crisis that influence academic performance in

girls' secondary schools within Sabatia Sub-county, Vihiga County.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

In a meeting held by head teachers of secondary schools in Vihiga County, a unique interpretation of adolescence stage was made referring to the many problems that occur at this stage. Problems affecting academic performance were discussed more so in girls' secondary schools [3]. In the meeting, the participants were to reach a consensus that the diversity in the school setting greatly affected the adolescent girls' at secondary school level.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

To investigate the factors influencing adolescent crisis on girls' academic performance and the implication of counseling in Vihiga County, Sabatia sub-county.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The study focused on the following specific objectives;

- 1) To determine the influence of adolescent sexual behavior on academic performance in girls' secondary schools in Sabatia sub-county.
- 2) To establish the extent to which levels of intelligence influence academic performance in girls secondary schools in Sabatia sub-county.
- 3) To find out other problems girls undergo that may affect their performance in secondary schools in Sabatia Sub-County.
- 4) To examine the academic performance of girls secondary schools in mathematics and science subjects in Sabatia Sub-County.
- 5) To evaluate the effectiveness of guiding and counseling services in assisting the adolescent girls in secondary schools in Sabatia Sub-County.

1.4. Significant of the Study

- 1) The findings of this investigation are of importance in understanding academic performance particularly in girls' secondary schools. The study would provide knowledge that is vital in improving academic performance of girls at secondary school level.
- 2) The study identifies the physical and social changes that influence academic performance of girls. These would assist the Ministry of Education coming up with policies that will empower secondary school going girls.
- 3) The finding of the study would be made available to the Ministry of Education, school administration, parents and other stakeholders involved with adolescents especially with girls within the area of study.

2. Methodology

A descriptive cross sectional survey design was used in the current study. It was used to collect information on students' behavior as well as personal characteristics like age, performance [5]. The design was suitable because of its convenience

in deriving extensive data from a large sample of respondents within a short period of time. The study was carried in Sabatia Sub-County, Vihiga County. The constituency was chosen because it has the highest number of girls' schools, and for the last five years it has been experiencing the highest dropout of girls from secondary schools due to reasons related to adolescent crisis. There are a total of five girls' secondary schools within the division [3]. All the girls' secondary school formed a population from which two schools were sampled within Sabatia Sub-County. Simple random sampling technique was applied. From this sample, two head teachers served as respondents, whereas all students who form the population from which an appropriate sample was selected.

Therefore, the sample size consisted of three hundred and twenty (320) participants. The research sample consisted of two girls' secondary schools. To obtain the sample, a simple random sampling technique was used. From the sampled schools, head teachers served as respondents. In Keveye High School, the researcher selected a sample of one hundred and ninety four (194) students. In Igunga Girls High School the researcher selected one hundred and twenty six students (126). Since these are single sex schools, this was done by secret balloting where pieces of papers numbered 1 - 194, 1 - 126 folded and mixed with others without numbers were used. Then each student picked a piece of paper each at a time and then put it back into the box. Those three hundred and eighteen students (318) with numbered papers were taken as sample from forms two and three.

The interview schedules were administered to head teachers and students from sampled schools. It contained twenty (20) items. The head teachers' interview schedule was administered to head teachers; they contained twelve (12) items. The two interview schedules targeted the influence of adolescent crisis on girls' academic performance and the implication of counseling. Using the observation checklist, the researcher recorded each phenomenon as it was observed. The unit of analysis was the school; the units of observation were students within the school responsible for academic achievement.

Both qualitative and quantitative data collected was scored. Data relating to each research were analyzed separately, when descriptive statistics were used to represent the results and describe the effects of adolescent crisis on academic performance of girls in secondary schools in Vihiga County. This involved extraction, examination and interpretation of the data from the interview schedule and an observation checklist and presenting it in tables, percentages, chart using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Results

In this study, **Table 1** shows that a total of 320 respondents participated. Of the 320 adolescent girls in the study, (119) 37% of them had their education influenced

Table 1. Influence of adolescent sexuality on academic performance.

Personal Problems 2001-2003	Number of Secondary School Girls Influenced	Percentage % Showing
Teenage pregnancy	119	37%
Sexually transmitted diseases	67	21%
Lesbianism	32	10%
Boy girl relationship	60	19%
Abortion	42	13%
Total	320	100%

Source field data, 2003.

by teenage pregnancy. (67) 21% were suffering from sexually transmitted diseases gonorrhea and syphilis. About (32) 10% of adolescent girls were practicing lesbianism, (60) 19% were involved in boy-girl relationship, and (42) 13% had engaged in abortion as shown in **Table 1**. The findings reveal that between 2001 and 2003 a significant proportion of high school girls were pregnant.

As indicated in **Table 2**, performance of girls influenced by the personal fable was (166) 52%. (32) 10% of the girls' performance was influenced by the imaginary audience while (122) 38% of the girls were influenced by the naive idealism. Therefore, the influence of the personal fable on high school girls patterns of thought, is higher compared to other patterns of thought.

From **Table 3**, 16% high school girls prefer Biology to other science subjects. 15% Chemistry whereas 10% Physics. However majority of high schools would rather pursue other subjects (211) 66%. This implies girls like Biology since it is easier and it is a science for girls. Students who prefer other subjects to sciences cited difficult terms and concepts while others gave heavy workload and examination questions which seem too technical for them. This was attributed to a negative attitude towards sciences and teachers who teach those subjects. Some high school girls believe that science subjects are meant for boys. The order of preference indicates different levels of intelligence.

Table 4 shows that generally the mean grades of the two selected schools demonstrated that their academic performance in sciences and mathematics were poor in Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics.

According to **Table 5**, it was found out that (304) 95% of high school girls in Sabatia Sub-County suffer from low self-esteem. Only (16) 5% claimed that they had been psychologically disturbed and even attempted to commit suicide.

The study revealed that (6) 75% of the teachers in the guidance and counseling departments are not professional counselors. Only (2) 25% of the members of guidance and counseling departments are trained hence few qualified counselors available to take up responsibilities. These findings are tabulated in **Table 6**.

Table 2. Patterns of thought and their influence on academic performance in girls' secondary schools.

Patterns of thoughts	Number	Percentage %
Personal fable	166	52%
Imaginary audience	32	10%
Naive idealism	122	38%
Total	320	100%

Source field data, 2003.

Table 3. To examine the academic performance of girls secondary schools in mathematics and science subjects preference among girls in high school.

Science Subjects	No. of Students	Percentage %
Biology	50	16%
Chemistry	47	15%
Physics	10	3%
Other Subjects	211	66%
Total of High School Girls Sampled from Two Selected Schools	318	100%

Source field data, 2003.

Table 4. Showing KCSE analysis in science and mathematics in the year 2002 to 2003 in vihiga county, sabatia Sub-County.

Subjects	Biology		Chemistry		Physics		Mathematics	
	Schools Mean Grade							
Years	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003
School X	2.916	3.33	1.4	1.7	2.785	2.253	4.554	4.97
School Y	1.436	1.2	3.5	3.7	2.141	2.090	2.934	3.12

Source field data, 2003.

Table 5. Other problems related to adolescent in girls secondary schools which influence their academic performance.

Other Problems	Number	Percentage %
Challenges related to self-esteem	304	95%
Attempted suicide Cases	16	5%
Total	320	100%

Source field data, 2003.

3.2. Discussion

In relation to the influence of adolescent sexual behavior on academic performance in girls secondary schools in Sabatia Sub-County [6] highlighted that once children have passed through the latent stage, the next psycho sexual stage

Table 6. Teachers' professional qualification in guidance and counseling.

No. of teachers	Qualified	Not qualified
8	2	6
Percentage %	25%	75%

Source field data, 2003.

is the genital stage. At this stage sexual interest is awakened. They take strong interest in the opposite sex. They spend a lot of time thinking about sex. During this period girls tend to perform poorly in academic work at secondary school level since their attention is focused on the opposite sex and concern with physical appearance. His explanation justifies the findings of this study for they reveal why sexuality is so intense during adolescence and personal problems that affect the education of young girls. Freud explains why sexuality is so intense that at its fatality, leads to teenage pregnancy which in turn may lead to learners dropping out from school. Girls found to be pregnant destroy their chances of completing their education. Sometimes, the girls and their sexual partner organize or procure an abortion in order to continue with her education to avoid straining the cordial relationship that exists between the girls and parents. In the course of indulging in pre-marital sex, girls may contract sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. This usually leads to ill health which affects their academic performance and at its worst, death of the girl. Intimate relationship between boys and girls, effects academic performance of girls to a large extent since the girls spend most of their time thinking about the boyfriend and other members of the opposite sex. The study also revealed that lesbianism is a practice among girls. This refers to intimacy between a girl and another girl. One of the girls is meant to play the role of a male in this relationship. This has led to drop out of schools and low concentration in class.

With regard to the extent to which patterns of thought influence academic performance in girls' secondary school in Vihiga County, Subatia Sub-County, just as bodies mature during adolescence, so do patterns of thought. However, adolescents' thinking has its own limitations, more so, their power of reasoning is limited by egocentrism. Their thinking is guided by logic not reality. Adolescence egocentrism manifests itself in three ways; personal fable, imaginary audience and naive idealism [7]. It was established in this research that a large percentage of adolescent girls in high school seem to be affected by the personal fable. Personal fable includes the belief or myths that one is unique and has a personal mission in life. These are girls who have the feeling that they are un-destroyable, immortal, and incorruptible that they cannot be harmed by the things that harm other people for example, beliefs like: other people will fail to realize their life ambitions, but I will realize mine. For these reasons adolescents engage in many strange things such as pre-marital sex, alcoholism and drug abuse, and all these are likely to lead to poor academic performance. During the study, a number of the girls commented that they are affected by imaginary au-

dience pattern of thought. These are girls who behave as if they are on stage acting and everybody else is watching them. They believe that other people are pre-occupied by their appearance and behavior. Consequently this feeling of being perpetually on stage becomes the source of much self-consciousness, concern about personal appearance and showing off in adolescence for instance they engage in funny behavior to attract attention and this likely enhances poor academic performance. To some extent naive idealism has had an influence on high school girls according to this study. Naive idealism refers to a situation in which the adolescence is looking for an ideal world where things happen in a perfect order (utopia). This becomes the source of conflict between them and their teachers, parents, religious teachers and administrators. Therefore, this research confirms that the three patterns of thought imply that girls in X Girls High School and Y Girls High School are intelligent enough, but their level of intelligence is influenced by their stage of development

Concerning, other problems related to adolescent in girls secondary schools in Vihiga County, Subatia Sub-County, adolescents who are least satisfied with their physical appearances have the lowest self-esteem [8]. This argument is in agreement with this study as the findings indicate that low self-esteem is attributed to the confusion and anxiety they experience as a result of social, emotional and physical psychological and behavioral changes that occur and this impacts on academic performance negatively. Half of the adolescents who attempt suicide are psychologically disturbed. Suicidal attempts are common among adolescents yet sometimes it has been a cause of mortality among pupils in high schools [9]. Psychological disturbance is attributed to growing sexuality, the uncertainty about the future, personal relationships, new capabilities and demands and expectation of the surrounding.

Academic performance of girls' secondary schools in mathematics and science subjects, science subject preference among Girls in High Schools in Vihiga County, Subatia Sub-County, girls in adolescence complain of poor background in mathematics and sciences and influence from challenges related to adolescence crisis. Moreover, they claimed that such subjects are hard and this could be due to lack of exposure to firms dealing with sciences [10]. His study is in agreement with the findings of this research which indicates that high school girls prefer Biology to other science subjects because of the negative attitude towards the subjects and teachers who teach. Also it was claimed they are hard, therefore, meant for boys. This has therefore, contributed to poor performance in the sciences generally.

In view of the effectiveness of counseling services in girls secondary schools in Vihiga County, Sabatia Sub-County, the study indicated that adolescence crisis has a negative influence on academic performance of girls and hence the need to intensify guidance and counseling programmes in girls' secondary schools. The state of counseling in Kenyan schools implies that there is need for this service, thus the Kenya government is in the process of strengthening the guidance and counseling services through the Ministry of Education and other non-governmental

agencies. It is encouraging that there are a number of private and public universities such as Kenyatta University and Nairobi University etc. that are offering guidance and counseling courses. Guidance here is vital as it involves helping boys and girls to plan their future wisely in full light of all factors affecting them [3]. There are however, limitations to this programme as indicated below by the study findings.

1) Insufficient trained professional counselors. Many schools are using amateur counselors. Full time trained teachers are assigned to take this guidance and counseling services as part of their extra roles in the school.

2) Absence of solid professionalism. There is nobody to fight for the proper counseling and guidance place in Kenyan schools. There are no uniform policies to guide the principals on how to assign the counseling duties.

3) Lack of support from the establishment of successful guidance and counseling programme especially in terms of moral and financial in running the programme in the schools.

4) The teaching member of staff who also doubles up as a counselor teacher is normally overloaded with the workload and thus, cannot give proper guidance and counseling in the entire school. The implication of this is that the overloaded teacher cum counsellors is not able to attend to students' problems adequately which in turn affects students' academic performance.

In summary, this research's inferences were made basing on the following aspects [11]: sexual behaviour, patterns of thought, availability of trained and experienced teachers, other problems related to adolescents in girl's secondary schools, science subjects' preference, and finally the effectiveness of counseling services.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1. Conclusion

In relation to sexual activity the study concluded that at adolescence stage, the influence of sexuality is very intense and in some ways conflicting for high school girls hence leads to poor performance. The study concluded that poor performance of girls is attributed to levels of intelligence or patterns of thought. The findings implied that some girls in high school in Sabatia Sub-County have their academic performance affected by the personal fable. Other problems related to adolescence in girls secondary schools such as challenges related to low self-esteem were weighty and were largely attributed to the changes taking place in their bodies, and poor performance. In addition this was enhanced by the growing sexuality, the uncertainty about the future, personal relationships, new capabilities and demands, and expectations of the surrounding. According to adolescence crisis in relation to KCSE analysis in science and mathematics in the year 2002 to 2003 in Vihiga County, Sabatia Sub-County, high school girls prefer Biology to other science subjects and Mathematics.

4.2. Recommendations

Sex education program within schools is an excellent step forward for this would curb sex related problems to the adolescents. The adolescence girls in high school should restructure their cognitive structures such that their power of reasoning, and thinking should be guided by both logic and reality. Experienced teachers in sciences should work with newly posted teachers from college when they are fully experienced. In addition, in-service training program ought to be enhanced among teachers. Those girls in high school should be encouraged to pursue science subjects and mathematics by involving competent female teachers in teaching at the same time serve as role models. The self-concept of such students should be enhanced by organizing talks to increase students' awareness of themselves, and the school administration in conjunction with parents should strengthen guidance and counseling departments so that professional assistance can be provided/or referrals when necessary.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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