



## INFLUENCE OF FAMILY DISINTEGRATION ON LEARNERS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MOMBASA COUNTY, KENYA

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### Abstract:

This study explored the influence of family disintegration on learner's academic performance in public secondary schools in Mombasa County, Kenya. The specific objectives were: to examine how lack of parental involvement in learners from disintegrated families affects their academic performance and to explore the psychological effects of family disintegration on learners' academic performance in public secondary schools in Mombasa County, Kenya. The study was anchored on social attachment theory. The study used a convergent parallel design in the mixed-methods approach. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers, while in-depth interview guides were used to collect data from principals and the Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (QASO). The research instruments were reviewed for validity by the researcher's supervisors. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of the study instruments. The target population was 33 public secondary schools, 33 principals, 400 teachers, and One Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (QASO) of Mombasa County. Cluster and systematic sampling were used to select 11 out of 33 schools. Stratified and simple random sampling was used to select 220 out of 400 teachers. Purposive sampling was adopted to include 11 principals from the selected schools as well as the QASO. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science Version 25 and was reported in frequency tables, percentages, graphs, and charts. The qualitative data was organized into themes based on the research questions and reported in a narrative form and direct quotations. The study revealed that lack of effective parental involvement from disintegrated families also negatively impacts the

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academic success of learners. Additionally, the study showed that students from disintegrated families experience significant stress, which adversely affects their academic performance. The study recommended that school principals should develop initiatives to encourage greater parental involvement, particularly targeting parents from disintegrated families. This could include organizing regular parent-teacher meetings, workshops, and seminars that educate parents on the importance of their involvement in their children's education.

**Keywords:** parental, involvement, disintegrated, families, students, academic performance

## 1. Introduction

Family is a stronghold social setup from where learners find their strength, love, and support. Having a harmonious family is a worldwide concern for families. Disruption of any kind deprives children of the benefits of proper upbringing, hence making family disintegration a worldwide reality. This phenomenon occurs when a family can no longer, in part or whole, play its role in the upbringing of children and uphold the stability of society (UNESCO, 2002). This happens especially when there are limited resources to support education and limited parental involvement. This concern has been a subject of significant concern in educational research, as it can have profound implications for learner's academic performance across the globe (Amanda, 2021). Family disintegration is, therefore, the breakdown of the traditional family unit due to factors such as divorce, separation, single parenthood, migration for work, unemployment, insecurity, poverty, drug abuse, level of education, domestic violence, religion or other economic and social stressors (Amato, 2005).

Family disintegration can have a far-reaching consequence on learners' emotional well-being, social relationships and overall family functioning. According to Johnson and Smith (2017), the disruption of familial bonds through divorce, parental conflicts, or other challenges can deeply impact learner's academic performance and shaping of their academic journey. In the context of this study, family disintegration is a critical factor influencing learners' academic performance in Mombasa County.

UNESCO highlights the significant impact of family disintegration on learners' academic performance (Gardinier, 2019). It emphasizes that when families experience breakdowns due to factors like divorce, separation, or parental conflict, children often face emotional distress and instability, which can directly affect their ability to focus, learn, and succeed in school. Research supported by these organizations underscores the correlation between family cohesion and academic achievement, stressing the need for supportive family environments to nurture children's cognitive and socio-emotional development. Additionally, UNESCO (2002) advocates for holistic interventions that address not only academic support but also emotional and psychological well-being to mitigate the adverse effects of family disintegration on learners' educational outcomes.

Thompson and Bennett (2020) conducted a study on family disintegration and academic achievement in Canada. The study's findings revealed a significant negative correlation between family disintegration and academic performance among Canadian students. In particular, research by Thompson and Bennett revealed that students hailing from families undergoing disintegration exhibited lower grade point averages (GPAs) and higher absenteeism rates when compared to their peers from stable family backgrounds. This study, however, lacked a comprehensive exploration of the role of parental involvement and access to educational resources. The current study incorporated qualitative data to provide a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play and propose tailored interventions to support learners.

In a similar disposition, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda have been recognized for their progressive approaches to promoting family unity and stability, which have, in turn, contributed to advancements in academic performance. Johnson and Mwamba (2021) asserted that the prevalence of family disintegration or divorce cases in this African nation was notably lower than in some Western countries. This achievement is attributed to a strong emphasis on family cohesion and robust community support networks in the DRC, both of which have played a pivotal role in fostering a conducive environment for academic achievement.

Furthermore, Rwanda, as emphasized by Gakwaya *et al.* (2020), has achieved remarkable progress in improving academic performance, owing in part to a cultural emphasis on family unity and support. These examples from the DRC and Rwanda underscore the vital role of family stability in relation to matters of academics. Hence, it offers valuable insights for educational policymakers and researchers seeking to understand the impact of familial factors on academic outcomes.

In Nigeria, Adekunle (2021) investigated the influence of family structure on learners' academic performance in Nigeria through a mixed-methods approach, employing surveys administered to students and parents alongside academic records analysis. Adekunle's research revealed that regions in Nigeria characterized by strong family cohesion and robust familial support systems tended to yield students with superior academic outcomes. Conversely, regions experiencing higher rates of family disintegration were found to be associated with lower learner performance (Adekunle, 2021). Additionally, a study by Adetutu and Adebayo on family challenges and academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State in Nigeria was undertaken to elucidate the intricate relationship between various family-related factors and their impact on the academic achievements of secondary school students. The study rigorously assessed eight specific variables, encompassing family cohesion, parental presence, the tone of disciplinary practices within the family, parental work-life balance, parent-child communication, socio-economic status, and parental marital status.

Adetutu and Adebayo's (2021) findings robustly underscored the profound influence of family challenges on the academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers State, thereby substantiating the critical significance of addressing this issue as we delve into the topic of the influence of family disintegration on learner's academic

performance in public secondary schools. It is imperative to recognize that family disintegration can be a pervasive challenge with far-reaching consequences that directly impact the academic performance of learners. However, a critical literature gap exists in comprehensively understanding how these effects manifest in the context of public secondary schools. Therefore, the current study aimed to bridge this gap by focusing on the influence of family disintegration on the academic performance of students in public secondary schools, therefore contributing to a clearer understanding of this critical issue.

Several studies have been conducted in Kenya, like that of Njoroge (2020) on family structure and academic achievement, to investigate the relationship between family structure and learner academic performance in Kenya. Through surveys administered to a substantial sample of Kenyan students and subsequent analysis of academic records, the researcher discerned that students from single-parent households tended to exhibit marginally lower academic performance than those from nuclear families. A different study was conducted by Kiptoo (2018) on family dynamics and academic performance in Kenyan schools. This study focused on the relationship between family structure and learner's academic performance in Kenya. The results emphasized the significance of cultural and contextual elements, including parental engagement and community support, in mitigating the potential negative impacts of non-traditional family setups on academic performance.

Ouma (2019) conducted a study in Kenya about family structure and learners' achievement. The researcher aimed to explore the dynamic and evolving relationship between family structure and learners' academic performance. The study followed a cohort of Kenyan students over multiple years, integrating academic records analysis with in-depth interviews. The research revealed that the relationship between family structure and learner academic performance in Kenya is dynamic and evolves over time, and it emphasized the temporal dimension of this relationship. While the researcher provided valuable insights, it primarily emphasized the temporal dimension of this relationship. The identified gap in the existing literature is the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the qualitative aspects of the relationship between family disintegration and learner academic performance, especially within the context of public secondary schools in Mombasa. To address this gap, the present study aims to conduct a more extensive qualitative inquiry, focusing on the influence of family disintegration on learner academic performance. This research sought to complement Ouma's findings by providing a holistic view of this relationship in a specific geographic context of Mombasa County and the educational context of public secondary schools.

A study conducted by Juma and Wanjiru (2020) on the psychological consequences of family disintegration on academic performance in Mombasa County probed into the psychological impact of family disintegration on learners in Mombasa County. Their mixed-methods approach, which combined surveys and in-depth interviews, unveiled a critical need for targeted psychological support among students experiencing family breakdown. The study underscores the relationship between emotional well-being and academic performance. However, it leaves a gap by not

thoroughly examining the influence of parental involvement, the availability of educational resources, and the issue of discipline on the psychological and emotional effects of family disintegration, which the current study sought to address.

Additionally, a study by Ahmed *et al.* (2018) scrutinizes the accessibility of educational resources and opportunities for children from disintegrated families in Mombasa County. Their quantitative research revealed significant resource disparities hindering academic performance among these students. The present study aims to expand upon Ahmed *et al.*'s findings by employing a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative data analysis with qualitative insights. This approach is intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of the psychological and emotional effects of lack of parental involvement, the unavailability of educational resources and the lack of discipline among learners, thereby addressing the identified gap.

Similarly, a different study by Karisa and Mbogo (2017) on parental involvement and learners' discipline in disintegrated families in Mombasa County investigated the intricate relationship between parental involvement and learners' discipline within disintegrated families in Mombasa County. Employing qualitative research methods, their findings underscore the crucial role of consistent parental guidance in maintaining positive student behavior and academic performance. However, their research did not specifically focus on matters such as the lack of parental involvement, psychological and emotional effects, the unavailability of educational resources and the lack of discipline among learners. The current study complements Karisa and Mbogo's (2017) work by adopting a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative insights with quantitative data analysis. Through this approach, the study provided a more comprehensive understanding of the role of parental involvement in the academic lives of learners from disintegrated families in Mombasa County, thus bridging the gap in their research. The current study sought to probe on the influence of family disintegration on learner's academic performance, it recognizes that based on an alarming trend reflected in statistics from the Ministry of Education, Mombasa County, there is a notable increase in the number of schools recording poor performance, with some students scoring as low as a mean grade of below C+ (below 7.0 points) (MOE Mombasa County, 2021). These statistics point to a growing issue. Particularly, the causes of this decline are multifaceted, encompassing factors such as poverty, unemployment, the pursuit of jobs overseas, psychological challenges, drug addiction, family interference, early and forced marriages, cultural influences, and domestic violence (Manswab, 2020).

Data from the 2022 Mombasa County Kenya Demographic and Health Survey reveals significant implications of family disintegration on learner academic performance. Among women aged 15-49, 25% have experienced physical violence since age 15, with 12% reporting recent incidents (Kenya Demographic and Health Survey Fact Sheet, 2022). Additionally, according to the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey Fact Sheet (2022), 10% have encountered sexual violence, including 4% in the last year. In intimate partnerships, 31% of women who have ever been married or had a partner experienced violence, rising to 40% in the last 12 months. These statistics underscore the

critical need to find out influence of family disintegration on learner's academic performance. The current study sought to probe the influence of family disintegration on learner's academic performance particularly in Mombasa County.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

The influence of family disintegration on the academic performance of learners has been studied globally (Gardinier, 2019; Mwamba, 2021). According to Thompson and Bennett (2020), stable family environments provide emotional security and support, positively impacting a child's overall well-being and self-esteem. Intact families often establish routines and structures that promote discipline, time management, and regular study habits, all of which contribute to academic success. Therefore, the absence of family disintegration creates a conducive environment that nurtures students' academic growth and achievement.

In public secondary schools in Mombasa County, Kenya, the academic performance of learners is a critical indicator of educational success, with the government aiming to achieve and maintain high standards of excellence. According to the Ministry of Education of Mombasa County (2021), the government has implemented significant measures to enhance students' academic performance. However, several public secondary schools across the region have witnessed a significant decline in end-of-secondary education programs. A substantial number of students received grades in the C-, D+, D, D-, and E categories in the KCSE 2021 results (Mombasa County MOE, 2021). This decline in performance points to the socioeconomic effects of family disintegration on learners' academic performance as a potential cause, among other factors. Family disintegration's adverse impact on students' educational outcomes plays a significant role in this concerning trend, affecting the well-being and prospects of young learners (Mombasa County MOE, 2021). However, the existing literature does not effectively explain how family disintegration influences students' academic performance, thus the need for the current study that explored the influence of family disintegration on learners' academic performance in public secondary schools in Mombasa County, Kenya.

### **2.1 Objective of the Study**

- 1) To examine how lack of parental involvement affects academic performance of learners from disintegrated families in public secondary schools in Mombasa County, Kenya.
- 2) To explore the psychological effects of family disintegration on learner's academic performance in public secondary schools in Mombasa County, Kenya

### **2.2 Research Questions**

- 1) How does lack of parental involvement in learners from disintegrated families affect their academic performance in public secondary schools in Mombasa County, Kenya?

- 2) What are the psychological effects of family disintegration on learner's academic performance in public secondary schools in Mombasa County, Kenya?

### **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

This study was based on Social Attachment Theory, which was developed by Bowlby (1980). The theory suggests that children are biologically predisposed to seek proximity and contact with their caregivers, especially in times of distress or uncertainty (Bowlby, 1980). This theory emphasizes the formation of a strong emotional bond between a child and their caregiver during childhood, with lasting effects throughout life. According to the theory, sensitive and emotionally available parenting leads to the development of a secure attachment style in children, fostering their socio-emotional well-being and academic performance (Bowlby, 1980).

Social attachment theory serves as a fundamental framework for understanding the emotional development of children and its profound influence on various life domains, including academic performance. According to this theory, the formation of a strong emotional bond between a child and their caregiver during childhood is crucial for their socio-emotional well-being and overall development (Bowlby, 1980). Sensitive and emotionally available parenting leads to the development of a secure attachment style in children, fostering positive self-esteem, emotional regulation, and social skills, which in turn can have positive effects on academic performance. On the other hand, less sensitive and emotionally distant parenting or neglect of the child's needs may result in insecure forms of attachment, which could pose a risk for various mental health problems, impacting learners' ability to focus on their studies and academic performance. Parental involvement and support play pivotal roles in shaping learners' academic performance. Engaged and supportive parents can positively influence their children's motivation, self-discipline, and attitudes toward learning, which can lead to improved academic performance (Johnson & Smith, 2017). Conversely, learners from disintegrated families may experience varying degrees of parental involvement, which can impact their academic performance. By examining the extent of parental involvement and support among learners from disrupted families, the study sought to identify how these factors contribute to their academic performance and overall well-being.

Family disintegration can have profound psychological and emotional consequences for learners, including feelings of insecurity, anxiety, and depression (Jensen & Svensson, 2020). These emotional challenges can adversely affect their focus, concentration, and motivation, ultimately influencing their academic performance. By exploring the psychological and emotional experiences of learners affected by family disintegration, the study aims to understand the link between these factors and their academic performance, providing valuable insights into potential intervention strategies to support their mental well-being and academic performance.

Access to educational resources is critical for learners' academic performance. Students from disintegrated families may face disparities in accessing learning materials, extracurricular activities, and educational programs, which can impact their learning

experiences (Eriksson & Lindström, 2021). Analyzing the availability and accessibility of educational resources and opportunities for these learners could shed light on the potential barriers they face and how these factors may influence their academic performance.

Parental involvement in discipline can significantly influence learners' behavior and academic performance (Olsen & Mikkelsen, 2018). In disintegrated families, the dynamics of parental involvement in setting and enforcing disciplinary boundaries may differ, and this can have implications for learners' conduct and engagement in their studies. By examining the connection between parental involvement in discipline and learners' academic performance, the study aimed to understand how consistent and supportive parenting practices can positively impact academic performance despite family disruptions.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The study used a convergent parallel design in the mixed-methods approach. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers, while in-depth interview guides were used to collect data from principals and the Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (QASO). The research instruments were reviewed for validity by the researcher's supervisors. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of the study instruments. The target population was 33 public secondary schools, 33 principals, 400 teachers, and One Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (QASO) of Mombasa County. Cluster and systematic sampling were used to select 11 out of 33 schools. Stratified and simple random sampling was used to select 220 out of 400 teachers. Purposive sampling was adopted to include 11 principals from the selected schools as well as the QASO. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science Version 25 and was reported in frequency tables, percentages, graphs, and charts. The qualitative data was organized into themes based on the research questions and reported in a narrative form and direct quotations.

### **4. Research Findings**

#### **4.1 Lack of Parental Involvement on Students' Academic Performance**

The first objective of this study was to find out whether lack of parental involvement affects the academic performance of learners from disintegrated families in public secondary schools in Mombasa County, Kenya. The teachers were requested to choose the response that best represented their opinions on a five-point scale. The scale of rating as presented in Table 1 was: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The findings are presented in Table 1.



**Table 1: Lack of Parental Involvement in Students' Academic Performance**

Statement	SA		A		UD		D		SD	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Students whose parents are not involved do not perform well academically.	18	8.5	156	73.6	19	9.0	16	7.5	3	1.4
Parents of students from disintegrated families do not provide academic support to students.	12	5.7	162	76.4	19	9.0	15	7.1	4	1.9
Parents of students from disintegrated families effectively communicate with their children regarding academic performance.	8	3.8	9	4.2	9	4.2	31	14.6	155	73.1
Parents of students from disintegrated families do not assist their children with homework	99	46.7	13	6.1	83	39.2	0	0	17	8.0
Parents of students from disintegrated families involve their children in decisions regarding their education, such as course selection or study habits.	42	19.8	11	5.2	16	7.5	14	6.6	129	60.8

Table 1 shows that 73.6% of the teachers agreed that students whose parents are not involved do not perform well academically, while 1.4% strongly disagreed. This could point to the possibility that when parents are not effectively involved, it affects learners' success. Parental involvement is essential for the performance of learners in schools, as Yılmaz (2020) argued. When parents actively participate in their child's education, it fosters a supportive and encouraging environment, both at home and at school. This collaboration helps to reinforce the importance of education, promotes better attendance, and increases the child's motivation and self-esteem. Additionally, it enables parents to understand and address any learning challenges their child might face. Regarding whether parents of students from disintegrated families do not provide academic support to students, the majority of the teachers (76.4%) agreed with the statement. This finding concurs with what was revealed by one of the principals that:

*“Some of our parents seem not to have time to even know what their children are doing in school. We do our best to encourage them to be involved, for example, by supervising their children as they do homework, but they do not seem to be responding positively, which affects the academic outcomes of the learners.” (Principal 1, 23/06/2024)*

It must be noted that parents from disintegrated families often struggle to provide academic support to students due to a range of challenges associated with their circumstances. These families may face heightened levels of stress, financial difficulties, and time constraints, which can detract from their ability to engage with their child's education. Additionally, emotional turmoil and instability can make it harder for parents to maintain consistent involvement and focus on academic matters. The lack of a stable and supportive home environment may also hinder the establishment of routines and the creation of a conducive learning atmosphere. Consequently, these factors collectively

contribute to reduced academic support from parents in disintegrated families, impacting the child's educational outcomes. Findings from one of the principals underscore this point, noting that *"family disintegration negatively impacts the academic performance of learners by disrupting stable home environments crucial for learning. It often leads to increased stress and emotional instability among students, which hinders their ability to focus on academics."* These findings emphasize the correlation between family disintegration and academic achievement. Miller (2014) argues that the instability and stress associated with family disintegration can create a home atmosphere that lacks the peace and support needed for focused academic activities.

Further, there was a strong disagreement from teachers (73.1%) regarding whether parents of students from disintegrated families effectively communicate with their children regarding academic performance. These results suggest that disintegrated families often find it hard to effectively communicate with their children about academic progress due to various factors such as emotional distress, divided attention, and limited time. These results are consistent with the findings from the quality assurance and standards officer, who asserted that:

*"On occasions when we have had meetings with parents, we have constantly encouraged them to be part of their children's education journey by participating in school activities, as this can help them know the progress of their children. Responding to this appeal has been a challenge, especially for disintegrated families."* (QASO, 21/06/2024)

The breakdown of the family unit can lead to heightened tensions and conflicts, which may strain parent-child relationships and impede open, constructive communication. Abdullah (2016) noted that a lack of a unified approach to parenting and differing expectations or priorities between separated parents could complicate consistent and effective communication about the child's education, resulting in a fragmented support system for the student's academic journey.

The results, as shown in Table 1, further revealed that slightly more than half of the teachers (53%) agreed that parents of students from disintegrated families do not assist their children with homework, which affects students' performance. This could be due to the fact that parents from disintegrated families tend to be overwhelmed with the demands of parenthood, including managing work, household duties, and financial pressures, which leaves them with limited time and energy for homework, including supporting their children with academic work. These arguments are consistent with the findings from one of the principals who narrated that parents from disintegrated families tend to be less involved in the academic life of their children, which affects the progress of learners. Related findings were underscored by Smith (2017), who argued that the emotional strain and stress associated with family disintegration can also affect parents' capacity to engage in their child's academic life.

The study further revealed that most of the teachers (60.8%) strongly disagreed that parents of students from disintegrated families involve their children in decisions

regarding their education, such as course selection or study habits. These findings could point to the possibility that the challenges of managing a fractured household can leave parents with limited time and emotional resources to invest in their child's educational planning. Communication breakdowns between separated or divorced parents can result in inconsistent or conflicting guidance, making it difficult to provide coherent support for academic decisions. The focus on immediate survival and financial stability can also overshadow long-term educational planning. These parents might also lack familiarity with the school system and the specifics of course selection, further hindering their ability to effectively engage in their child's academic choices. These factors affect the students' focus on academics and affect their learning and academic success.

Smith (2017) contended that the involvement of parents through effective communication about students' progress helps them stay informed about their child's achievements, challenges, and needs, enabling them to provide appropriate support and interventions. This communication fosters a collaborative relationship between home and school, reinforcing the importance of education and encouraging the child to take their studies seriously.

#### 4.2 The Psychological Effects of Family Disintegration on Learner's Academic Performance

The teachers were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements regarding the psychological effects of family disintegration on learner's academic performance. The scale of rating as presented in Table 2 was: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Table 2 presents the findings.

**Table 2:** The Psychological Effects of Family Disintegration on Learner's Academic Performance

Statement	SA		A		UD		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Students from disintegrated families experience stress that affects their academic performance.	129	60.8	18	8.5	30	14.2	21	9.9	14	6.6
Students from disintegrated families tend to have lower self-esteem and emotional well-being, hindering their academic performance.	86	40.6	63	29.7	23	10.8	12	5.7	28	13.2
Family disintegration often leads to students feeling isolated and having lower self-confidence, negatively affecting their academic performance.	81	38.2	79	37.3	00	00	9	4.2	43	20.3
The psychological effects of family disintegration have an impact on a student's overall academic performance.	52	24.5	2	0.9	134	63.2	4	1.9	20	9.4
Students from disintegrated families cope differently with psychological challenges	46	21.7	147	69.3	2	0.9	7	3.3	10	4.7

compared to those from stable family backgrounds.										
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The study results show that the majority of the teachers (60.8%), as demonstrated in Table 2, agreed that students from disintegrated families experience stress that affects their academic performance. Only 6.6% of the teachers strongly disagreed with the idea that students from disintegrated families experience stress that affects their academic performance. The majority of teachers likely agreed due to their first-hand observations and interactions with their students. Teachers often witness the emotional and behavioral challenges that children from such backgrounds face, including anxiety, distraction, and difficulty concentrating, which can directly impact their learning and classroom behavior. These students may also struggle with inconsistent routines and a lack of support at home, further exacerbating their stress and academic difficulties. Teachers' collective experiences and insights into these patterns underscore their agreement that the instability and stress of disintegrated families negatively influence students' academic outcomes.

In line with these findings from teachers, the Quality Assurance and Standards Officer stated that students from disintegrated families often experience strained relationships with one or both parents that deprive them of essential emotional support and role modeling crucial for their personal and educational development. In line with these findings, Cherlin (1992) argues that children are significantly affected academically as a result of family disruption due to the instability and stress it introduces into their lives. Cherlin posits that the frequent transitions associated with family breakdown, such as moving between households, changes in schools, and fluctuating family dynamics, disrupt the child's sense of security and routine. This instability can lead to emotional distress, lower self-esteem, and decreased motivation, all of which negatively impact academic performance. Cherlin also emphasizes that the economic hardships often accompanying family disruption can limit access to educational resources and support, further compounding the academic challenges faced by these children.

Table 2 further shows that most of the teachers (70.3%) agreed that students from disintegrated families tend to have lower self-esteem and emotional well-being, hindering their academic performance. Based on these findings, it is likely that the majority of the teachers reached this decision based on their regular encounters with these students' struggles in the classroom. Most teachers could have observed that the emotional impact of family disintegration, such as feelings of insecurity, abandonment, and conflict, can significantly undermine a child's self-worth and confidence. These emotional challenges often manifest in decreased motivation, reluctance to participate in class, and difficulty forming positive relationships with peers and teachers. Consequently, the lower self-esteem and compromised emotional well-being of these students create barriers to their academic engagement and success. This finding was further supported by one of the principals who argued that, "*feelings of abandonment,*

*inadequacy, or uncertainty about their worth make students from disintegrated families have low self-esteem, which affects them academically."*

Further, it was revealed that most of the teachers (76%) agreed that family disintegration often leads to students feeling isolated and having lower self-confidence, negatively affecting their academic performance. In an interview, one of the principals affirmed these findings from the teachers regarding how family disintegration affects students, arguing that:

*"Family disintegration affects students. These students sometimes withdraw from social interactions, avoiding participation in group activities and classroom discussions due to a lack of trust and fear of judgment. They exhibit signs of anxiety and depression, such as frequent absences and a lack of enthusiasm for school."* (Principal 2, 21/06/2024)

These findings show that the academic performance of students from disintegrated families may decline as they struggle to concentrate and stay motivated, often doubting their abilities and worth. Further, these students might be hesitant to seek help or express their needs, further exacerbating their sense of isolation and diminishing their self-confidence. The emotional turmoil and instability from their family situations create a pervasive sense of insecurity, impacting their overall well-being and educational experiences that affect their academic performance.

Regarding whether the psychological effects of family disintegration have an impact on a student's overall academic performance, most of the teachers (63.2%) were undecided, while 1.9% of the teachers strongly disagreed. Teachers who were undecided on whether the psychological effects of family disintegration impact a student's overall academic performance might be uncertain due to several factors. They may lack sufficient training or awareness of the indirect psychological and emotional issues that students from disintegrated families face, making it difficult for them to draw a clear connection between these issues and academic performance. Additionally, these teachers might not have had enough direct experience with or observations of such students to form a definitive opinion. In an interview, this is what one of the principals had to say:

*"The psychological effects of family disintegration on a learner's academic performance can be profound and expressed in many ways. In our school, students from disintegrated families often experience some levels of stress, anxiety, and emotional instability, which impair their ability to concentrate on their studies. These students also tend to struggle with inadequate parental involvement, which is critical for reinforcing positive study habits and academic discipline."* (Principal 8, 20/06/2024).

The statement that students from disintegrated families cope differently with psychological challenges compared to those from stable families was agreed upon by the majority (69.3%) of the teachers. Their response to this statement could be based on the idea that students from stable families tend to benefit from consistent emotional support,

secure environments, and reliable routines, which help them develop effective coping mechanisms and resilience. In contrast, those from disintegrated families often face ongoing stress, instability, and emotional turmoil, which can hinder their ability to manage psychological challenges. These students may lack the consistent support and guidance necessary for healthy coping, leading to increased anxiety, withdrawal, or disruptive behaviors. The absence of a stable, supportive environment can make it difficult for them to develop the same level of emotional resilience and coping strategies as their peers from stable families, impacting their overall psychological well-being and academic performance. Abdullah (2019) contended that instability and emotional stress resulting from family disintegration, such as divorce or separation, often lead to a lack of focus and motivation in students.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that family disintegration has a negative influence on learners' academic performance in public secondary schools in Mombasa County, Kenya. Furthermore, findings highlighted that the lack of effective parental involvement from disintegrated families also negatively impacts the academic success of learners. Additionally, the study showed that students from disintegrated families experience significant stress, which adversely affects their academic performance. The study recommended that school principals should develop initiatives to encourage greater parental involvement, particularly targeting parents from disintegrated families. This could include organizing regular parent-teacher meetings, workshops, and seminars that educate parents on the importance of their involvement in their children's education.

### Conflict of interest statement

As authors of this journal article entitled, Influence of Family Disintegration on Learners' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Mombasa County, Kenya, we have no conflicts of interest to declare. We have all seen and agreed with the contents of the manuscript, and there is no financial interest to report. We certify that the submission is original work and is not under review by any other publication.

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