

## **The influence of parents' socio-economic status on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Keumbu Division, Kisii County, Kenya**

Faith Kerubo Onyancha<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Kinga Njoroge<sup>2</sup> and Dr. Mukolwe Newton<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Master of Educational Psychology Candidate, Maasai Mara University, P.O. BOX 164-40200, Kisii, Kisii County, Kenya

<sup>2,3</sup> Lecturer, Department of Education Psychology Foundations, Early Childhood Education and Special Needs Education Maasai Mara University

---

**Abstract:** Academic performance among students is influenced by numerous factors. Yet, excelling in academics is important in ensuring that students not only pass exams but also lead rewarding lives. What influence does socio-economic status play in academic performance? The present study therefore, sought to determine the influence of parents' socio-economic status on students' academic performance in public secondary schools. The study utilized one hundred and fifty (150) respondents drawn from sixteen secondary schools in Keumbu Division. Respondents were selected using purposive as well as systematic sampling approaches within descriptive survey design. Data were collected using a specially designed questionnaires and interview schedules as the research tools and analyzed descriptively. To establish validity, experts were used to assess the concepts of the instrument purported to measure, the adequacy of the scales, and whether items represented accurately the variable under investigation. In addition, through pilot testing any ambiguities were checked. A test-retest method was employed, allowing a period of two weeks interval between the first and second administration, to estimate the reliability of the instrument. The instrument yielded a coefficient of correlation of 0.7852. The researcher utilized the Social Learning Theoretical framework to interpret the results of the study. The study established that socio-economic status plays a significant role in influencing students' academic performance. It was concluded that the lower the parents socio-economic status the lower the students average grade and number of points in performance. Conversely, the higher the parents socio-economic status the higher the academic performance of the students. It implies that parents' socio-economic status influences the performance of the students in secondary schools.

**Key words:** Socio-economic status, academic performance.

---

### **I. Introduction**

Socio-economic background or status refers to a person's position in a given group, society or culture as determined by wealth, occupation, education and social class. Amutabi (2003) discusses the impact of socio-economic status on children's readiness for school. He asserts that the segregating nature of social class, ethnicity may well reduce the variety of enriching experiences thought to be prerequisite for creating readiness to learn among children. Social class, ethnicity, dictate neighborhood, housing, and access to resources that affect enrichment or deprivation as well as the acquisition of specific value systems.

American Psychological Association, APA (2001) describe the relationship of family socio-economic status to children's readiness for school, Across all socio-economic groups; parents face major challenges when it comes to providing optimal care and education for their children. For families in poverty these challenges can be formidable. Sometimes, when basic necessities are lacking, parents must place top priority on housing, food, clothing, and health care. Educational toys, games, and books may appear to be luxuries, and parents may not have the time, energy, or knowledge to find innovative and less-expensive ways to foster young children's development. Sheldon (2003) observes that even in families with above average income parents often lack the time and energy to invest fully in their children's preparation for school, and they sometimes face a limited array of options for high-quality child care both before their children start school and during the early school years. Kindergarten teachers throughout the country report that children are increasingly arriving at school inadequately prepared. Families with low socioeconomic status often lack the financial, social, and educational supports that characterize families with high socioeconomic status. Poor families also may have inadequate or limited access to community resources that promote and support children's development and school readiness. Parents may have inadequate skills for such activities as reading to and with their children, and they may lack information about childhood immunizations and nutrition.

Lareau (2004) states that low maternal education and minority-language status are most consistently associated with fewer signs of emerging literacy and a greater number of difficulties in preschoolers. Having inadequate resources and limited access to available resources can negatively affect families' decisions regarding their young children's development and learning. As a result, children from families with low socioeconomic status are at greater risk of entering kindergarten unprepared than their peers from families with median or high socioeconomic status.

Mc Neal (2001) has also pointed out in his study that SES has overridden other educational influences such as family size, parental involvements and educational level of the parents. Jeynes (2002) shows that there is a positive correlation between SES of a family and the academic achievements of a student. Hochschild (2003) says that students who have a low SES earn lower test scores and are more likely to drop out of school. Emmon (2005) believed that low SES negatively affects academic achievements because low SES prevents access to vital resources and creates additional stress at home. This study determined the influence of parents' socio-economic status on students' academic performance in public secondary schools as little attention has been given on it.

### **Statement of the problem**

Poor performance in Kisii County and especially in Keumbu Division has been associated with high level of indiscipline from students, lack of commitment from parents, teachers and inefficient administrators in secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 2012). In order to improve performance, much has been done to improve the level of discipline in many of these schools and at the same time the ministries of education and other stake holders have done much to put in place efficient administration. In spite of all these, student performance has not significantly improved. Therefore, it is important to establish other factors that influence academic performance in the division outside those that are perceived. Such factors may emanate from parental factors from which students comes from as they received inadequate attention by researchers. This study therefore focuses on the influence of parental factors on academic performance of students in public Secondary schools in Keumbu Division in Kisii County. Such parental factors may include the parent's education levels, parental socio-economic status, parent's occupation and finally parental involvement in the students' academic activities. Therefore the study sought to determine the influence of parents' socio-economic status on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Keumbu Division, Kisii County.

### **Study objectives**

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To determine the influence of parents' socio-economic status on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Keumbu Division.
- ii. To establish the influence payment of school levies/fees in time on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Keumbu Division.
- iii. To find out the influence of non-payment of school levies/ fees on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Keumbu Division.

## **II. Literature Review**

The concept of socio-economic status has received widespread attention from scholars. Amutabi (2003) discusses the impact of socio-economic status on children's readiness for school. He asserts that the segregating nature of social class, ethnicity may well reduce the variety of enriching experiences thought to be prerequisite for creating readiness to learn among children. Social class, ethnicity, dictate neighborhood, housing, and access to resources that affect enrichment or deprivation as well as the acquisition of specific value systems.

American Psychological Association, APA ( 2001) describe the relationship of family socio-economic status to children's readiness for school, Across all socio-economic groups; parents face major challenges when it comes to providing optimal care and education for their children. For families in poverty these challenges can be formidable. Sometimes, when basic necessities are lacking, parents must place top priority on housing, food, clothing, and health care. Educational toys, games, and books may appear to be luxuries, and parents may not have the time, energy, or knowledge to find innovative and less-expensive ways to foster young children's development. Sheldon (2003) observes that even in families with above average income parents often lack the time and energy to invest fully in their children's preparation for school, and they sometimes face a limited array of options for high-quality child care both before their children start school and during the early school years. Kindergarten teachers throughout the country report that children are increasingly arriving at school inadequately prepared. Families with low socioeconomic status often lack the financial, social, and educational supports that characterize families with high socioeconomic status. Poor families also may have inadequate or limited access to community resources that promote and support children's development and school readiness.

Parents may have inadequate skills for such activities as reading to and with their children, and they may lack information about childhood immunizations and nutrition.

Mc Neal (2001) has also pointed out in his study that SES has overridden other educational influences such as family size, parental involvements and educational level of the parents. Jeynes (2002) shows that there is a positive correlation between SES of a family and the academic achievements of a student. Hochschild (2003) says that students who have a low SES earn lower test scores and are more likely to drop out of school. Emmon (2005) believed that low SES negatively affects academic achievements because low SES prevents access to vital resources and creates additional stress at home. This study determined the influence of parents' socio-economic status on students' academic performance in public secondary schools as little attention has been given on it.

### **III. Research Methodology**

The study employed a descriptive survey design in which questionnaires and interview schedule were utilized to collect data. The study was located in Keumbu Division which is 5km from Kisii Municipality which is the cradle of Kisii community but also serves as a confluence of the Luo community of south Nyanza, the Kalenjin of South Rift and the Maasais of the Mara. Kisii is located on latitude: 0 41<sup>0</sup> E. The town is approximately 350 Kms from the capital city of Nairobi. Other major urban centres from Kisii town are Kisumu City which is 114kms to the northwest; Nyamira at 23kms to the immediate north; Keroka at 25Kms to the east; Kilgoris at 46 kms to the southeast and Migori 67 kms to the south-west. The choice of Keumbu Division as the area to conduct the study was motivated by a number of reasons; the division is host to a number of public secondary schools (16) as of the time of conducting this study; the division performs dismally in national examinations; the researcher, picked interest of the division to find out how to resolve the influence of selected parental factors on students' academic performance; the location is easily accessible and 'the researcher can quickly develop rapport with the Respondents; finally, the researcher is familiar with the location which helped to contextualize the responses given by Respondents (Hassan, 2009).

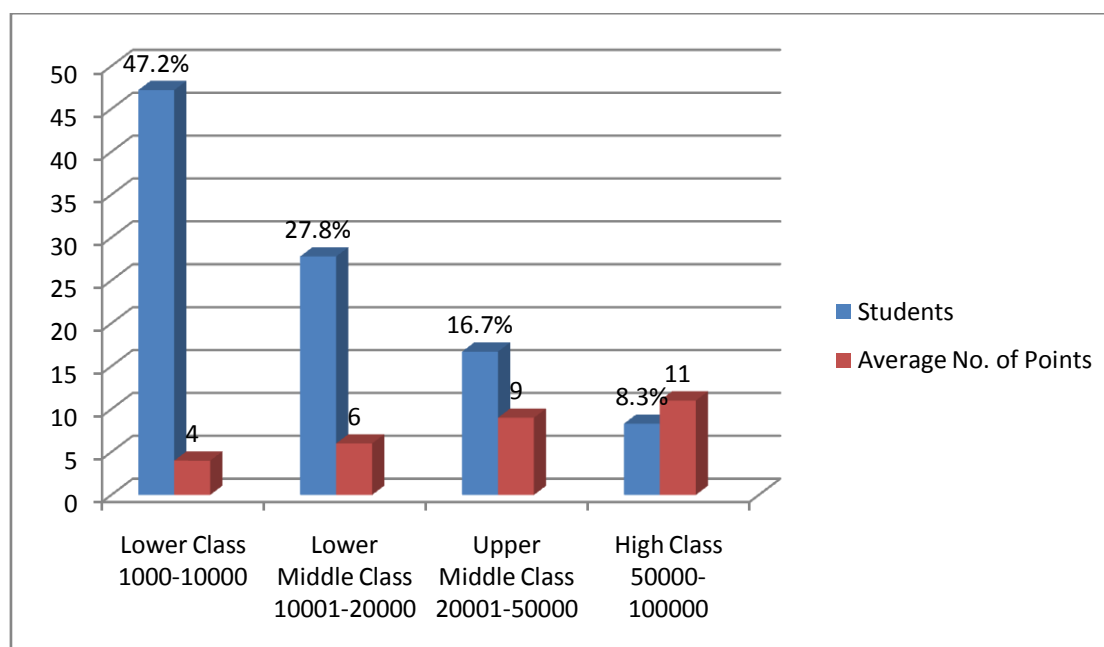
The study surveyed public secondary schools which were classified into two educational zones from which stratified random sampling was used to select a total of 16 schools to participate in the study. Simple random sampling was used to select the schools from each zone and the researcher considered this to be representative sample because the sample size was large enough to contain all the variation in the population and equal and independence chances were given to each individual in the population to be selected. Hence 7 schools were selected from Ibeno zone and 9 schools from Birongo Zone. Sixteen principals and 16 directors of studies from the selected schools qualified to participate in this study. They were selected by use of purposive sampling. Simple random sampling was used to select teachers from each selected schools. Ten percent of the 2, 3 and 4 students from the selected schools were selected using simple random sampling technique which Psacharopoulos & Patrions (2002) considers as adequate sample size.

The second stage involved the identification of students from selected schools to participate in the study. To do so, the researcher employed the systematic sampling approach. This method was preferred because it is easy to come up with the sample size due to the number of students involved. In this regard, the researcher visited the selected schools and approached the administrators to provide the list of names of the students who would participate in the study so as to compare with the academic records kept by the school to ensure that the scores in the study were valid.

### **IV. Results And Discussion**

The study sought to assess the influence of parents' socio-economic status on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Keumbu Division. In this context, socio-economic status is mediated as a person's position in a given group, society or culture as determined by wealth, occupation, education and social class. Amutabi (2003) discusses the impact of socio-economic status on children's readiness for school. He asserts that the segregating nature of social class, ethnicity may well reduce the variety of enriching experiences thought to be prerequisite for creating readiness to learn among children. Social class, ethnicity, dictate neighborhood, housing, and access to resources that affect enrichment or deprivation as well as the acquisition of specific value systems.

As far as the influence of socio-economic status is concerned, the study examined whether excelling in a academic performance is an important factor in enhancing socio-economic status. The study sought to determine the influence of parents' socio-economic status on student performance. Their responses are shown in figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Parents' Socio-economic Status on Academic Performance

From the results in figure 1, show that almost half (51) 47.2% of the students indicated that their parents belong to the lower class with the net earnings of between Kshs. 1000- 10000 per month. The average grade of these students was a D+ (plus) with an average number of points of 4.0000. Further, the figure shows that (30) 27.8% of the students indicated that their parents belong to the lower middle class with the net earnings of between Kshs. 10001- 20000 per month. The average grade of these students was a C (plain) with an average number of points of 6.0000. In addition, the table indicates that show that (18) 16.7% of the students indicated that their parents belong to the upper middle class with the net earnings of between Kshs. 20001- 50000 per month. The average grade of these students was a B (plain) with an average number of points of 9.0000. Finally, results from the figure show that (09) 8.3% of the students indicated that their parents belong to the high class with the net earnings of between Kshs. 50001- 100000 per month. The average grade of these students was an A- (minus) with an average number of points of 11.0000. From these findings, it can be implied that the lower the parents socio-economic status the lower the students average grade and number of points in performance. Conversely, the higher the parents socio-economic status the higher the academic achievement of the students. This implies that parents' socio-economic status influences the performance of the students in secondary schools. These findings are in line with those of Amutabi (2003) who asserts that the segregating nature of social class, ethnicity may well reduce the variety of enriching experiences thought to be prerequisite for creating readiness to learn among children. It contradicts the findings of Sheldon (2003) who observes that even in families with above average income parents often lack the time and energy to invest fully in their children's preparation for school, and they sometimes face a limited array of options for high-quality child care both before their children start school and during the early school years.

Further, the study sought from the students whether school levies/fees are paid in time and the findings are as in figure 2.

#### Payment of School Levies (School Fees)

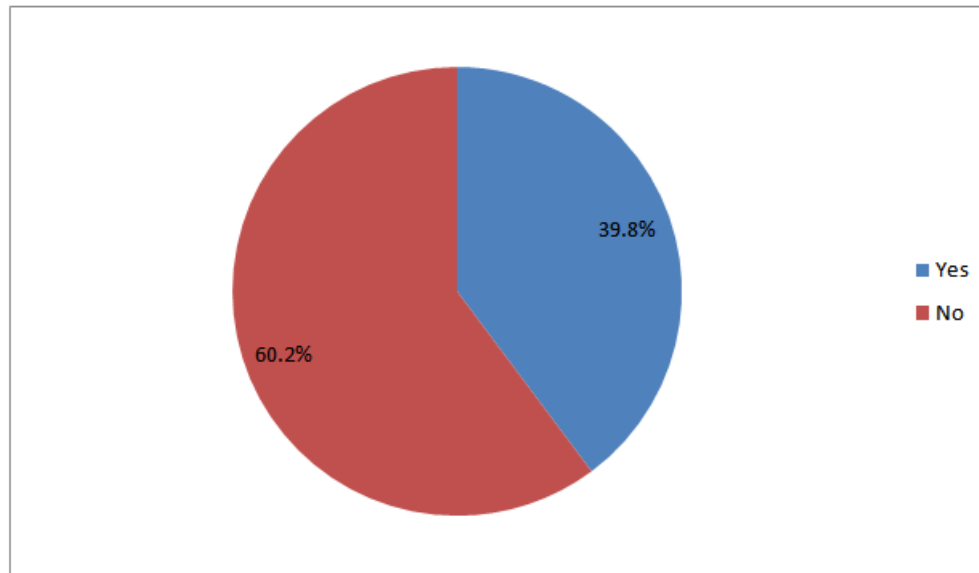


Figure 2: Payment of school Levies (school fees)

Information from figure 2 shows that more than half (65) 60.2% of the students indicated that their school levies/ fees is not paid in time while (43) 39.8% of them indicated that it is paid in time. This implies that most of students are absent from school looking for the school levies/fees at the expense of learning.

The researcher further sought to find out how often the students are sent home for the school levies/ fees and the responses were as in figure 3.

#### How often Students are sent home for fees

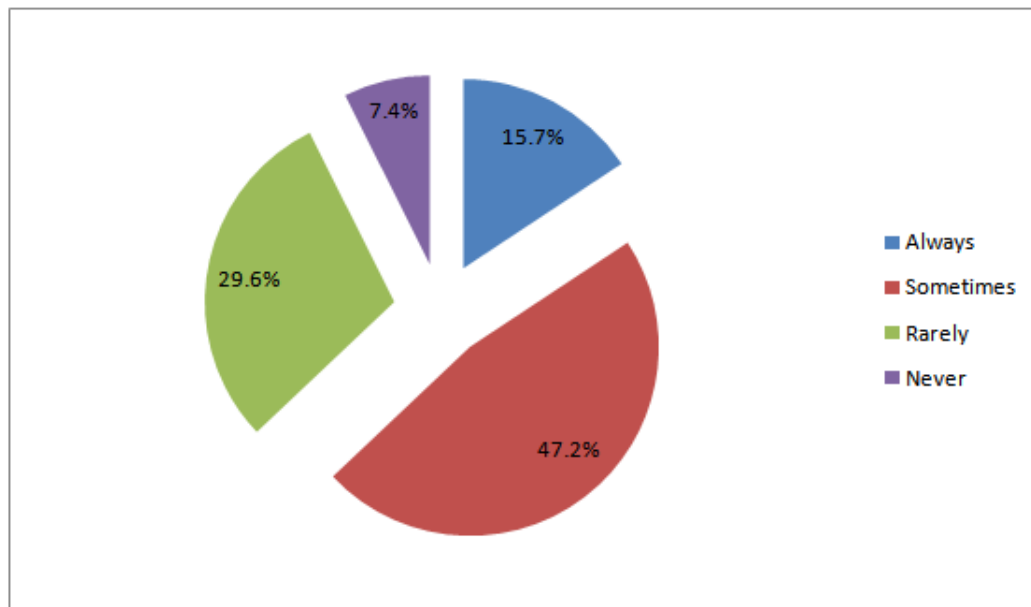


Figure 3: How often Students are sent home for fees

Data from figure 3 shows that majority (68) 62.9 % of the students indicated that they are always and sometimes sent home for school levies/ fees while only (08) 7.4% are never sent home for fees. Those students who are rarely sent home for school levies/ fees constituted (32) 29.6%. This implies that most of students are absent from school due to lack of the school levies/ fees which may be due the parents' socio-economic status. This in turn affects students' academic performance.

The researcher sought from the students the extent to which the parents' socio-economic factors affect their academic performance and the responses are as in table 1

Table 1: Parents' Socio-Economic Status and their Effect on Students' Performance

Statement	Percentage (%)				
	SA	A	N	D	SD
My school fees is always paid late	27.8	27.8	8.3	21.3	14.8
I receive all the basics I need for my studies	17.6	25.9	7.4	28.7	20.4
My school materials are not provided by my guardians because they don't have money	30.6	37.0	4.6	16.7	11.1
Sometimes I miss school because I help my guardians to raise my school fees	16.7	8.3	1.0	37.0	37.0
My guardians provide me with everything I need for schooling	17.6	18.5	3.7	25.9	34.3

Results in table 1 indicate that 55.6% of the students agreed with the fact that their school fees are always paid late which affects their performance whereas 36.1% disagreed. Only 8.3% were not certain about it. This implies that most of the parents are not able to pay fees in time to allow the students in school. As a result, the performance of the students is dismal. This is in line with Bakken (2003) who asserts that the source of income is essential for meeting the child's educational needs as well as participating on social activities.

The table further shows that 43.5% of the students agreed that their parents are rich and they have the basics for their studies while 59.1% disagreed. Only 7.4% were not certain about it. This implies that most of the parents/guardians are not able to provide the basics for their studies. As a result, the performance of the students is affected. This is in line with APA (2001) who asserts that sometimes, when basic necessities are lacking, parents must place top priority on housing, food, clothing, and health care. Educational toys, games, and books may appear to be luxuries, and parents may not have the time, energy, or knowledge to find innovative and less-expensive ways to foster young children's development.

In addition the table indicates that 67.6% of the students agree that most times their school materials are not provided by their guardians because they don't have money whereas 27.7% of the students disagree only 4.6% are not certain about it. This implies that most parents are not able to provide school materials to give them humble time to study. As a result, the performance of the students is affected. This is in line with Kalil (2005) who asserts that unstable or insufficient funds limits families' ability to purchase the resources and goods (school, housing, food and cognitively enriched learning environment) that are critical for successful development and academic performance.

Also the table indicates that 25.0% of the students agree that sometimes they miss school because they help their guardians to raise money for their school levies/ fees and this affects their performance whereas 74.0% of the disagree while 1.0% are not certain about it. This implies that most parents struggle alone to look for school levies/fees which leads to late payment of school fees hence affecting their performance. This is in line with Hill et (2004) who reports that children from homes with low income due to low parental occupations may model their parent's lower levels of educational attainment and thus not work hard to attain high grades in school. He further observes that the link between academic performance and future occupational success may be less clear for children from low socio-economic status homes.

Finally the table indicates that 36.1% of the students agree that their guardians are financially okay and they adequately provide them with everything they need for schooling 60.2% disagree with the same while 3.7% are not certain about it. This implies that most of the parents in Keumbu are socio-economically challenged. This is in line with the findings of Jeynes (2002) who noted that there is a positive correlation between SES of a family and the academic achievements of a student. Hochschild (2003) says that students who have a low SES earn lower test scores and are more likely to drop out of school. Emmon (2005) believed that low SES negatively affects academic achievements because low SES prevents access to vital resources and creates additional stress at home.

A further statistical test (chi-square) was carried out to show whether there existed a relationship between the parents' socio-economic status and academic performance of the students. The rejection level was set at 0.05. The results were tabulated as in table 2:

**Table 2: Chi-Square Results on relationship between the parents' socio-economic status and academic performance of the students**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.371(a)	4	.004
Likelihood Ratio	21.263	4	.002
Linear- by- linear Association	1.234	1	0.101
N of valid cases	108		

The  $\chi^2 = 19.371$   $df = 4$  and  $sig = 0.004$  was found. This implies that  $p < 0.05$ . This implies that there was a significant relationship between the parents' socio-economic status and academic performance of the students.

## V. Conclusions

From the findings of the study, it is clear that the lower the parents socio-economic status the lower the students average grade and number of points in performance. Conversely, the higher the parents socio-economic status the higher the academic performance of the students. It implies that parents' socio-economic status influences the performance of the students in secondary schools.

## References

- [1]. American Psychological Association, (2001). Task Force on Socio economic Status. Report of the APA Task Force on Socioeconomic Status. Washington, DC
- [2]. Amutabi, M.N. (2003). The 8-4-4 system of education. *International Journal of Educational Development* 23(2003) P.P.127-144
- [3]. Borg, M. P. Gall, M. (2001). *Educational Research: An Introduction* 5<sup>th</sup> Edition; New York: Longman.California School Boards Association (CSBA). (2006, November). Governance and policy services: Policy briefs. West Sacramento, CA: Author.
- [4]. Emmon, M.K. (2005). Socio-demographic school neighborhood and parenting influences on Academic achievement of Latino Young Adolescents. *Journal of Youth and adolescence*.
- [5]. Floods, J. & Anders, P.L. (2005). Literacy Development of students in urban Schools. Research and Policy NJ: International Reading association
- [6]. Hassan, J.E. (2009). Parent's socio-economic status and children's academic Performance. Munthesgt, Oslo: Norske Kuinners Sanitetsforening.
- [7]. Hill, N.E, Castellino, D.R. Lansford, J.E. Nowlin, P, Dodge, K.A, Bates, J.E. Pettit, G.S. (2004). Parent academic involvement as related to school behaviour, achievement, and aspiration: Demographic variations across adolescence.
- [8]. Jeynes W. H. (2002). Examining the Effects of Parental Absence on the Academic Achievements of Adolescents the Challenge of Controlling for Family Income. *Journal of family and Economic Issues*, 23(2234-243.)
- [9]. Jordon, W.J. & Plank, S.B. (2000). Talent loss among high school – achieving poor students. In: Sanders MG, editor. School students placed at risk: Research policy and practice in the dducation of poor and minority adolescents. Pp. 83 – 108.
- [10]. Kalil, A (2005). Unemployment and job displacement: The impact on families and children. *Ivey business Journal* 2,1-5.
- [11]. Kathuri, J.N. & D.A. Pals, (1993). *Introduction to Education Research*. Educational Media Centre, Egerton University, Njoro.
- [12]. Khan, J. & Jemberu, A. (2002). Influence of family social economic status on Educational and Occupational aspirations of high and low achieving adolescents. *Journal of community guidance and Research* 19. *Journal of Social Psychology*. Kakamega District.
- [13]. Lareau, Annette. (2004). *Unequal Childhoods: Race, Class, and Family Life*. University of California Press Government Printer. Press.
- [14]. McNeal, R. B. (2001) "Differential effects of parental involvement on cognitive and behavioral outcomes by socioeconomic status" *Journal of Socio-Economic*, 30 (2) 171-176.
- [15]. Mugenda, O. & Mugenda, A. (2003). *Research Method: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. Nairobi: African Centre for Technology Studies (Acts) Press.
- [16]. Ohba, G. (2009). Elusive search for Quality Education. The Case of Quality Assurance and Teacher Accountability. *International Journal of Education Management*, 22(5): 417-431.
- [17]. Orodho, J.A. & Kombo, D.K.(2000). Factors Influencing student's achievement in Science at Secondary School level. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Kenyatta, University, Kenya.
- [18]. Sheldon, S. (2003). Linking school – family Community Partnership in urban Elementary Schools to Students Achievement on State tests. *Urban Review*.