



Influence of Parental Support on Academic Achievement of Vulnerable and Orphaned Children in Ainabkoi Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

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Abstract: Children who are orphaned are a major concern for all education stakeholders across the world. The purpose of study was to investigate influence of parental support on academic achievement of vulnerable and orphaned children in Ainabkoi Sub County. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population comprised of 99 Early Childhood Schools in Ainabkoi Sub-County, 580 teachers in selected schools. Cluster and random sampling techniques were used to select the respondents. Interview guides and questionnaires were used to collect data. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics with the aid of SPSS version 25. Analyzed data was presented using tables, graphical illustrations, and narrations. The study findings showed that parental support was statistically significant and positively influenced the academic achievement of vulnerable and orphaned children in Ainabkoi Sub County in Kenya. Parental support positively influences the academic achievement of vulnerable and orphaned children in Ainabkoi Sub County in Kenya. The study recommends that parental support be ensured since the information is shared about how the child is doing at home for the benefit of the teachers, and in turn, the caregivers or parents can keep abreast of the child's academic status and performance. This can significantly impact how the child perceives the value and premium placed on their overall well-being and educational endeavors. This, in turn, has a psychological and social implication that influences their attitudes and effort towards the academic pursuits.

Keywords: Academic achievement, Vulnerable, Orphaned, Parental support, Children

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1. Introduction

Child development research has shown that most accelerated brain development occurs before a child turns three years old. In this period children, "develop their abilities to think and speak, learn and reason and lay the foundation for their values and social behaviour as adults (Pekrun, 2017). Early childhood development is a

comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to eight years of age with the active participation of their parents and caregivers (Ogunyemi & Ragpot, 2015). The aim is to provide equal opportunities for all children to develop to their full capacity in the following areas: physical, cognitive/mental, emotional, social, spiritual and moral.

Psychosocial factors are a multidimensional construct. Researchers in the field of psychology Gill, Williams and Reifsteck (2017) agree that a pupil engaging in any learning situation has to answer three fundamental questions: 'Can I do this activity?', 'Do I want to do this activity and why?', and 'What do I need to do to succeed?' (Davis, 2018). Constructs relating to the question "Can I do this activity?" are the expectations pupils have according to their capabilities to perform a certain activity in different areas. Over the last five decades there has been general consensus amongst all people studying child development that prenatal growth and early childhood experiences set the foundation for long-term health and development of children into adulthood.

In the USA, up to 40% of ninth-grade orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) pupils in cities with the highest dropout rates repeat ninth grade and who find that their academic skills are insufficient for high school-level work. Over one third of all dropouts are lost in ninth grade. Unfortunately, many pupils are not given the extra support they need to make a transition to high school and are lost in ninth grade. Most of vulnerability of Children has continued to increase. Addressing the needs of OVC and mitigating negative outcomes of the growing OVC population worldwide is a high priority for national governments and international stakeholders that recognize this as an issue with social, economic, and human rights dimensions (Pillay, 2018).

In South African, policies supporting early childhood education development of OVC is poor. However, there is need to better management of social grants to ensure that OVC actually get the funds; the safety and security of OVC access to counseling services at schools and local communities; aftercare support centres, school homework support programmes; learning support for OVC; better housing facilities for OVC; improved health services; better training and support for teachers working with OVC. However, addressing OVC concerns needs systemic intervention so policies directed at improving the lives of poor families should also be promulgated, such as, earning supplements directed at correcting wage inadequacies, tax policies that do not penalize the poor, and job creation policies. An integrated coordinated strategy that involves the different sectors of government together with relevant stakeholders in the community is needed for policies pertaining to OVC to be developed and successfully implemented (Mwoma & Pillay, 2015).

One of the key findings of the RAAAP assessment was that civil society organizations (CSOs) play an important role in supporting community-based responses to OVC. Nevertheless, many vulnerable children were still not being reached by current programs. These findings were the basis for establishing a comprehensive strategy that: (1) identifies OVC not being supported through NGOs and (2) provides their families, and in some cases foster families, with a cash subsidy. This strategy is referred to

in the NPA for OVC. The first priority area in the plan is strengthening the capacity of families to protect and care for OVC at the household level (Ward, Hurrell, Visram, Riemenschneider, Pellerano, O'Brien, & Willis, 2010).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

It is a major concern for all education stakeholders in Kenya and the rest of the world that orphaned and vulnerable children achieve academically at all levels. According to ECDE program officer in Ainabkoi Sub County, this group of pupils performs dismally in academics across all elementary classes. As a result, they are more likely to face challenges such as low self-esteem, poor performance, and delinquency as a result. Orphans and vulnerable children, indiscipline, absenteeism, lack of parental involvement and high levels of poverty are all psychosocial factors that influence academic achievement in early childhood development. These are among the key psychosocial factors that contribute to low academic performance of the pupils that need to be addressed. In Ainabkoi Sub- County, there are numerous Orphaned and Vulnerable Children projects. Due to a large number of street children and orphans dropping out of school in the county, the performance of these projects has not been adequately addressed by the government. A lack of resources has prevented these projects from providing quality follow-up care for orphaned and vulnerable children. This was the driving force behind the researcher's decision to conduct the research.

1.2 General Objective

The purpose of the study was to investigate whether parental support influences the academic achievement of vulnerable and orphaned children in Ainabkoi Sub County in Kenya.

1.3 Research Question

The study was guided by this research question: What is the influence of parental support the achievement of vulnerable and orphaned children in Ainabkoi Sub County in Kenya?

2. Literature Review

Parental Involvement as a Psycho-Social Factor Influencing the Academic Achievement of Vulnerable and Orphaned Children

Kris and David (2020) studied on perceptions of parents/guardians about the effectiveness of future

families' orphans and vulnerable children programme in Olievenhoutbosch, South Africa. Their findings revealed that lack of support to OVC by their parents or respective guardians in receiving the needs both physically and emotional is evidently a challenge. This would translate over to any assistance needed in a child's school or homework. Collaboration from caretakers or parents who are beleaguered by difficult living situation of providing economically is scarce or non-existent. In the case of child headed households, parental support is unrealistic and this can put both the child and the educators under stress to bridge the gap. Children under the care of an orphanage may receive academic and physical support and provisions from the overseers in the institutions, but the element of emotional support may be limited. The parent teacher follow-up may be curtailed or non-existent reducing the impact and frustrate efforts of a support system for the involved child. This is collaboration is critical since information is shared about how the child is doing at home for the benefit of the teachers, and in turn the caregivers or parents can keep abreast of the child's academic status and performance. This can have a significant impact on how the child perceives the value and premium placed on their overall well-being and educational endeavors. This in turn has a psychological and social implication that influences their attitudes and effort towards the academic pursuits (Yang & Lau, 2019).

Tefera and Refu (2019) examined orphans' academic performance, stumbling blocks and parental role of school in primary schools in Ilubabor zone. In primary schools in Iluababor zone, the study found statistically significant difference in academic performance between orphaned and non-orphaned pupils. Among the problems highlighted were lack of food and high work demand of the people living with them.

Ferri, Grifoni and Guzzo (2020) study revealed that a lack of parental care, a lack of school uniforms and learning materials, and behavioral and emotional problems. The findings also showed that neither the schools nor the educational institutions or the government made any efforts to address the problems of the orphaned students and promote the academic achievement of the orphans. Orphaned students did not receive academic or parental support in their respective schools.

Marthe (2017) conducted research on educational project support and academic performance of vulnerable children in Rwanda. The National Commission for Children's Secondary Education Project was established to provide social and economic security to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). The study found that there was a significant reduction in the number of school dropouts among OVC beneficiaries of the project. A study of project interventions and academic performance of project beneficiaries found that the project SSF-HIV-NCC contributed to some extent to the academic performance of OVC.

Mwoma and Pillay (2016) assessed educational support for children and youth in South African public primary schools by engaging in critical dialog about the problems encountered and the interventions to be made. One hundred and seven participants took part in the survey, including 65 OVC and 42 teachers. The results show that while the South African government has taken action to support OVC to acquire a primary education, several obstacles have been discovered that prevent some OVC from receiving an adequate education. Several action steps were presented as a result of the findings.

Schneiderman, Kennedy, Granger and Negriff (2020) findings indicated that parental or caregiver support can also be affected by instability and residency challenges. OVC may find themselves constantly looking for a place to reside, moving from one relative to another. This can cause insecurity and anxiety problems which can be reflected back in their school performance. This challenge can lead to lack of consistent school attendance, deficits in concentration levels, isolations by peers, and completely dropping out of school.

Ndlovu (2019) focused on exploring psychosocial support systems for vulnerable children in rural schools. The study findings revealed that teachers face a formidable challenge in providing the unique support system OVC require. In fact, literature show a strong indication that teachers are ill prepared to do so since the main focus as educators is academia uptake and the discipline that goes with it. Additionally, other stakeholders such as parents, the community and the administrators lack the proper capacity to cultivate an environment that caters to the needs of OVC. There is a moral imperative then, to review how to navigate this issue and examine some of the different element that might be involved namely: peer pressure, parental support, cultural and religious practices and interpersonal relationships.

Musungu (2021) focused on the role of community-based programs in empowering orphans and vulnerable children in Kenya: A Case of Mathare Child Development Center, Nairobi County. The study findings noted that the increased breakdown of the traditional family structure, lack of cohesiveness in the society or community and increased incidences of HIV among other things has contributed to the rise of orphaned and vulnerable children. The African saying of "It takes a village to raise a child" has lost much of its significance with the increasing nature of individualism in the modern society which continues to adapt westernized lifestyles and ideologies (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). The African heritage, cultural dogmas and practices of children being nurtured with reverence is no longer relevant. The most vulnerable in the society are now exposed to all kinds of issues that would have been a taboo (Sahlins, 2017). They are no longer protected from trauma and the boundaries have been pushed to the limit. As such, there is an impact to the process of psycho-social development in modern digital

children that affect them in the duration of their lifetime. It is crucial to therefore examine the various aspects of psycho-social dynamics among OVC children and the teachers' perceptions thereof.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The conception framework demonstrates the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The independent variable is parental support which is measured by parent participation, socio-economic status

of parents and parents as advocates influencing the dependent variable. The dependent variable is academic achievement to be measured by mean grade, attendance, reading proficiency and satisfactory behaviour. If there are parents support the orphan children will achieve their academics goals in terms of mean grade, attendance, reading proficiency and satisfactory behaviour. The intervening variable is whole school experiences measured by teachers' characteristics, environmental situations, transitional programming and distance from home to school

Independent Variable

Dependent Variable

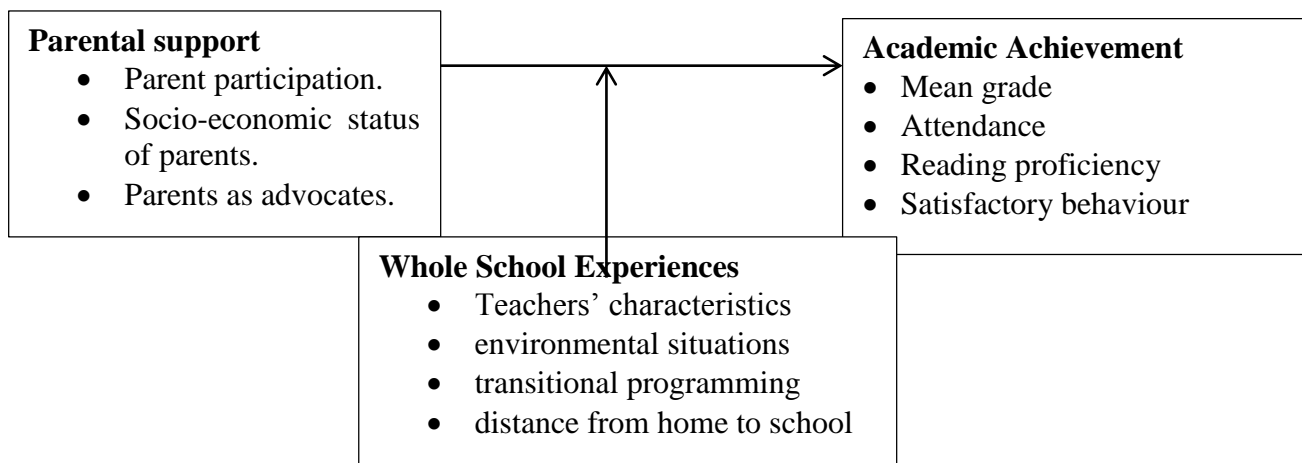


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Orphaned and vulnerable children in early childhood education can be affected by psychosocial a factor, which is why this design was chosen to describe this (Heppner, Bruce & Kivlighan, 2009). Orphaned and vulnerable children in early childhood education were the focus of this study (Kothari, 2017).

3.2 Target Population

The target population for the study were 580 early childhood teachers from 99 schools. Early childhood education is conceptualized as all formal programmes provided to children from birth to eight years (Rao & Sun, 2015). All teachers in Ainabkoi Sub County who teach pre-primary one and two, as well as those in grades one, two and three were therefore included in this study. The distribution of the early childhood teachers is shown on Table 1

Table 1: Distribution of the Target Population

Zones	Total Number of Schools	Total Number of Teachers
Zone 1	31	216
Zone 2	24	131
Zone 3	22	110
Zone 4	22	123
Total	99	580

3.3 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study population consisted of 580 early childhood education teachers. Out of this population, the final sample size was determined by relying on Yamane (1967) formula. According to Fetcher (2009), if the target population is less than 10,000, then the sample can be determined using Yamane (1967) formula. The sample size of this study was drawn using the formula as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where

n represents corrected sample size,
 N represents population size, and
 e represents Margin of error (MoE) (0.05) based on the research condition.

$$n = 580 / (1 + 580 * 0.05^2)$$

$$n = 236$$

Based on this, the final sample size was 236.

Table 2: Summary of Sampling Procedure and Size

Zone	Population	Proportion	Sample
1	216	$\frac{216}{580} \times 236$	88
2	131	$\frac{131}{580} \times 236$	53
3	110	$\frac{110}{580} \times 236$	45
4	123	$\frac{123}{580} \times 236$	50
Total	580		236

3.4 Data Collection Tools

Questionnaires and interview schedule were the major instruments used to collect detailed and comprehensive data.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

To ensure content validity of the instruments, expertise of supervisors was sought. Their services were sought based

on their familiarity with the study phenomenon. They asked to check whether the items in the instrument are viable to collect the intended data. Also, all questionnaire items were generated from objectives to ensure relevance and completeness.

To ensure reliability of the instruments the researcher conducted a pilot study in neighboring Kesses Sub County. Kesses is within Uasin Gishu County and share similar demographics with Ainabkoi. The data to be collected from the pilot study was used to compute the reliability of the instrument. Reliability of the questionnaire was determined using the Cronbach alpha method for internal consistency. According to Mugenda

and Mugenda, (2009) internal consistency of data is determined from scores obtained from a single test administered to a sample of respondents. In this study a score that was obtained in one item was correlated with scores obtained from other items in the questionnaire. A Cronbach's coefficient Alpha was then computed to determine how items correlate amongst themselves. According to Koul (1988), a reliability coefficient of 0.70 is considered acceptable for internal consistency levels. Items which were found to fall below a reliability coefficient of 0.70 was considered irrelevant and therefore corrective measures was done to ensure they comply with accepted reliability index.

3.6 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the collected quantitative data. Tables were used to calculate statistics such as frequency distributions, proportions, and

percentages, as well as the mean and standard deviation for all quantitative variables. Thematic analysis and verbatims were used to analyze qualitative data.

4. Results and Discussion

Response Return Rate

The study respondents were early childhood teachers and headteachers from the primary school in Ainabkoi Sub-County. Data collected revealed that out of the anticipated total sample population of 268(100%) respondents, 213(79.5%) responded and their responses analyzed. This response comprised of 181(78.4%) early childhood teachers out of the anticipated 236 and 32(100%) head teachers out of the anticipated 32. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Response Rate

	Response rate	Frequency	Percent
Early childhood teachers	Responded questionnaires	181	76.7
	Non-response	55	23.3
Headteachers	Responded questionnaires	32	100

Parental Support Influence on Academic Achievement of Vulnerable and Orphaned Children

The study sought to determine the extent to which respondents agreed with the following statements relating to establish whether parental support influences the academic achievement of vulnerable and orphaned children in Ainabkoi Sub County in Kenya. Results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Parental Support Influence on Academic Achievement of Vulnerable and Orphaned Children

		SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Statements									
1.	Education is not a priority according to the orphaned and vulnerable children guardian	F	41	116	3	11	10	3.92	.991
		%	22.6	64.1	1.7	6.1	5.5		
2.	The family resources are used for other basic needs more than on education of orphaned and vulnerable children	F	43	110	9	9	10	3.93	.991
		%	23.8	60.8	4.9	4.9	5.5		
3.	Money from well-wishers is spend on education requirements of orphaned and vulnerable children	F	45	112	2	13	9	3.97	.998
		%	24.9	61.9	1.1	7.2	4.9		
4.	Orphaned and vulnerable children guardian provide for sufficient support on academic efforts	F	28	112	16	15	10	3.73	1.003
		%	15.5	61.9	8.8	8.3	5.5		
Valid	N		181						

Table 4 shows that 10(22.6%) of the respondents strongly agree, 116(64.1%) agree, 3(1.7%) were undecided, 11(6.1%) disagreed and 10(5.5%) strongly disagreed with the statement that Education is not a priority according to the orphaned and vulnerable children guardian. Further the study findings showed in terms of means and standard deviation that Education is not a priority according to the orphaned and vulnerable children guardian (Mean=3.92, Std. dev=0.991). The study concurred with Mwoma and Pillay (2015) that the parent teacher follow-up may be curtailed or non-existent reducing the impact and frustrate efforts of a support system for the involved child. This collaboration is critical since information is shared about how the child is doing at home for the benefit of the teachers, and in turn the caregivers or parents can keep abreast of the child's academic status and performance. This can have a significant impact on how the child perceives the value and premium placed on their overall well-being and educational endeavors. This in turn has a psychological and social implication that influences their attitudes and effort towards the academic pursuits.

School 4 male headteacher noted that:

“To Orphaned and Vulnerable Education is not always a priority and always they don't take their education with much concern as it should be”

Also, 43(22.6%) of the respondents strongly agree, 110(60.8%) agree, 9(4.9%) were undecided, 9(4.9%) disagreed and 10(5.5%) strongly disagreed with the statement that the family resources are used for other basic needs more than on education of orphaned and vulnerable

children. Further the study findings showed in terms of means and standard deviation that the family resources are used for other basic needs more than on education of orphaned and vulnerable children (Mean=3.93, Std. dev=.991). The study agreed with Mwoma and Pillay (2015) who revealed that the attitudes of the caregivers in the child's life towards education, as well as psychological, emotional and social wellbeing is one of indolence then the child will emulate the same and hence enhancing academic performance. As such, the normative belief adapted may be of indifference and languor.

Further, 45(24.9%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 112(61.9%) agreed, 2(1.1%) were undecided, 13(7.2%) disagreed and 9(4.9%) strongly disagreed with the statement that Money from well-wishers is spent on education requirements of orphaned and vulnerable children. Further the study findings showed in terms of means and standard deviation that Money from well-wishers is spent on education requirements of orphaned and vulnerable children (Mean=3.97, Std. dev=9.98). The study results agreed with Musungu (2021) who noted that parental or caregiver support can also be affected by instability and residency challenges. OVC may find themselves constantly looking for a place to reside or moving from one relative to another. This can cause insecurity and anxiety problems which could easily be reflected back in their school performance. This challenge can lead to lack of consistent school attendance, deficits in concentration levels, isolations by peers, and completely dropping out of school.

One male headteacher interviewed during the study stated that:

“I seek assistance from well-wishers which I have been using to meet the Educational expenses and requirement of the orphaned and vulnerable children”

Finally, 28(15.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 112(61.9%) agreed, 16(8.8%) were undecided, 15(8.3%) disagreed and 10(5.5%) strongly disagreed with the statement that orphaned and vulnerable children guardian provide for sufficient support on academic efforts. Further, the study findings showed in terms of means and standard deviation that orphaned and vulnerable children guardian provide for sufficient support on academic efforts (Mean=3.73, Std. dev=1.003). The study concurred with Marthe (2017) who indicated that other stakeholders such as parents, the community and the administrators lack proper capacity to cultivate an environment that caters for the needs of OVC. There is a moral imperative then, to

review how to navigate this issue and examine some of the different elements that might be involved namely: peer pressure, parental support, cultural and religious practices and interpersonal relationships.

Headteacher from school 10 during interviews revealed that:

“The guardians provide enough and sufficient support on academic progress of the Orphaned and Vulnerable Children”

Academic Achievements

The study sought to determine the extent to which respondents agreed with the following Statements relating to academic achievement of vulnerable and orphaned children in Ainabkoi Sub County in Kenya. Results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Academic Achievements

Statements		SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	Sd
1. Provision of sufficient support on academic efforts to Orphaned and vulnerable children by guardian/parents has increased the academic achievements.	F	40	117	3	9	12	3.91	1.01
	%	22.1	64.6	1.7	4.9	6.6		
2. Orphaned and vulnerable children take long to be accepted in their social group which drives them to make rush decisions that impact their academic work negatively	F	43	108	9	9	12	3.89	1.04
	%	23.8	59.7	4.9	4.9	6.6		
3. The culture values and attitudes where orphaned and vulnerable children were brought up affect their academic achievement	F	41	116	2	11	11	3.91	1.01
	%	22.6	64.1	1.1	6.1	6.1		
4. Orphaned and vulnerable children have low academic achievements because they are poor in communication	F	27	113	15	14	12	3.71	1.03
	%	14.9	62.4	8.3	7.7	6.6		
Valid	N	181						

Table 5 shows that 40(22.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 117(64.6%) agreed, 3(1.7%) were undecided, 9(4.9%) disagreed and 12(6.6%) strongly disagreed with the statement that provision of sufficient support on academic efforts to Orphaned and vulnerable children by guardian/parents has increased the academic achievements. Further, the study findings showed in terms of means and standard deviation that provision of sufficient support on academic efforts to Orphaned and vulnerable children by guardian/parents has increased the academic achievements (Mean=3.91, Std. dev=1.01). The study findings disagreed with Ringani (2018) who

revealed that the caregivers (guardians) with whom they lived misused their grants for their own benefit. They were unable to adequately meet the needs of these orphaned learners.

Further, 43(23.8%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 108(59.7%) agreed, 9(4.9%) were undecided, 9(4.9%) disagreed and 12(6.6%) strongly disagreed with the statement that Orphaned and vulnerable children take long to be accepted in their social group which drives them to make rush decisions that impact their academic work negatively. Further the study findings showed in terms of

means and standard deviation that Orphaned and vulnerable children take long to be accepted in their social group which drives them to make rush decisions that impact their academic work negatively (Mean=3.89, Std. dev=1.04). The study findings agreed with Ntshunshu and Taukeni (2020) who indicated that the situation of orphans and vulnerable children is escalating. The community suspects that large numbers of people are infected with HIV/AIDS.

Another headteacher noted that;

“The society always takes long to accept the Orphaned and vulnerable children according to their social class; in this situation they end up making rush decision which later affects their academic Performance”

.....

 Also, 41(22.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 116(64.1%) agreed, 2(1.1%) were undecided, 11(6.1%) disagreed and 11(6.1%) strongly disagreed that the culture values and attitudes where orphaned and vulnerable children were brought up affect their academic achievement. Further the study findings showed in terms of means and standard deviation that the culture values and attitudes where orphaned and vulnerable children were brought up affect their academic achievement (Mean=3.91, Std. dev=1.01). Finally, 27(14.9%) of the respondents strongly agree, 113(62.4%) agree, 15(8.3%) were undecided, 14(7.7%) disagreed and 12(6.6%) strongly disagreed that orphaned and vulnerable children have low academic achievements because they are poor in communication skills. Further the study findings showed that orphaned and vulnerable children have low academic achievements because they are poor in communication skills (Mean=3.71, Std. dev=1.03). The study agreed with Ferri, Grifoni and Guzzo (2020) that a lack of parental care, a lack of school uniforms and learning materials, and

behavioral and emotional problems. Neither the schools nor the educational institutions or the government made any efforts to address the problems of the orphaned students and promote the academic achievement of the orphans.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study also concluded that parental support has a positive influence on academic achievement of vulnerable and orphaned children in Ainabkoi Sub County in Kenya. This implies that education is not a priority according to the orphaned and vulnerable children guardian. Further, the family resources are used for other basic needs more than on education of orphaned and vulnerable children. Also, money from well-wishers is spending on education requirements of orphaned and vulnerable children. Finally, orphaned and vulnerable children guardian provide for sufficient support on academic efforts.

5.2 Recommendations

Parental support should be ensured since the information is shared about how the child is doing at home for the benefit of the teachers, and in turn the caregivers or parents can keep abreast of the child’s academic status and performance. This can have a significant impact on how the child perceives the value and premium placed on their overall well-being and educational endeavors. This in turn has a psychological and social implication that influences their attitudes and effort towards the academic pursuits.

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