

FAMILY SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS AND MALE YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN VIOLENCE IN GATANGA SUB COUNTY, MURANG'A COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The impact of violent conflicts has been documented as unquantifiable and ruinous. It is evidenced that current judicial approaches in use are counterproductive. There is need to look for social approaches in mitigating these violent conflicts. This study contributed towards this goal by investigating the relationship between the family social economic status (FSEF) and male youth participation in violent conflicts in Gatanga Sub County, Muranga County, Kenya. The study adopted the correlation research design. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were utilized. A multistage sampling strategy was used to sample, eleven secondary schools, 33 violent youths, 33 non-violent youths and their 66 parents, 11 (eleven) teacher counselors and 24 key informants. The study relied on primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected using four instruments; student self report; family self-test; teacher counselors unstructured interview schedule and In-depth Interview (IDI) schedule for the key informants. Data collected was analyzed using the SPSS analytical package. The Pearson's chi-square (χ^2) was run to assess the association between the identified variables and male youth participation in violence. The key findings of the study showed that, there was significant ($P < 0.05$) association between parents' education level, no significant ($P > 0.05$) association between family size, highly significant ($P < 0.01$) association between level of family income ($P < 0.01$) and highly significant ($P < 0.01$) association between regular income and male youth participation in violence. Male youth participation in violence was evident across all the family structures. This study established that, most of the parents in Gatanga had low level of education, with a few highly educated parents scattered within the sub-County and that most families had low income. To deal and mitigate youth violence, therefore, efforts should be made to improve on the family socioeconomic factors. This would include revamping adult education classes for parents and putting in place family based economic empowerment programmes.

Key Words: Parental education level, family size, family income level, family regular income, family structure

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Globally, youth violence has been cited as very destructive, visible and contagious; and generally undermining the fabric of society (Shalala, 2009). The youth factor in these violent conflicts, is currently an issue of major societal concern. It has been indicated that, there is no violence without youth involvement either as witnesses, victims, architects, reactionary groups or perpetrators (Muthoni, 2011).

Wangai (2001) avers that, statistics collected indicate that most of the perpetrators of violence in Kenya are male youth. Though attributed to varying factors, several studies have consistently given family influences as central factors in the development of violent behavior in young people (WHO, 2002; Liu & Situ, 2006; and Wedge, 2013). Various reports on the analysis of destructive and violent school unrests in Kenya have also consistently given parental and family factors listed among the major factors (Wangai, 2001, Karioba, 2012). It would be feasible, therefore, for an investigation of these family factors that would be related to youth participation in violence. This study based its argument on the UN report on the youth at risk of violent conflicts which suggests the use of social, rather than judicial approaches when dealing with youth problems. The UN report highlights the need of the use of the family as the institution to control or minimize the escalating incidence of violence among the youth (WYR, 2007; Cravero, 2009). Based on the foregoing, this study investigated the relationship between the family socio economic factors and male youth participation in violence in Gatanga Sub County, Murang'a County, Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The youth factor in violent conflicts is currently an issue of major societal concern. It has been indicated that, there is no violence without youth involvement either as witnesses, victims, architects', reactionary groups or perpetrators (Muthee, 2010). Cases of youth, intrapersonal, interpersonal and collective violence in many parts of the country, form of domestic violence, sibling violence and inter-village violent conflicts are a common occurrence (Muthoni, 2011).

There is evidence that, the youth factor in these violent incidences is key. For example, it is documented that youth played a central role during Kenya's post-election violence in 2007/2008, with over 70% of the direct perpetrators of the violence being young people (Educational Development Center, 2009). Youth are also reported to have constituted the majority of victims. There is, therefore an urgent need to put in place mitigating factors to deal with youth violence because the current judicial systems in Kenya are counterproductive. The role of the family in youth violence has been documented. However, with the changing dynamics of the family, it is imperative to investigate how these changes could be impacting on family members. This study thus set out to establish if there was a relationship between the family socio economic factors and male youth participation in violence in Gatanga Sub County, Muranga County, Kenya.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between the family socio economic factors and male youth participation in violence Gatanga Sub County, Muranga County, Kenya.

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

The Family Socio Economic Status (FSES) is a way of looking at how individuals or families fit into society using economic and social measures. This has been shown to impact individuals' health and well-being, Duncan and Magnuson (2005). Conventionally; FSES is evaluated as a combination of several factors. Majority of researchers agree that income, education and occupation of parents' together best represent FSES. However, some others argue that changes in family structure should also be considered. With the changes in the family structure, there is no agreement on the best factors to represent FSES. This study adopted the latter and assessed the FSES using four parameters; parental level of education, family income, family size and family structure in Gatanga Sub County, Muranga County, Kenya. The results are as discussed.

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This study utilized the correlation research design to investigate the relationship between the family socioeconomic factors and male youth participation in violence. The study area was Gatanga Sub County; Muranga County, Kenya. This Sub County was purposefully selected since it has experienced youth violence in its various forms. This violence had manifested itself in various incidences like; destructive school unrest, inter-village violent fights, hopelessness, helplessness and dependency syndrome tendencies like alcoholism (Mwai, et. al., 2013). The target population for this study were the male youth in the 32 secondary schools in the Gatanga Sub County as at 2011 when the data was collected. These were those male youth aged between 16 and 20 years; their parents or guardians; and teacher counselors. The study targeted male youth in form two, three and four. Students in these classes were considered to have stayed in the school for a considerable time to enable the assertion of their violence behavior pattern by the teacher counselors. This study adopted the Multi-Stage sampling method that led to sampling sequentially across a number of hierarchical levels (Jacob, 2007). Sampling of schools was done using the proportional allocation method (Ritchie et. al., 2003). This resulted in 40% (11) of all the schools in Gatanga Sub County becoming study sample as recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003). The four girls only schools in the sub county were not included in the sample.

This study, further put into consideration suggestions by (Kombo & Tromp, 2006), who states that, a group in qualitative research should have a minimum of 30 respondents. Based on this, the study sampled 33 student respondents per group to ensure that the data collected maintained a threshold. It therefore, included 33 youths who were deemed violent, 33 youths who were deemed non- violent, 33 parents of the violent youths and 33 parents of the non-violent youths. These respondents were enough to give the required information regarding the population and enabled the researcher to draw the conclusions from the data collected.

Data collection was done using self report questionnaires and interview guides. To ascertain validity of the data collection instruments the research instruments were submitted to supervisors for verification and their views were incorporated as Kothari (2004) advises. The study used methodological triangulation to increase the credibility and validity of the results (Denzin, 2006). This involves using more than one method to gather data. On reliability of the research tools, to gauge test-retest reliability, the research tools were administered twice at two different points in time during the piloting stage (Denzin, 2006). The results assisted to adjust language and context to the level of the

respondents (Kothari, 2004). The result of the two pre-tests were the same, hence they were considered reliable.

On the ethical aspect, the researcher followed the required procedure and process of conducting research in Kenya. This required, obtaining authorization from the National Council for Science, Technology and Innovations (NCSTI). This was followed by request and further authorization by the Sub County Commissioner and Education Officer in Gatanga. During data collection, the researcher observed the five ethical principles of counseling practice namely: fidelity, autonomy, beneficence, discomfort and justice.

The study used quantitative and qualitative method of data analysis where, the raw data collected was organized, coded and analyzed using the SPSS analytical package. The Pearson's chi-square test (χ^2) was run to assess the association between the identified variables and male youth participation in violence. Frequency distribution tables, graphs, and the verbal responses from the responses were used to summarize and present the data. These provided tools for describing statistical observations and reduce information to understandable form. Research findings were presented systematically and discussed scientifically.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A summary of the findings is discussed both descriptively and by analysis of chi square test results.

4.1.1 Relationship between parental education level and male youth participation in violence in Gatanga Sub County, Murang'a County, Kenya

This study intended to establish whether there was a relationship between the parental education level and male youth participation in violence. To achieve this, the 63 youth were asked to respond to an item that asked them to indicate their parents highest level of education. The results were as indicated in Chart 4.1 which show that, only 4 (6.2%) parents had attained a master's degree in education, 7 (10.5%) had an undergraduate degree, majority 12 (25%) had attained a diploma level education, another 8 (16.7%) had gone up to certificate level, 9 (20.8%) of the parents had attained Form Four level of education, while another 9 (20.8%) had not attained Form Four level. An interview with some of the lowly educated respondents revealed that they either dropped out of school at primary level, while those who reached Form Four did not get quality grades. This data clearly shows that most of the parents in Gatanga had low level of education, with a few highly educated parents scattered within the Sub- County.

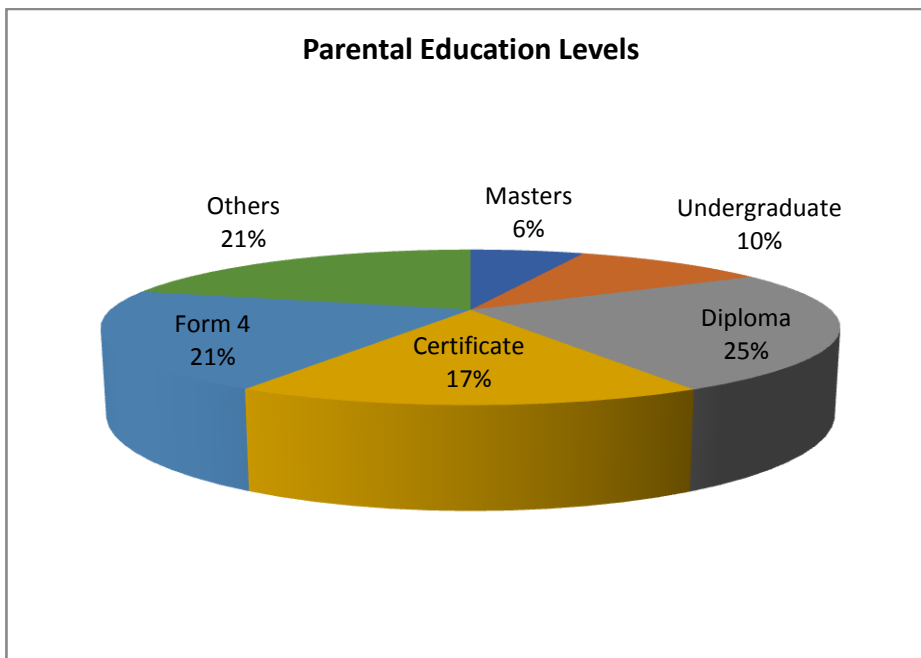


Chart 4.1 Parental education levels in Gatanga Sub County, Murang'a County, Kenya
(Source: Field Data, 2011)

Pearson Chi-Square value ($\chi^2_{4,0.05} = 11.322$) showed that there was significant ($P < 0.05$) association between Parent's education level and the way male youth participated in violence.

To enable a deeper exploration of the phenomenon in question, qualitative data on the same was collected from the key informants. The head of department of the Ministry of Gender and Social Services noted that:

Education makes a parent to be patient with the growing youth. He added that, education provides knowledge that makes parents knowledgeable on the conscious and unconscious forces working on their youth. This makes the educated parents to avoid erratic or harsh discipline and thus make their children less violent.

(Source: Field Data, 2011)

Several scholars have related education and parenting. According to (Alizadeh et al, 2011), education could have effects on parenting skills, which have implications for the criminality of their children. Respondents in this study especially those from religious institutions, indicated that parental education is a key factor that influences quality of life for children, youth, and families. Parental education affects human functioning in many ways, including development across the life span, psychological health, and physical health (Alizadeh et al, 2011). According to data collected from the Gatanga and Thika DEO's offices then, for a period of over 10 years, education standards in Gatanga Sub County have been below average. There is need therefore, for the sub county's stakeholders to promote the pursuit of higher education among the present and next generation of parents as a way of dealing with male youth violence as well as other youth delinquent behavior. As indicated, most youth viewed the parental education as having a positive impact of the youth. They viewed an educated parent as having an ability to take care of their youth and with the ability to handle family issues well. From this study,

inferences may be made that with the low educated level in Gatanga Sub County, improved parental education may help deal with male youth violence and other delinquent behaviors.

From the foregoing, this study suggests that, there is need to enhance adult education as a way of salvaging the situation especially in the *Mungiki* infested areas in Muranga County. Education may affect the decision to engage in crime by impacting on maturity and development of youths. Several studies have alluded to the education level of a parent as a significant predictor of child's educational achievements and behavioral outcomes (Duncan, & Magnuson, 2005). Educated parents purportedly raise children to have healthy self-perceptions who develop a healthy attitude and generally have fewer behavioral problems (Baumrind, 2007).

4.1.2 Family size and male youth participation in violence in Gatanga Sub County, Murang'a County, Kenya

This study considered family size as one of the parameters to assess the (FSES). From the data collected, 30.2% had 1-3 children, 25.4% had 4-6 children, 22.2 % had 7-9 children and 22.2% had over 10 children. Pearson Chi-Square value ($\chi^2_{8,0.05} = 14.492$) showed that there was no significant ($P > 0.05$) association between family size and how male youth deal with conflict. This implies that, the family size alone may not be a factor to determine youth conflict behavior. It is coupled up with other factors that determine the direction of youth behavior. This concurred with Farrington (2008) who indicated that the interaction between family size and children quality has been a recurring topic in the economics of family.

Respondents in this study gave varying views in relation to family size and male youth violence. There were those who stated that large families provided varying ways of resolving conflicts. Others contradicted this and saw situations where large families lay ground for competition of resources and parental attention. Such competition may eventual lead to violence in the family. However, there were respondents who favored a small family. They indicated that in small families, issues were handled well and that the parents took good care of their children. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the family is seen as the micro system whose quality and context forms the youth's environment which would influence them in life. Depending on the behaviors of the family in relation to the size, this would affect the youth's future behaviors. Key informants gave explanations on family size suggested that family resources become "diluted" as family size increases and the result is the various developmental deficits. Their views were that youth from large families were associated with assemblage of undesirable family conditions. An AIPCA church leader said:

In the large families, there would be overcrowding, competition over physical facilities, lack of attention, lack of affection, lack of sufficient family interaction and poor role modeling. This would make the youth frustrated and may result in violence. (Source: Field Data, 2011)



Plate: 4.1 The researcher conducting an In-depth interview an elder from the AIPCA church (Source: Field Data, 2011)

For some time now there has been a multidisciplinary interest in the effects of family size on children's development and on their overall life outcomes. (Monique & Adrian, 2006) indicates that children from small families tend to accrue advantages in many developmental areas, while children from larger families are, as a group, relatively disadvantaged. Larger families has been linked to domestic crowding, a condition which has negative consequences for adults and children, including higher psychological stress and poor health outcomes. There is substantial documentation indicating that children from small families have a better developmental prognosis than children with many siblings. In the aggregate, these effects could have a substantial impact on the behavior pattern of the youth (Monique & Adrian, 2006)

4.1.3 Family income in relation to male youth participation in violence in Gatanga Sub County, Murang'a County, Kenya

This study then examined the relationship between the family money situation and the way male dealt with conflicts in life. This was done by first looking at how the families in Gatanga Sub County generated family income. The 63-male youth were asked to indicate how their families generated their income. The results are as indicated in Table 5.1

Table: 4.1 Ways families in Gatanga Sub County, Murang'a County, Kenya, generated income

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Small scale farmer	19	30
Assisted by elder siblings	9	14
One parent working	7	11
Both parents working as civil servants	6	10
Not employed	12	19
Employed in small business	8	1
Others	2	3
Total	63	100.00

(Source: Field Data, 2011)

As indicated, families in Gatanga Sub County generate their income from small and large scale coffee, tea, dairy, pig and poultry farming. Others operate large and small scale businesses, while others are in formal employment as civil servants, teachers and in the private sector. There were other residents who depend on daily casual jobs. These are those who work and are paid on a daily basis. These results concurred with a study by (Mwai, Wamue and Mwangi, 2013) conducted in the same area.

Further, the study examined the level of family income in Gatanga Sub County. This study categorized the income as follow; above ksh.50, 000, between Ksh.49, 999 to 30,000; Ksh.29,999 to 20,000; between Ksh.19, 999 to 10,000, between Ksh.9,999-5000 and below Ksh. 4900. The findings reveal that majority 60% families obtained an average income ranging from Ksh 9,999-5000 from their income generating activity. The results also show that families that raised Ksh.4900 and below accounted for 10% and that only about 10% of the families were able to raise on average 29 999 and 20000. Another 8 % draw on average Ksh 50000 and above from their main source of income, Ksh.49, 999 to 30,000; 3% and Ksh.19, 999 to 10, 000 were 9%.The information implies that the level of family income in the majority families was low. This concurs with a study by (Mwai et al, 2013) which found out that the level of family income in the majority of household in Gatanga was low.

Key informants interviewed in this study also indicated that the level of income for families in Gatanga is low.

The AIPCA Gituamba Pastor said that:

On several occasions, family members have approached the church requesting for financial assistance to help them meet basic needs. This has made it necessary for us to fundraise and invests in income generating to support their church projects.

(Source: Field Data, 2011)

The Pearson Chi-Square value ($\chi^2_{8,0.01} = 39.33$) showed that there was a highly significant ($P < 0.01$) association between level of family income and how male youth deal with conflicts. This concurred with a study conducted on Australian families that points to the importance of increasing family supports and parenting skills as a means of reducing juvenile involvement in crime. The classical view of the relationship between economic stress and crime is that economic stress, in one way or another, motivates individuals affected by it to offend. Conversely, high-poverty neighborhoods are more likely to be physically deteriorated and to have more crime and street violence, greater availability of illegal drugs, and more negative peer influences and adult role models (Duncan, & Magnuson, 2005). These characteristics of high-poverty neighborhoods may have deleterious consequences for the cognitive functioning, socialization, physical health, emotional functioning, and academic achievement of children and adolescents (Chen, & Paterson, 2006). Finally, the effect of individual-level economic stress on juvenile involvement in crime would appear to be shaped by the level of economic stress and/or the prevalence of offending in the surrounding neighborhood (Newacheck, Hung, Park, Brindis, & Irwin, 2003)

The youth were asked to indicate how the family income level affected the way they dealt with conflicts. There are those who indicated that the level of family income determines the self-esteem of youth. Those who came from families with low level income developing inferiority and thus low self-esteem. Others said that low income may lead to feelings of deprivation due to lacking basic and

others need. This, then, determines the way the youth deal with conflicts. However, there are those who felt that the way the youth dealt with conflicts was dependent on various parental factors. Further results from this study revealed that 18 (22.9%) of the families represented had a steady income while 42 (68.8%) had no steady income and 4 (8.3%) did not comment. This indicated that more families are not on a steady income. Pearson Chi-Square value ($\chi^2_{7,0.01} = 75.185$) showed that there was highly significant ($P < 0.01$) association between families regular income and how male youth participate in violence

According to the Kiunyu Parish PCEA Pastor, Rev. Irene,

Steadiness of family income affects the quality of the neighborhoods in which children and adolescents grow up. Compared with low-poverty neighborhoods; high-poverty neighborhoods have lower availability of high-quality services. Family income also has a profound influence on the educational opportunities available to adolescents and on their chances of educational success.

(Source: Field Data, 2011)

The YARD NGO programme officer noted that:

In Gatanga Sub County, family income dictates whether the youth will go to a private or public school, boarding or day school.

(Source: Field Data, 2011)

This concurs with what was noted by (Chen, & Paterson, 2006) that, due to residential stratification and segregation, low-income students usually attend schools with lower funding levels, which result in reduced unavailability of textbooks and other instructional materials, laboratory equipment, library books, and other educational resources. This eventually translates into poor performance, lack of progression in education, lack of employment and thus the cyclic increase of family poverty, which is a common scene in Gatanga.

According to Duncan & Magnuson (2005) all family members living in poverty are more likely to be victims of violence. Racial and ethnic minorities who are also of lower SES are at an increased risk of victimization. The main settings that influences the way children and adolescents grow up include families, neighborhoods, and schools. The quality of these settings, and whether they are supportive and nurturing or dangerous and destructive, has a profound influence on adolescents' chances for leading successful adult lives.

Family income is perhaps the single most important factor in determining the quality of these settings. The effects of concentrated poverty in schools may include disciplinary problems and chaotic learning environments. The respondents went ahead to say that the most important ways of reducing the offenders are to reduce the level of economic stress, prevent geographic concentration of poverty (so as to attenuate the influence of a delinquent peers) and introduce family and child support programs designed to prevent social and economic stress exerting disruptive effects on the parenting process. Child support programmes may include subsidized school feeding programmes, introduction of low cost school uniforms and the provision of learning equipments which are sufficient to cater for the students' needs. There is need for parent based poverty reduction strategies in the sub county. There is need for policy in areas such as community services, school education and public health rather than changes to law enforcement and sentencing policy (Newacheck et al, 2003). Instead of the policy on

convicting parents who do not take their children to school, the policy should be on how they can be compelled to participate in poverty reduction initiatives.

Research evidence drawn from studies of individual families suggested that economic and social stress exert their effects on crime by disrupting the parenting process. Economic stress may diminish the emotional well-being of parents, which has direct and indirect negative effects on children. Adolescents growing up in families under economic stress or with a single parent may be poorly supervised and often gain autonomy too early (Chen, & Paterson, 2006). Higher rates of participation in the labor force by mothers in two-parent families have helped to maintain family incomes, but they have also created stress for families and difficulties in caring for and supervising children and adolescents. Unsupervised adolescents are more likely to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, use drugs, report depressed mood, and engage in risky behaviors. Low family income has been associated with early sexual activity, cigarette smoking, adolescent pregnancy, and delinquency (Newacheck et al, 2003)

4.1.3 Family structure and male youth participation in violence in Gatanga Sub County, Murang'a County, Kenya

This study examined the relationship between the family structure and male youth participation in violence. Data collected showed that, 52.1% came from nuclear monogamous families with two parents, 33.3% from polygamous families, 4.2% adoptive parent or living with guardians and 10.4% were living with a sole parent. The distribution of the family description was as indicated in Table: 5.2

Table 4.2 Family description in Gatanga Sub County, Murang'a County, Kenya

Family description	Frequency	Percentage
Nuclear or monogamous family	25	52.1
Polygamous family	16	33.3
With adoptive parents(no blood relation) or guardian	2	4.2
Sole parent	5	10.4
Total	48	100.0

(Source: Field Data, 2011)

The results indicated that, the majority of the youth were from nuclear families followed by polygamous families and the sole parents' families. This indicated that families in Gatanga value the Christian concept of marriage and monogamous families. However; the number of polygamous families was also high.

Stakeholders were also interviewed on the relation of family structure and male participation in violence in this region.

According to a lady elder from Kiarutara village;

Some married men in this area are monogamous by word but polygamous in action and practice. Eventually this, becomes an open secret. Their children can not dare talk about it. They harbour ill feelings and hatred. It is not uncommon children fighting their father's mistress.

(Source: Field Data, 2011)

A representative of the provincial administration interviewed stated that:

The Kikuyu culture promotes undisclosed blended families. Children in these families grow up with a father and mother without the biological status being disclosed. As the children grow to youth hood, they discover the truth, they are blended.

(Source: Field Data, 2011)

Cultural issues are seen to come into play in the determination of youth participation in violence. For the male youths, they struggle with identity issues and may inhibit feeling of anger and bitterness which may be pelted out as violence towards self, another person or any other from. Sibling fights may be precipitated by the way the youth are treated by the parents. It is common practice for the biological parent to favour their own. This favouritism from parents may be because of conflict and fighting between the siblings. Family structure has deep and lasting negative effects on the social behavior of children, poor supervision at homes and as a major determinant of delinquency. Scholars are not in agreement as to whether single parents are as effective as two parents in their ability to do these things.



Plate: 4.2 The researcher conducting an In-depth interview with a key informant from the Provincial administration

(Source: Field Data, 2011)

The findings are as meta-analysis of fifty different studies found that for most of the studies broken homes had a consistent and reliable association with juvenile delinquency. This study suggests more studies to be conducted on impact of the various family structures on youth violence and other youth delinquent behaviors. This is due to the current dynamic nature of the families in the world today and the impact of such changes to its members.

5.1 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION AND SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1.1 Summary

This study examined the relationship between FSES and male youth participation in violence in Gatanga Sub County, Murang'a County Kenya. The parameters used to assess the FSES were; parental level of education, family constant income, family level of income, family size and family structure.

5.1.2 Conclusion

The Chi square test indicated that there was significant association between level of parental education, a highly significant association between the family regular income and level of income and the phenomena under investigation. However, the Chi Square test found no association between the family size and male youth participation in violence in Gatanga Sub County. This contradicted the findings of the descriptive data, which indicated that family size is related to the way youth deal with conflicts in life. Qualitative data indicated that cultural issues are key to the determination of the family structure. The blended family was singled out as one that makes youth develop bitterness and anger due undisclosed identity. This may make the youth participate in violence as a way to seek attention due to identity crisis.

5.1.3 Recommendation

This study recommends improved family socioeconomic factors would reduce incidences of male youth participation in violence. Therefore, as a way of mitigating male youth participation in violence, there is need to revamp adult education classes for parents and putting in place family based economic empowerment programmes.

5.1.3 Suggestion for further research

Studies need to be conducted on the impact of the various family structures on youth outcomes. The dynamics of the blended family needs to be studied and its impacts on family members.

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