



POSITIVE SANCTIONS ON CHILDREN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF REWARDS IN CHILDREN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN KURIA EAST SUB-COUNTY, MIGORI COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract: Children social development is the foundation for holistic learning. Many countries including Kenya have adopted uptake of positive sanction methods in form of rewards to promote children social development as advocated for by the humanitarian laws. However, there is growing concern due to high number of children exposed to physical violence where 36.8% female and 40.5% male children were victims in Kenya in 2018. This necessitated the need to assess influence of rewards on children social development. Using Taro Yamane formula, a sample size of 391 Household-heads were randomly sampled, and 4 key informants purposively selected. Questionnaire and Interview Schedule were used to collect data. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics involving Pearson correlation; while qualitative data were thematically analyzed. Findings revealed that rewards have moderate ($r=.319$, $p<.05$) positive influence on children social development. The study therefore, recommends positive compliments as opposed to monetary rewards.

Key words: Positive sanctions, children, social development, rewards

1. Introduction:

Social development among children has always attracted intense debate, especially the use of positive sanctions towards children social development. The study focuses on positive sanctions as rewards, which include monetary rewards and social approval. There is an increased trend in use of rewards to promote children social development in western countries and a decline in adult's approval on use of negative sanctions. Global Partnership to End Violence against Children report 2021 indicated that, Finland prohibited violent punishment to children in 1983 and there was decline in use of negative sanctions from 47% in 1981 to 15% in 2014 which promoted use of rewards as a method to promote children social development. In recognition of rewards as a means to promote children social development, the Kenya constitution 2010 article 53 advocates against any form of cruel and inhumane form of punishment to children and have policies that advocate for use of alternative forms of positive discipline. However, statistics in 62 countries between 2005 and 2013 indicated that 80% of children were exposed spanking, caning, slapping, pinching and other forms of violent discipline methods (UNICEF, 2015). In Kenya, 36.8% female and 40.5% male children were exposed to physical violence in the year 2018 (Kenya Violence Against Children National Survey [VACS], (2019). This can be attributed to inadequate knowledge on the benefits of rewards as a method to promote children social development. On this regard, the study sought to assess the influence of rewards in children social development in Kuria East Sub County, Migori County, Kenya.

2. Materials and methods

The study was conducted in Kuria East sub County, which is located in Migori County. Kuria East has a population of 96,872 covering 187.6 km² (KNBS, 2019). The study area was purposively selected because the area is characterised by various methods of promoting children social development but still has higher number of children being exposed to violence in form of discipline. The target population was 17,363 households forming the main respondents and 391 was the sample size arrived at by use of Taro Yamane formula. The study utilized multi stage sampling technique. The first step involved cluster sampling whereby the sub county was divided into four divisions and further into locations and sub locations. The key informants were school headteachers purposively selected from the schools with the highest number of children in each division.

The study used both questionnaire and interview schedule. Research assistants were trained on data collection techniques and administered the questionnaire to the main respondents. Principal researcher used interview schedule to collect data from 4 Key Informants. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics where Pearson correlation, with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0; while qualitative data were thematically analyzed based on the study objectives.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Views of Household Heads Rewards

The results were as shown in Table 1

Table 1:

Views of Household Heads' on Rewards

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
I give my children money as a reward for getting good grades in school	128 (37.5%)	64 (18.8%)	22 (6.5%)	97 (28.4%)	30 (8.8%)	2.52	1.450
I tell my children the reasons why I praise them	12 (3.5%)	34 (10.0%)	21 (6.2%)	191 (56.0%)	83 (24.3%)	3.88	1.004
I praise my children immediately after good behavior	14 (4.1%)	21 (6.2%)	17 (5.0%)	143 (41.9%)	146 (42.8%)	4.13	1.039
I encourage my children to try again in an event of failure	43 (12.6%)	36 (10.6%)	27 (7.9%)	117 (34.3%)	118 (34.6%)	3.68	1.373
I recognize my children consistently for obeying my rules	5 (1.5%)	16 (4.7%)	37 (10.9%)	154 (45.1%)	129 (37.8%)	4.13	.890

Table 1 shows that the most frequently used method is: ‘praising children immediately after good behavior’. Data shows that 84.7 percent praised their children immediately after good behavior while 10.3 percent did not. This suggests that household heads tried to stimulate immediate change of mindset in children as they grow into adulthood. This finding concurs with the study from Vanessa L, (2018) which revealed that praises should be used strategically and carefully to promote and instill conformity among children. Caldarella et al, (2020) also revealed that praise is a powerful tool in inspiring children to conform to school standards particularly children who may be struggling both academically and socially.

HH32 had this to say,

I have always praised my children immediately they do their assigned tasks in time and conclusively. Whenever I praise them, they become more obedient and willing to do their best.

Contrary to these findings, Lee and Kim (2016) found out that when parents over or underpraised their children for schoolwork, children performed worse and experienced depression compared to children accurately praised.

HH314 had a contrary opinion. She had this to say;

I do not praise my children immediately after good behavior because they tend to demand more of praises and failure to do that they behave badly to attract attention.

In this mixed reaction, praise appears to be more effective discipline strategy and aids positive children social development. Nevertheless, it should be used precisely to increase children’s chances of being keen to discern what is socially accepted from those not accepted by the society as praise motivate children to be focused on the approved school standards and society norms.

The least preferred method is giving children money as a reward for getting good grades in school. Table 1 shows that 56.3 % were against giving their children money for achieving good grades in school, while 37.2 % confirmed that they give money to their children for obtaining good grades in school.

HH 94, disagreed with the statement stating that:

Money can prompt children to engage in anti-social behaviors such as theft, and gambling, and sustaining such form of reward may be difficult thus undermining their motivation.

Parents who were in support of monetary reward argued that giving reasonable amount of money is not bad considering their ages.

HH12 had this to say:

Monetary reward to children for achievement of good grades in school motivates and sustains hard work in academic performance.

HHT 2 interviewed on monetary reward had this to say;

Rewarding pupils’ excellent performance using money in my school affected academic performance of bright pupils. This was observed from the decline of

performance of the pupils whenever we failed to reward them. The deterioration in academic performance was consistent and as teachers we resolved to do away with monetary reward. Instead, now we reward top performing children using scholastic materials and we have observed great improvement in their performance.

Contrary to these findings, De Paola, M., Scoppa, and Nisticò (2012) reveal that monetary reward affects only high performing students positively and this is worthless to low performing students.

3.2 Household Heads Responses on Status of Children Social Development

The areas of focus in determining status of children social development was based on: Ability to follow school rules, children apologetic behavior, ability to control temper, ability to appreciate advice, positive feeling towards social guidance, ability to follow rules at home and ability to listen without interruption.

Status of children social development was established by use of rating scale and the results were as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Household Heads Responses on Status of Children social Development

Level of Quality of Status of Children social Development (Rating)	Frequency	Percent
1.00-1.44	1	.3
1.45-2.44	3	.9
2.45-3.44	42	12.3
3.45-4.44	181	53.1
4.45-5.00	114	33.4
Total	341	100.0

Interpretation of Mean Rating

1.00 -1.44	Very Bad
1.45 -2.44	Bad
2.45 – 3.44	Average
3.45 – 4.44	Good
4.45 - 5.00	Very Good

Table 2, indicated that status of children social development was rated good by 53.1 percent of household heads and very bad by .3 percent of household head.

4.3 Influence of Rewards on Children Social Development

In order to establish whether there was any statistical significant influence of rewards on children social development, a bivariate Pearson's Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation between the overall mean rating of rewards and overall mean rating of children social development was computed. The SPSS output in Table 3 shows the correlation results.

Table 3:
Influence of Rewards on Children social Development

		Monetary Reward	Social Approval Reward	Rewards
Social Development	Pearson Correlation	.096	.439*	.319*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.078	.000	.000
	N	341	341	341



The result in Table 3 indicates that monetary rewards has very weak positive relationship with children social development ($r=0.096$, $p>.05$). This means that giving money to children for getting good grade(s) at school could only have minimal and short-term influence hence may not have significant influence on children social development. In addition, the result shows that social approval had moderate positive ($r=0.439$, $p<.05$) relationship with children social development. Therefore, it was concluded that praising children immediately after good behavior, explaining why they are praised, encouraging children to try again in an event of failure and recognizing children consistently for obeying rules moderately and positively influence children social development.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concluded that majority of the household heads in the study area use rewards as a means of promoting children social development to conform to society norms and values as well as approved school standards. Rewards have moderate positive influence on children social development, with statistically significant ($r=0.319$, $p<.05$) relationship. The study further recommends that awareness to household heads and teachers to focus more on social approval as a method of enhancing conformity to societal norms and school approved standards.

5. References

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