

Influence of class teachers' teaching experience on the self-esteem of orphaned pupils in public junior schools in Nairobi County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The self-esteem of orphaned pupils plays a critical role in their academic performance, social development, and emotional resilience. In Nairobi County, Kenya, where a significant number of children in public junior schools have lost one or both parents, it becomes imperative to understand the role educators play in shaping their psychological well-being. Among various teacher characteristics, teaching experience is presumed to influence how effectively educators support emotionally vulnerable learners. This study sought to investigate the relationship between class teachers' teaching experience and the self-esteem of orphaned pupils in public junior schools in Nairobi County. Guided by Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Theory (1965), Harter's Self-Perception Profile (1985), and Self-Determination Theory by Ryan and Deci, the study employed a correlational research design targeting 192,113 orphaned pupils across 237 public junior schools. A stratified random and purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of 400 orphaned pupils and their respective class teachers. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using both descriptive statistics and Pearson's chi-square tests. The findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between teaching experience and the self-esteem of orphaned pupils ($\chi^2 = 169.93$, $p = 0.009$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Experienced teachers, particularly those with over 10 years in service, were found to foster higher levels of self-esteem among orphaned pupils. These teachers demonstrated greater emotional competence, consistent behavior, and adaptive classroom management styles that provided a sense of stability and reassurance for their learners. In contrast, teachers with limited experience were less effective in responding to the psychosocial needs of orphans, resulting in comparatively lower self-esteem levels among these pupils. These findings emphasize that teaching experience transcends content delivery; it contributes to relational trust, emotional guidance, and the creation of inclusive classroom environments. The study recommends that teacher training programs and education policies should prioritize equipping novice teachers with psychosocial support skills, particularly in multicultural and socioeconomically diverse settings like Nairobi County. Additionally, mentorship programs pairing less experienced teachers with seasoned educators can foster the transfer of affective teaching strategies essential for supporting vulnerable learners. Ultimately, addressing the emotional and psychological needs of orphaned students through experienced and empathetic teaching can significantly enhance their overall development and academic success.

Keywords: Nairobi County, Orphaned Pupils, Public Junior Schools, Self-Esteem, Teaching Experience

I. INTRODUCTION

Orphanhood has become a major concern in Kenya due to its high prevalence in both rural and urban areas. Children become orphans due to the death of both parents or of one parent. Orphanhood affects the psychological wellbeing of children negatively since there is the trauma involved with the loss of parents. Parental deaths that are caused by poverty and diseases have been identified as some of the cause of the problem of orphanhood in Nairobi County, which places the children in a vulnerable and helpless situation. The United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF, 2015) estimates that the number of orphans aged below 18 years amounted to approximately 3.6 million. Such children need to be provided with care, protection, and support in order to make sure that they grow up normally as others. Unless properly guided and provided with psychosocial support, the orphaned children can experience depression, anxiety, aggression, and stress, (Abraha, 2024).

The teacher is the nearest adult to the learner and the learners rely on the teacher to guide and steer them. The class teachers in the school setting should be the initial providers of emotional assistance and modeling behavior in the vulnerable students (Setai, 2023). This is the reason why this paper has attempted to explore the contribution of the nature of class teachers on the psychological wellbeing of orphaned learners in public junior schools in the Nairobi County in Kenya. It was concerned with the relationship between the teachers' teaching experience and the

psychological wellbeing of the orphaned learners. Psychological wellbeing of the orphaned learners was determined by measuring the self-esteem of learners.

Self-esteem can be defined as the subjective perception of the worth of the individual. Studies have shown that the level of self-esteem in orphaned and non-orphaned students is significantly different, with the former tending to have lower self-worth (Kinyua & Gitumu, 2024). Self-efficacy refers to the perception that a person has to achieve in certain situations or perform a task. The self-efficacy can have significant effects on the manner in which a person sets his/her goals, tasks, and challenges and can be shaped by self-esteem (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The last psychological development stage; self-actualization can be attained once the basic needs and mental needs are satisfied essentially including the esteem needs. Self-actualization means the achievement of the potential of a person, fulfillment of self, an interest in personal development and the best experiences. It is an idea that has its origin in the Humanistic psychology theory, and specifically the theory developed by Abraham Maslow. Maslow (1970) which states that the ultimate stage of psychological development is self-actualization where the potential of the individual is achieved once the low bodily and ego needs have been met.

Orphaned children form a special category of learners with most having a background of both economically and emotionally disadvantaged background. Their lives are characterized by sorrow, instability, uncertainty and in others abuse or neglect. Research has found out that orphaned children experience serious psychosocial problems which influence their educational experiences and general development (Lemeyu et al., 2023). Thus this group of learners needs extra psychosocial assistance to assist them in overcoming difficulties in their real life. The school turns into a second place of belonging and the teacher, principally the class teacher becomes an important person in providing emotional support and creating a feeling of safety and belonging. It has been found that teacher connectedness plays a significant role in resilience and psychological wellbeing of orphaned adolescents (Akilandeswari & Annalakshmi, 2023). The competence of a teacher to successfully meet the needs of orphaned students depends greatly on the professional preparedness of the teacher which entails the academic as well as the affective competence.

The experience of teaching especially, is influential in creating the manner in which a teacher interacts with the learners, in recognizing learners in need and applying support strategies in the classroom. The teachers who have been in the teaching profession longer also have a tendency to have built stronger classroom management, emotional intelligence and adaptive practices that enable them to address the needs of different learners. Research has shown that the efficacy of teachers to teach orphaned learners was significantly different depending on the experience and training of the teachers (Setai, 2023). It's more likely that they have had experience of dealing with such learners before and may thus have tried and tested methods of providing support. Conversely, new teachers might not have this experience and confidence, and they might not be able to detect psychological problems at the initial stages or provide any useful help.

In the Nairobi County scenario, where urban poverty, congested classrooms, and inadequate access to school-based counselling services all impact the situation, the role of the classroom teacher becomes even more important. Schools in the informal settlements and the low-income areas face the issue of underfunding and no access to professional counsellors. A study carried out in the Kiambu County that has similar urban aspects with Nairobi found out that HIV stigma and other psychosocial aspects have a considerable impact on the self-esteem of pupils in the public primary schools (Wambugu, 2023). Subsequently, teachers are left with almost all the responsibility of offering psychosocial services to the vulnerable learners. Thus, the years of service of a teacher and, consequently, his or her experience, becomes a proxy of his or her potential to provide not only academic but also emotional support to students.

Different education systems across the world have appreciated the role of teaching experience in emotional development of learners. Structured psychosocial support is proven to be important, and Life Skills Education programs have been reported to help adolescents in orphanages to enhance their emotional health and self-esteem (Mohammadzadeh et al., 2019). Special educational programs aimed at increasing self-esteem in orphaned children when provided by trained and experienced educators have been effective in its implementation, (Öztürk & Ekinci, 2018). Moreover, the problem-based learning projects have also been considered as the ways to promote self-esteem among orphaned students (Latada & Hashim, 2023). The results of this study underscore the significance of teaching experience in fostering not only academic achievements, but also psychosocial growth of students.

The Government of Kenya has introduced several interventions aimed at improving educational access and retention for orphans and vulnerable children, including the Free Primary Education program, bursary schemes, and feeding programs. Although these have been useful in improving school enrollment, they have not directly been related to better emotional and psychological health of the orphaned students. The research studies conducted on orphaned students at Kenyan secondary schools have shown elevated rates of irrational beliefs and stress which demonstrate the existence of long-term psychosocial difficulties (Umija et al., 2021). Studies that focus on the socio-economic background of the orphaned students have established strong linkages between the status and the level of self-esteem in the students (Gatumu et al., 2010). This psychosocial support loophole has remained a significant issue in the education system of the country.

The Basic Education Act of 2013 requires schools to offer safe and inclusive learning environment to all children including orphans. Nevertheless, this has not usually been put into effect due to limited resources, insufficient training

of teachers on matters dealing with psychosocial issues and the lack of monitoring systems. A survey conducted on the discipline management tactics used by principals in Makueni County determined that proper management tactic has critical impacts on the psychological health of the orphaned students (Muli, 2024). Therefore, lots of orphaned students still face the problem of low self-esteem, lack of academic interest, and lack of interest in school. These issues directly affect the potential of the learners to realize their potential, not only at school but also in general.

It is against this backdrop that this research paper aims to examine the connection between the teaching experience of the class teacher and the self-esteem of orphaned pupils in the public junior schools in Nairobi County. It is anticipated that the results of the research will guide the policy-making process and teacher-training programs by showing the importance of the teaching experience in the emotional and psychological support of the orphaned learners.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

According to UNICEF (2015), the population of orphans below the age of 18 years in Kenya stands at 3.6 million. These children require psychosocial support to develop positively and be like other children. Due to the loss of their parents, these children lack parental care, love, protection and the basic necessities. They are, therefore, likely to develop psychological issues such as low self-esteem, low self-efficacy and low self-actualization. Research has established significant differences in self-esteem between orphaned and non-orphaned students, with orphaned children exhibiting lower levels of psychological wellbeing (Kinyua & Gitumu, 2024; Shuja, 2023). These psychosocial challenges affect the educational achievement of learners. The school becomes the hope for learners in terms of providing them with psychosocial support. Teachers who are trained in psychosocial support are expected to provide the necessary support to the learners and help them to develop positively and achieve their life goals. However, studies indicate that teachers often lack confidence in their efficacy to effectively support orphaned learners (Setai, 2023). In many cases, teachers are not prepared to deal with the psychosocial challenges of orphaned learners. This is likely to affect their achievement in school.

Research observes that in Nairobi County, the number of orphaned learners is increasing every year and there has not been enough effort to prepare the teachers to handle the psychological issues of these learners. Orphaned learners experience psychosocial challenges that affect their academic achievement. Studies conducted in similar urban settings have documented high levels of stress and psychological distress among orphaned students (Umija et al., 2021; Wambugu, 2023). These challenges include aggression, stress, low self-esteem and low self-confidence. The class teacher is the person who can offer the necessary psychosocial support. The teacher should be able to recognize learners who have challenges and give them the necessary support. The question is whether the teachers were prepared and able to deal with these challenges and provide the necessary support to the learners. This study, therefore, aimed at establishing whether class teacher's teaching experience has an influence on the psychological wellbeing of orphaned learners as indicated by their self-esteem.

1.2 Research Objective

To investigate the relationship between class teacher's teaching experience and the self-esteem of orphaned pupils in Public Junior Schools of Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H_{01} : There is no relationship between class teacher's teaching experience and the self-esteem of orphaned pupils in Public Junior Schools of Nairobi County, Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The study was grounded on three theories: the Self-Esteem Theory by Rosenberg (1965), the Social Learning Theory by Bandura (1977), and the Self-Determination Theory by Deci and Ryan (1985). These theories provide the foundational basis for understanding the influence of class teachers' teaching experience on the self-esteem of orphaned pupils.

According to Rosenberg (1965), self-esteem is a positive or negative attitude towards oneself. He argued that self-esteem involves a person's overall sense of self-worth or personal value. Rosenberg assumes that self-esteem is created by the interactions that individuals have with their environment and the feedback they get through teachers and other key people in their lives. A learner who has high-self-esteem is likely to have a positive perception of himself/herself whereas a learner with low-self-esteem will feel insecure, inadequate, and uncertain. School life, particularly in case of orphaned students can largely influence the way such students perceive themselves regarding their interaction with the teachers. It has been established that educational interventions are important in structuring the educational programs which can greatly enhance self-esteem of individuals in institutional care settings (Öztürk & Ekinici, 2018). Emphatic, praiseful, and supportive feedback can also be used by teachers to ensure that vulnerable learners have high

self-esteem. The theory is in tandem with the present study since it shows how the experience of teaching can impact on the manner in which teachers engage and react to emotional needs of orphaned students.

The Social Learning Theory developed by Bandura (1977) focuses on how observational learning, imitation and modelling contribute to the development of behavior and psychological growth. According to the theory, people and especially children learn by watching the behavior of the role models and copying them. Bandura also observed that learning occurs through cognitive processes implying that learners are not passive receivers of stimuli but rather they are active in the interpretation and internalization of modeled behavior. The orphaned learners, in the classroom setting, can turn to their teachers to find support in terms of emotional stability, confidence, and guidance. Teachers who are positively-behaved, confident, and emotionally supportive are able to become effective role models. Research has demonstrated that the connectedness of teachers and positive modeling have a great impact on the resilience of orphaned adolescents (Akilandeswari & Annalakshmi, 2023). Seasoned teachers will tend to be more likely to have such attributes since they have been exposed to a variety of needs of learners over a long period. Therefore, the experience in teaching can determine the amount of teacher that can become the best model to help the orphaned learners to develop self-esteem.

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) created by Deci and Ryan (1985) concentrates on the intrinsic motivation of a person and the psychological needs that are supposed to be met to facilitate productive learning and development. Such needs are autonomy, competence and relatedness. When the needs are addressed, chances are high that the learners will enjoy psychological well-being, motivation, and high self-esteem. Ryan and Deci (2000) note that teachers have a significant role to play to foster such needs, in the form of the learning environment. Seasoned teachers can be more suitable to assist the learners with their autonomy, develop their competence through positive feedback, and enhance meaningful teacher-learner relationships. In case of orphaned pupils, who might not have support at home, the ability of a teacher to attend to these psychological needs is important to the self-esteem and general growth of such children. It has been established that interventions, which fulfill these basic psychological needs, substantially enhance emotional health and self-esteem in adolescents in an orphanage (Mohammadzadeh et al., 2019). This theory hence justifies the idea that teaching experience of class teachers has much influence in the development of psychological well-being of orphaned learners.

2.2 Empirical Review

Studies conducted in various countries have explored how teaching experience influences learner outcomes, including psychological well-being. The role of the teacher, particularly the class teacher, in shaping self-esteem among vulnerable learners such as orphans, has been of interest to many scholars.

Gatumu et al. (2010) developed a study on the self-esteem of orphan students and their connection with socio-economic status in secondary school students in three central Kenya districts. In the research, it was found that the self-esteem of the orphaned students was very low as compared to their non-orphaned counterparts. The results showed that socio-economic status, together with the quality of support that the orphaned learners were given by teachers and other adults in the educational setting, was very crucial in defining the level of self-esteem among the orphaned learners. The researchers in the study stressed that more experienced and empathetic teachers were in better situations to identify the emotional needs of orphaned students and respond to them.

A more recent investigation by Kinyua and Gitumu (2024) involved the analysis of the degree of self-esteem among orphan and non-orphan learners by secondary schools in both Kirinyaga and Nyeri Counties in Kenya. The research established that significant disparities existed in the levels of self-esteem, and orphaned students always reported a lower state of self-worth and confidence. The study emphasized that teacher to student relationship and the degree of individualized attention by the experienced teachers were crucial in enhancing the psychological wellbeing of orphaned students. The research concluded that teacher experience played a major role in boosting the self-esteem of orphaned students in the secondary schools.

Setai (2023) explored the views of teachers toward their effectiveness in teaching learners who were orphans in Maseru Secondary Schools in Lesotho. The researchers found that teachers who had greater teaching experiences were more assured and capable of meeting the psychosocial needs of the orphaned students. These educators were more conscious about the emotional issues of orphaned students and more proactive in adopting the supportive strategies. The researchers established that the senior teachers were more tolerant, sensitive and effective in instilling trust among orphaned students. These were teachers who provided good classroom conditions, which facilitated self-expression, acceptance by peers, and the feeling of self-worth. The study underscored that novice teachers were not always confident and able to address the emotional needs of vulnerable students.

Shuja (2023) conducted a comparative study to investigate the academic performance, happiness, and self-esteem of the orphan and non-orphan children in Pakistan in terms of gender and type of institution. The findings indicated that orphaned children exhibited considerably low self-esteem and happiness with respect to non-orphaned ones. The study also observed that quality of adult supervision and mentorship in learning institutions was also critical

in moderating these differences. The psychological outcome of the orphaned children was better in institutions that had long time experienced staff who offered a steady emotional support and structured guidance.

A study that was carried out in Malaysia examined project-based learning (POPBL) that was problem-oriented as an intervention program to improve the self-esteem of orphans. Latada and Hashim (2023) established that organized learning programs, when performed by highly trained and qualified teachers, were of great importance in enhancing self-confidence, as well as self-worth, of orphaned children. The research indicated that more successful in designing and implementing such interventions were teachers who had the pedagogical experience since they were more aware of the needs of learners and adaptive teaching strategies.

The study by Öztürk and Ekinçi (2018) in Turkey was focused on the impact of structured education on self-esteem and suicide probability in male adolescents placed in orphanages. The results indicated that guided learning programs run by skilled teachers had a dramatic effect as it enhanced self-esteem level and minimized adverse psychological consequences. According to the study, more trained teachers showed higher abilities to provide safe and accommodative learning environments, which were responsive to the emotional weaknesses of the institutionalized children.

In Malaysia, a multi-center randomized control trial study by Mohammadzadeh et al. (2019) compared the efficacy of Life Skills Education programs in enhancing the emotional health and the self-esteem of adolescents residing in the orphanage. The findings also indicated that clear psychosocial programs conducted by trained and qualified facilitators greatly boosted self-esteem and emotional wellbeing. The researchers have highlighted the significance of experience and training of a facilitator in providing effective psychosocial support to vulnerable adolescents.

Wambugu (2023) in Kenya carried out an evaluation of the impacts of HIV-related stigma to the self-esteem of pupils in public primary schools in Kiambu County in Kenya. According to the research findings, stigma was identified as a major hindrance to the self-esteem of the affected pupils though supportive interactions with the teachers were identified as protective factors. The teachers who had a longer experience were identified to be more sensitive to the stigmatization of vulnerable pupils as well as being more effective in establishing inclusive classroom settings that encouraged self-worth and dignity.

Umija et al. (2021) investigated the level of irrational beliefs and stress, among Kenyan secondary school orphaned students. It was found that orphaned students were more affected because of the stress and irrational beliefs. The paper has highlighted that educator and especially those who have been experienced in counseling and psychosocial provision were very important in refuting such irrational beliefs and offering emotional advice that facilitated resilience and well-perceived self-image.

Muli (2024) examined how the management strategies of principals on discipline enforced on orphaned children in state secondary schools in Makueni County, Kenya, affect the psychological wellbeing of these students. The researcher established that the use of supportive and restorative methods of discipline, which experienced school leaders and teachers tend to use most frequently, was related to the increase in the levels of self-esteem and emotional stability of the learner among the orphans. The study found that professional teachers tended to be more willing to implement discipline measures that accounted on the emotional impact of orphaned children than those that are discipline based and which may harm the attitude of the students.

A comparative study by Akilandeswari and Annalakshmi (2023) was carried out in India to determine the role of alienation, educational aspiration, and teacher connectedness on resilience in orphan and non-orphan adolescents. The results showed that teacher connectedness was a strong predictor of resilience and self-esteem by orphaned adolescents. Students who indicated strong relationship with their teachers, especially those whose teachers had taught them over a long time showed better levels of psychological wellbeing and academic motivation.

Lemeyu et al. (2023) researched the experiences of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in public primary schools in the city of Harare in Zimbabwe. Teacher interaction is one of the key factors the study determined to affect the self-esteem and engagement of the learners at school. It observed that the senior teachers developed organized schedules, articulated expectations, and respected relationships with the learners. These are the factors that led to higher self-esteem by orphaned pupils. The paper has also pointed out that inexperienced teachers tended to use punitive approaches and could not relate well with emotionally vulnerable students.

Abraha (2024) investigated psychosocial experiences of orphan children in primary school in Ethiopia, including issues and mitigation. The researchers established that orphans had serious psychological issues such as low self-esteem, anxiety, and social withdrawal. But the study made the observation that psychological outcomes were greatly enhanced by supportive efforts of experienced teachers and school-based counselors. The paper has highlighted that more experienced teachers were more placed to recognize the initial signs of mental distress and make the right support or referral.

In spite of the fact that a few studies have highlighted the role of teacher qualities on the psychological growth of learners, a majority of them have concentrated on general population or other performance dimensions like academic attainment or conduct. There have been limited studies which specifically looked at the correlation between teaching

experience of class teachers and the self-esteem of the orphaned students in the public junior schools in Nairobi County. The present study aims at filling this gap by offering a local evidence based information.

Based on the reviewed literature, teaching experience has an enormous impact on the psychological development of learners, in particular, emotional stability, self-worth, and self-confidence. The conceptual models including Rosenberg Self-Esteem Theory, Social Learning Theory developed by Bandura, and Self-Determination Theory of Deci and Ryan all prove that interactions with important adults, particularly teachers, affect self-esteem of learners.

Empirical research in Kenya, Pakistan, Malaysia, Turkey, India, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia show that experienced teachers are crucial towards offering emotional support, modeling positive behavior and inclusive classroom environments. The latter characteristics apply particularly to the case of orphaned pupils who usually have no support of their parents and are more vulnerable to emotional difficulties.

Nevertheless, literature has a clear gap when it comes to the direct correlation between the teaching experience of the class teachers and the self-esteem of orphaned students in the public junior schools in the Nairobi County. The majority of the available research is generalized or carried out in other institutions of learning. This research therefore fills this gap of knowledge by paying attention to the role of a teaching experience of the class teachers in affecting the self-esteem of the orphaned students in urban setting of Nairobi County in Kenya.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive correlational research design to determine the relationship between class teacher teaching experience and the self-esteem of orphaned pupils. The design was considered appropriate as it allows for the establishment of relationships among variables without manipulating them. The study was carried out in Nairobi County, Kenya, and targeted a population of 192,113 orphaned learners drawn from 237 public junior schools. The accessible population included orphaned pupils and their class teachers in grades 7, 8, and 9. The sample size comprised 400 orphaned pupils and their class teachers, selected using purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to both pupils and their class teachers. The pupil questionnaire was designed to measure the self-esteem, while the class teacher's questionnaire focused on demographic characteristics, including the teaching experience. The data collection instruments were pilot tested in a school outside the main study area to assess their reliability and validity. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) was found to be 0.784, which was considered acceptable for the study.

Quantitative data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and percentages were used to summarize the data. To test the hypotheses, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the relationship between the independent variables (teacher's teaching experience) and the dependent variable (self-esteem of orphaned pupils). Statistical analysis was facilitated by the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Ethical considerations were upheld throughout the study. The researcher obtained permission from the relevant education authorities and ensured that informed consent was obtained from all participants. Anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were guaranteed, and participation was voluntary. The research process was also guided by logistical preparations, including scheduling appointments with school heads.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate

The respondents who participated in this study included class teachers and orphaned pupils in public junior schools in Nairobi County. Specifically, the researcher targeted 400 orphaned pupils and their class teachers. A total of 579 questionnaires were successfully returned: 179 from class teachers and 400 from orphaned pupils. This data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Questionnaire Return Rate

Respondents	Sample	Returned	Return Rate
Class Teachers	200	179	89.5%
Orphaned Pupils	400	400	100%
Total	600	579	96.5%

The return rate of 96.5% is considered very good as it exceeds the 70% threshold recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) for reliable data analysis and generalization. This high response rate enhances the credibility of the findings and the representativeness of the sample.

4.1.1 Class Teachers' Teaching Experience

The study sought to determine the distribution of teaching experience among class teachers in public junior schools. Respondents were asked to indicate their total years of teaching experience.

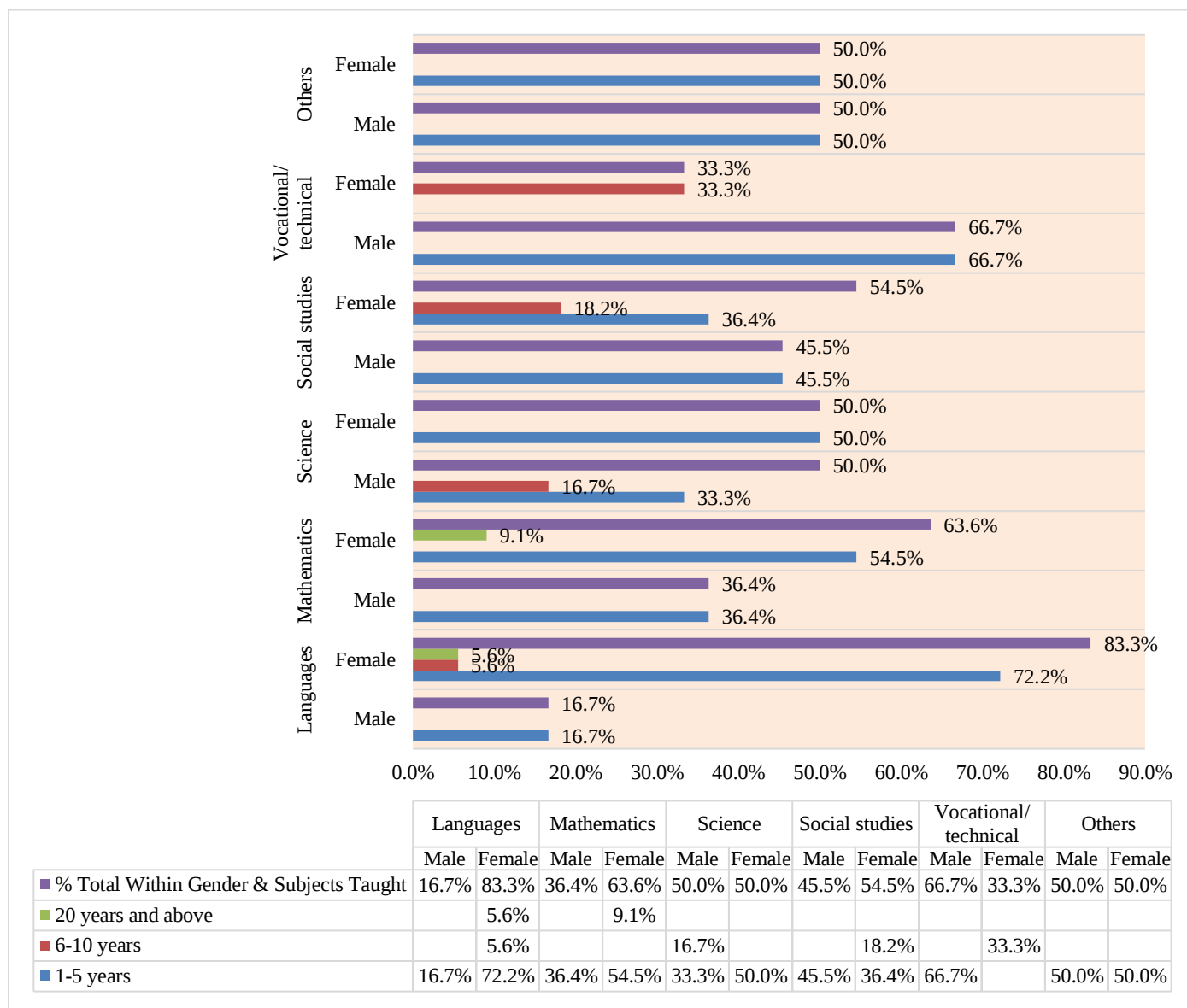


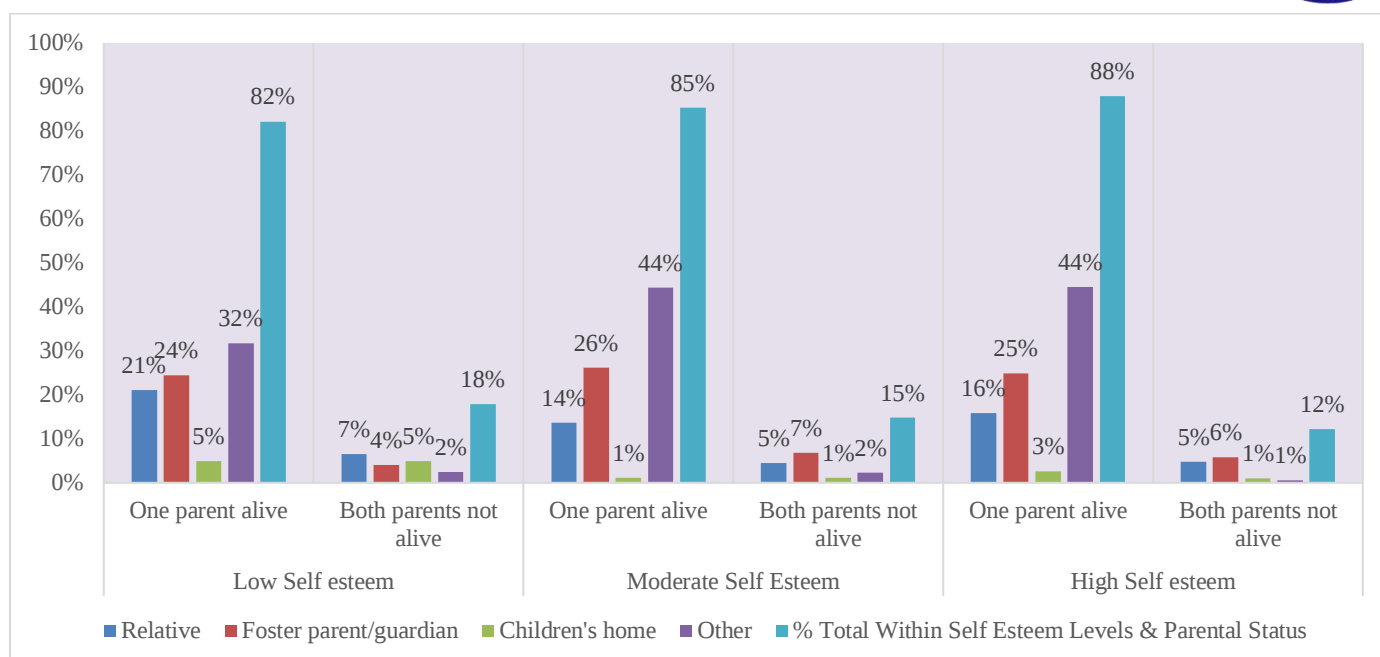
Figure 1

Distribution of Teacher Respondents by Gender, Teaching Experience and Subject Taught

This chart illustrates the distribution of teachers' teaching experience across different subjects by gender. The data reveals that the majority of teachers, regardless of gender or subject area, have 1-5 years of teaching experience, with particularly high concentrations in Languages (72.2% female, 16.7% male) and Mathematics (63.6% total). Teachers with 6-10 years of experience represent a smaller proportion, most notably in vocational/technical subjects (33.3%). Remarkably, only two instances show teachers with 20+ years of experience (5.6% in Languages and 9.1% in Mathematics), indicating a predominantly young or less-experienced teaching workforce.

4.1.2 Self-Esteem Levels of Orphaned Pupils

Figure 2 shows the connection between the living status of the orphaned pupils, the parental status and the level of self-esteem.

**Figure 2**

Distribution of Student Respondents by Parental Status, Living Categories and Self Esteem Levels

The statistics in Figure 2 indicate dangerous trends: only 82 percent of students who had one parent alive and 85 percent of those who had both parents dead had low or moderate self-esteem, and only 88 percent of students had high self-esteem. It is also interesting to note that the group of pupils who live with relatives has the highest percentage (21% low, 14% moderate, 16% high), and pupils in the children homes have the least percentage (5% low, 1% moderate, 3% high). Always worrisome are the trends of double orphans (both parents are dead), whereby there is a high representation in low self-esteem. Different results are observed in foster parents/guardians who take care of orphaned children (24% low, 26% moderate, 25% high self-esteem), which explains the role of caregivers in seriously affecting psychological wellbeing. Such results drive home the frailty of orphaned pupils irrespective of their living conditions, the importance of teacher assistance in fostering self-esteem among this group of people

4.1.3 Relationship between Class Teachers' Teaching Experience and Pupils' Self-Esteem

To test the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between class teachers' teaching experience and the self-esteem of orphaned pupils, the researcher used Pearson's Product Moment Correlation.

Table 2

Teachers Ratings of Orphaned Children Self Esteem

Statistics		
Teachers Ratings Of Students Self Esteem Scale Scores		
N	Valid	30
	Missing	0
Mean		80.8667
Median		81.5000
Mode		80.00 ^a
Std. Deviation		8.22835
Variance		67.706
Skewness		-.615
Range		34.00
Minimum		60.00
Maximum		94.00
Percentiles	25	77.0000
	50	81.5000
	75	86.7500
A. Multiple Modes Exist. The Smallest Value Is Shown		

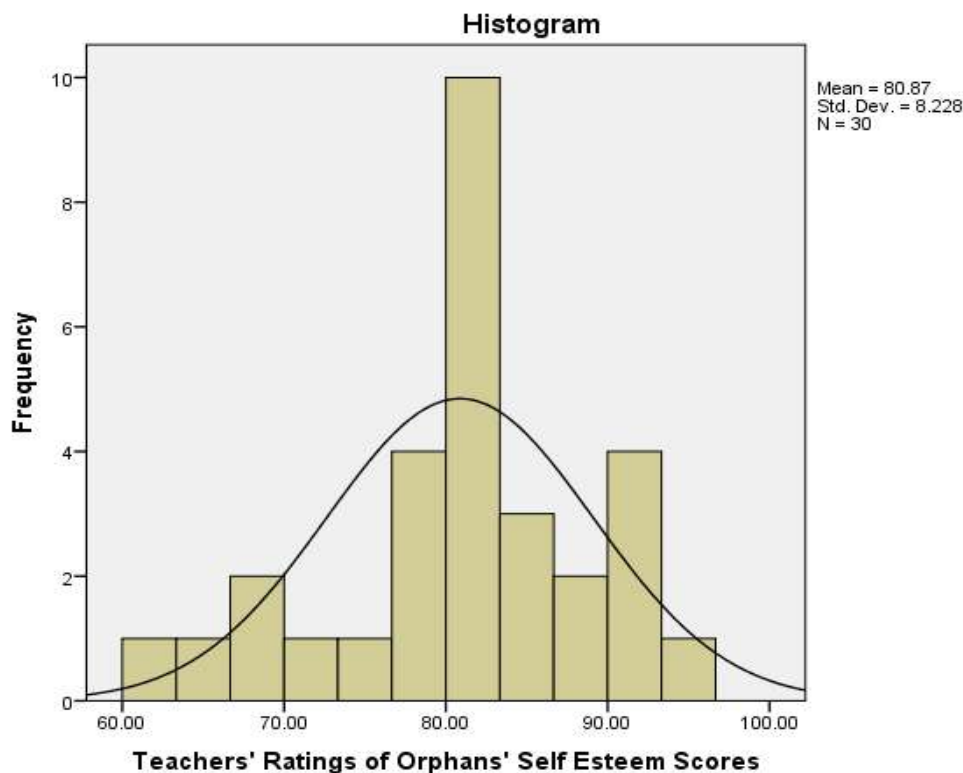


Figure 3
Teachers' Ratings of Orphaned Children Self Esteem Histogram

The results presented in Table 2 and Figure 3 reflect teachers' perceptions of the self-esteem levels of orphaned students under their care. The data was based on valid responses from 30 teachers, with no missing values. The mean score for teacher ratings was 80.87 with a standard deviation of 8.23, indicating that, overall, teachers viewed the orphaned students as possessing relatively high levels of self-esteem. The median score was 81.50, while the mode was 80.00, showing consistency around the central tendency. The range between the highest (94) and lowest (60) scores was 34, suggesting that while teachers generally reported high self-esteem levels, they acknowledged some variation across individual students. The interquartile range from the 25th percentile (77.00) to the 75th percentile (86.75) further supports that most ratings clustered in the upper quartile of the scale. The skewness of -0.615 confirms a clear leftward (negative) skew in the distribution, indicating that most ratings leaned toward the higher end of the self-esteem scale. Figure 3 visually affirms this, with the histogram showing a concentration of responses in the upper range. These findings suggest that teachers overwhelmingly perceive orphaned learners as resilient and emotionally stable.

The results indicate a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.367$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that higher levels of teaching experience are associated with higher levels of self-esteem among orphaned pupils. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

4.2 Discussion

The finding that most of the orphaned pupils have low to moderate self-esteem is consistent with recent research demonstrating significant differences in self-esteem levels between orphaned and non-orphaned students (Kinyua & Gitumu, 2024; Shuja, 2023). This emotional vulnerability in orphans is worsened by the absence of consistent adult support and parental care. In this situation, the class teacher is most likely the one to have the emotional and psychological support responsibility. This paper has established that the more experienced teachers help to bridge this gap by designing systematic classroom practices, verbal affirmation and individual attention. These measures are helpful in creating a stable and supportive environment to orphaned students that later facilitates building self-esteem and a sense of belonging, which was seen in other researches on teacher efficacy in dealing with vulnerable students (Setai, 2023).

The fact that the positive correlation between teaching experience and the self-esteem of the pupils found in this study is valid confirms the assertion of the Self-Determination Theory by Ryan and Deci (2000) which contends that the pillars of psychological well-being are relatedness and competence. The veteran teachers with their interpersonal maturity as well as broad exposure to the needs of the different learners are better placed to facilitate the influence of these two interrelated dimensions on the vulnerable pupils. They create a feeling of belonging to classrooms that not

only help pupils become visible and audible, but also capable and worthy. This conclusion is justified by the studies that have shown that the self-esteem and emotional well-being of adolescents in institutional care are significantly improved by the help of structured interventions provided by the experienced educators (Mohammadzadeh et al., 2019; Öztürk & Ekinci, 2018).

This brings out the emotional nature of teaching which is more important in the case of orphaned children. It has been a consistent finding that teacher connectedness is a great predictor of resilience and psychological wellbeing in orphaned adolescents (Akilandeswari & Annalakshmi, 2023). The teachers who have been teaching in the classroom over a long period are more prone to identify the needs of their students that are not fulfilled. They pick up slightest indications such as withdrawal, restlessness, mood swings, and they often have informal arrangements such as check-ins during breaks to assist struggling pupils with emotional problems. These are the kinds of emotional literacy that are likely to be developed over time that appear to play a vital role in helping the students who are orphaned to grow with better self-esteem.

In Nairobi, the school environment, which is generally an urban environment, individual attention is a luxury since in most cases the teacher is supposed to attend to a huge number of students in a classroom. Nonetheless, this research showed that the longer the teacher had been teaching the more competent he or she was in identifying students in need of help and making effective use of time to offer emotional support. This favors the virtue of relational capital that will accrue to the experienced teachers over time. They know how to strike a balance between delivery of content and emotional care. Research in a similar urban setting established that senior teachers can better assist in solving psychosocial problems, including those associated with stigma which impacts on self-esteem (Wambugu, 2023). This means that the orphaned students they take in feel better and they will most likely come out successfully in the social and emotional front despite their conditions.

Further, the findings also confirm the hypothesis that teaching experience increases the advancement of adaptive classroom strategies, especially on socio-emotional aspects. Veteran teachers being experienced in the field of both behavioral and academic concerns are better equipped to recognize the instances of emotional distress, implement the responsive classroom management and participate in the empathy-based pedagogy. This fact aligns with a study in Zimbabwe that demonstrated that veteran teachers establish routines and develop respectful relationships that help to build better self-esteem in orphaned students (Lemeyu et al., 2023). On the other hand, the more recent teachers may be more obsessed with the content of the syllabus, marking, and performance scores which may be disruptive of their ability to engage the pupils on a personal level. This might be the cause of such a shift in priorities as orphaned pupils proved to be more self-esteemed with teachers who were more experienced under their care.

The data indicate that emotional support cannot be replaced by curriculum content or institutional policies. It is human touch that has decisive role in shaping the psychological perspective of the child especially by the steadfast influence of an adult in the school. This research article contributes to the literature that schools should be concerned about teacher preparation and emotional intelligence and specifically among teachers who teach vulnerable populations. Research on the discipline management techniques has revealed that seasoned teachers who use supportive styles can play a critical role in the psychological wellbeing of orphaned students (Muli, 2024). It is not only the experienced teachers who should educate pupils in academic matters but act as role-models of resilience, compassion, and emotional control, which orphans might not acquire at home.

Besides, previously taught teachers are more successful in facilitating peer relations, participation in group activities, and inclusion in a classroom. Having more developed knowledge of class dynamics, they are able to build the community and create cooperation among pupils. This can be especially applicable to orphaned students who usually feel isolated, unworthy, or afraid of being rejected (Abraha, 2024). When their teachers in the classroom create emotionally safe spaces, such learners become more likely to engage, speak up and feel validated. As well, veteran educators can make referrals to vulnerable students to school counseling offices and in some cases even initiate informal mentoring programs. Their information on the processes and resources present in the institution makes them be able to advocate for the students who need psychological interventions. Studies have shown that these supportive interventions help a great deal to decrease stress and irrational beliefs in orphaned students (Umija et al., 2021). This is the conclusion that brings out the forms of transformation in which a supportive teacher can transform the life of an orphaned child. It validates that the psychological wellbeing at school is not a mere product of policies and infrastructure, but a product of relationships, primarily, the relationship between the pupil and the teacher. This relational focus is especially critical at public schools in Kenya, where the material resources might be scarce, yet interaction between a person can be an effective tool of positive transformation.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between class teachers' teaching experience and the self-esteem of orphaned pupils in public junior schools in Nairobi County, Kenya. The quantitative analysis revealed a

statistically significant positive correlation between teachers' years of teaching experience and the self-esteem levels of orphaned pupils ($\chi^2 = 169.93$, $p = 0.009$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Pupils taught by more experienced teachers reported higher levels of self-confidence, belonging, and classroom engagement. The study's conclusions emphasize the role of significant adult figures in shaping learner's self-worth. In summary, the study concludes that teaching experience significantly influences the self-esteem of orphaned pupils, with more experienced teachers better positioned to provide the emotional stability, psychosocial guidance, and nurturing environment required to build resilience and confidence among orphaned learners in Nairobi County.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the study makes the following recommendations:

The Ministry of Education and the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) should strengthen in-service training programs focusing on psychosocial support and emotional intelligence. Such programs should target newly recruited teachers, equipping them with skills to identify emotional distress, manage vulnerable learners, and provide trauma-informed support. Schools should establish mentorship systems pairing less experienced teachers with seasoned educators. Through this structure, novice teachers can learn best practices in handling psychosocial challenges from their senior colleagues.

Education policy makers should consider teaching experience as a factor in class allocation. Vulnerable groups such as orphans should be placed under the guidance of more experienced teachers to ensure that their psychosocial needs are met alongside academic instruction. Schools should integrate professional guidance and counseling units to complement the support given by class teachers. Teacher-counselors should be provided with ongoing training and resources to enhance their capacity to serve orphaned pupils. The Government of Kenya, in collaboration with NGOs, should prioritize the provision of psychosocial support programs within schools, including life skills education, peer counseling, and mentorship activities. Such initiatives will supplement the work of class teachers in building self-esteem among orphaned pupils.

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