

**EFFECTS OF PARENTAL NEGLECT ON LEVEL OF ADJUSTMENT  
DURING TRANSITION TO YOUNG ADULTHOOD: CASE OF YOUNG  
WOMEN IN MIGWANI SUB-COUNTY, KENYA**

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**Abstract**

*The concept of a healthy transition to young adulthood includes situations where the young adult assumes independent roles like work, financial independence and moving from the parents' house to their own house to achieve full independence. Moreover, parental support is regarded as key in influencing the transition process where the young adults constantly require the support of their parents in various ways to become fully independent as well as master some skills of survival on their own in the world. This study sought to identify the effects of parental neglect on level of adjustment during the transition to young adulthood among young women in Migwani sub-county. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Data was collected by the use of questionnaires and the reliability of the instruments was accepted at 0.89 using the Cronbach alpha coefficient. Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis with the help of SPSS version 23, and the results presented using tables and percentages. The findings of the study showed that majority of the respondents (82%) engaged in risky lifestyles to deal with problems that come their way. Other impacts like poor decisions and mistreatment from friends whom they seek help from had a percentage of 79% and 78% respectively. The study recommended that parents of young adult women should be empowered to effectively respond to the various needs that young women face to prevent their maladaptive behaviors.*

**Keywords:** Adjustment, Coping, Parental neglect, Transitions, Young adulthood

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**Introduction**

Human development depends on the interaction of two factors; heredity and environment which depend on and influence each other (Lerner, 2014). Each development stage in human life is influenced by these major concepts to some level. Young adulthood has been described as an age of identity exploration when young adults aged 19-25 are deciding who they are and what they want out of work school and love (Weiten, 2011). The process of transitions to the new roles is huge as young adults face enormous changes in this development span than any other group. With change and difficulties in life being unavoidable- knowledge about constructive coping is necessary for this stage in life. Globally the concerns about the transition to young adulthood have been felt differently in various countries. For instance in America, Oris, & Ritschard, 2014 report that young women are waiting longer than ever to find a stable career path and leave home. Other studies by (AIHW, 2015) show that young women aged 18–25 in Australia are also more likely to be unemployed/underemployed compared to other age groups further delaying their transition to independence.

Studies done in Europe showed that in comparison to earlier generations, young women rely on their parents for financial, practical, and emotional support, well into their twenties(Beckett, &Taylor, 2013). The delayed transition can influence the well-being of young women leading to maladaptive behaviors. According to Fingerman, Kim, Birditt, & Zarit (2016). Financial instability is positively associated with depressive symptoms of psychological disorders. Other behaviors that have been noted as outcomes of poor transitions include marijuana use, binge drinking, transactional sex, risky behaviors, and

psychopathy (Butler, & Randall, 2013). The role of parents in the young women facing the named struggles can be to provide empathy and guidance when the process becomes difficult or frustrating and in intense cases make a referral to counseling. According to Muanda, Gahungu, Wood, Bertrand, (2018) in Sub-Saharan Africa, the young people are greatly disadvantaged due to poor livelihood, lack of opportunities, high risk to sexual abuse, drug abuse, and poor livelihoods which negatively impact their health and well-being.

Parents can be understandably confused by the process which explains the lack of support by some and in other times possible neglect. In sub-Saharan Africa, Culturally embedded ideals place many of the caring roles within the collective space of kin and community networks particularly those facilitating young people's entry into adulthood (Juarez, & Gayet, 2014). However, the review by Juarez and Gayet (2014) about the African context does not translate to easy support from the parents to young adults who sometimes also suffer from their problems. According to Goldberg, (2013) young adults suffer when parent coping strategies include excessive drinking and from related increases in violence and mental instability. Most young people are unable to deal with the parental maladjustment and their needs which drive them to perish in their needs due to a lack of required support and guidance.

In Africa, where most parents get married at a young age, case scenarios of parental neglect are common occurrences for most young people trying to transition to healthy adulthood. Burgeoning research has cited a lack of parental inspiration to support the young women's transition in meaningful ways as a result of their failures in life. Studies done by Bray (2014) show that in central Africa, support groups established by health care and other guidance services have become an important source of help for young adults who as a result exhibit greater resilience and are less likely to engage in harmful behavior. From this study, it is evident the practice can be the truth among many other African countries where mentorship in institutions like schools, community groups churches, and the workplace has become a haven for most young women. According to Wagman, Gray, Campbell, Thomas, Ndyanabo, Ssekasanvu (2015) the challenges and hardships facing rural youth and young adults in Africa are; a growing population of unemployed but educated youth lack of capital or income-generating activities; a strong cycle of poverty from parents to children inadequate awareness youth interventions from caregivers. The young women in these contexts will therefore do better with external help despite their yearning for their parents' support. Arnett (2014) posits help from peers, use of self-help materials, and other sources of external help have proved to be the most immediate aid in this age of is misleading most of the time

Other Studies done by (McEvoy-Levy, 2014) have shown that young people in the Middle East and Africa contexts experience economic exclusion and violent conflict that make it difficult for them to become adults in traditional terms which prolongs their transition to adulthood lasting into a person's thirties or forties. The importance of acquiring a job at this age therefore cannot be understated as is it will catapult the young adults to their required roles. According to Honawana, (2014) in Zimbabwe Most young women engage in sex work and do so for reasons of mobility due to family instability and political upheaval, and lack of resources in the home. While exposure to multiple negative life events may not be controllable it can undermine the effective transition of many causing most of the young women to lose focus on their advancement. Friends and immediate family members (parents, children, and siblings) were named as the primary sources of emotional support to young

adults in rural Mozambique, while sexual partners are noted as further providers (Cummings et al, 2014). The struggle in Africa, of the young women transitioning to adulthood, turns out to be heavy when the key roles in this age cannot be achieved easily; work and healthy romantic relationship.

In Kenya, Jivetti, Billystrom & Njororai Simiyu, Wycliffe & Njororai, Fletcher. (2016) found out that 45% of young women living in rural populations are the poorest population because of unmet needs and lack of support from their parents. A study done by Bernard (2014) shows that in Kenya, young people constitute 30% (12,321,280) of the total population while the scenario is worsened by the economy generating only 150,000 jobs in total, leaving hundreds of thousands of youth without opportunities for formal employment. The means for the young women to make a living becoming narrow in Kenya most of them have decided to engage in other social vices to make ends meet. A study done by Ndolo (2014) posits that the “sponsor” culture in Kenya has become common where young adult women rely on older men to pay their bills while they engage in party life and high-class life. Gulled (2013) pointed out that young women are forced into the sex industry to survive; they lose their rights to grow older are denied their rights to develop at the natural pace.

The atrocious culture of ‘sponsors’ in Kenya and other African countries is that it cuts across contexts both rural and town set up while in developed countries is highly advanced as a profession. Miriti & Mutua (2019) in their study found out that parents in Kitui county do not discuss the sexual and social vices that the young women engaged in they were nonetheless ignorant or pretentious of their daughters’ behavior and played no role in discouraging it. According to Tobias (2013), young women are extremely vulnerable, living in poverty with no food or money they lack the opportunities for education or even employment in rural areas, forests have been transformed into lodgings like in Chobingo forest in Ukunda town, Kwale County. Some common assumptions that young women are mature in early adulthood and should take care of themselves lead to a lack of parental support and heinous activities in this group.

Despite the efforts put in place to help the young women to transition to adulthood effectively, the core reason for their suffering has remained unsolved without a focus on their parental relationships. Greater numbers of young women continue to manifest maladaptive behaviors such as drug abuse, transactional sex, risky relationships, and emotional instability. Without parental support, the gaps in underdeveloped capacities to face the world remains evident in most of the young women. Young women yearn for input from their parents on many issues as demonstrated in their constant pursuit of relationship and communication with their parents on financial support, and advice about education or employment, and ways to handle difficult situations. The importance of parental support remains beneficial for relational bonds between the young women and their parents as well as post-transition adjustment. On the other hand, any form of parental neglect would adversely affect young women. Burgeoning research has shown that retrained and difficult relationships between parents and young women can hinder educational attainment, cause ill health, dysfunctional behavior, and unhappiness. Against this background, this study investigated the effect of parental neglect on the level of adjustment during the transition to young adulthood: the case of young women in the rural areas in Migwani sub-county, Kitui County, Kenya.

## **Objective of the Study**

To find out the effects of parental neglect on level of adjustment during transition to young adulthood among young women in Migwani sub-county, Kenya

## **Literature Review**

### **Causes of parental neglect in young women**

Separation in young adulthood is viewed in two main ways; external and internal. According to Lerner (2014), external separation involves moving out of the family home, increased financial independence, independent roles, and other responsible roles and arrangements. The external tasks are huge, underpinned by life realities of frustrations and challenges to be achieved automatically as most elders or young adults themselves may perceive. Coping and adaptive strategies are needed to manage the external demands usually, acquired from the elderly and experienced who are the parents. The second type of separation has been noted as the most difficult change that the young adults have had to deal with as it involves their internal emotions. According to (Arnett, 2014) the epitome of this particular kind of change is seen in young adult's physical movement from their own house to the family home. Other changes in the phase involve becoming less dependent on parents and entering new roles and responsibilities as they engage in more autonomous decision making (Beckett and Taylor, 2013). Most parents are unable to support their young women during this phase of life due to a lack of knowledge of the difficulties the young people may be experiencing. In most cases, as noted by most parents end up chasing their troubled young women from home exposing them to more dangers and problems.

### **Impact of parental neglect during the transition to young adulthood among young women**

The adjustment refers to psychological processes through which human beings manage or cope with the challenges and frustration of the demands of everyday life (Keith, 2014). The catastrophic events in this age such as changes in the environment, tasks, social, economic, catastrophic events are beyond the normal range of human experiences of change and decision making. Without effective support and a process to adjust, the said tasks can cause to intense stress which leads to maladjustment. Parental support in this prime time is required and most trusted among the young women. According to Arnett (2014) when envisaged parental support is withheld or not given it causes disturbance and upheaval not just at a personal and familial level but throughout the society.

In other studies by Keith (2014) lack of parental support the more immediately traumatizing events for young women in explaining maladaptive behavior. Some common maladaptive reactions to distress and change among young women as noted by Duggan, and Lenhart, (2015) are; Alcohol or drug abuse, smoking, overeating, dumping in, or abusing others, escapism spending sprees, risky sexual behaviors, and blaming others. However, the presence of parental support enhances; resilience and protective factors such as effective decision coping, adaptive strategies in young women (Fingerman, Kim, Birditt, & Zarit, 2016).

### **Extent of parental neglect during the transition to young adulthood among young women**

The parental roles can consistently have beneficial effects on the coping and healthy transition to young adulthood. In the African countries, however, the cultural beliefs that young women should get married to rich husbands contribute to their parents being neglectful of their needs. According to Jivetti, *et al* (2016) young women in their adulthood are more likely to engage in riskier sexual behaviors than their male counterparts such as; transactional sex, and multiple sexual partnerships. The advanced effects of lack of support and parental involvement give rise to maladjustment leading to a lack of self-efficacy, independence, and risky behaviors and patterns among women. On the other hand, when grown children incur problems, studies have documented parental empathetic distress but in terms of financial support, support, and love yet they have not noted difficulties for the grown children stemming from parental involvement (Fingerman, 2016).

### **Effective techniques to improve ways in which parents can relate with their young women**

The emphasis on the importance of parental support, relationships, and interaction provide a useful framework to explore the impact of parental involvement in young adulthood. Erickson (1964) in his psychosocial theory claimed two aspects of parenting as important in young adulthood; “parental acceptance, responsiveness versus parental control/ neglect. The former has been seen as a powerful contributor to healthy developmental outcomes and a strong indicator of support when used. Parental involvement can play a major role in helping young adults to interpret, process, and adjust accordingly to the challenges and frustrations that they face in this journey (Miller, Yu, Chen, & Brody, 2015).

The parental support should provide models for reinforcement in life; problem-solving, motivation, and necessary coping skills. On the other hand, neglectful parents are seen as low on both responsiveness and demandingness. According to Weiter (2011) parent’s characteristics that contribute towards neglect, involve overlaps between context and involvement where parents from poor contexts have been seen to suffer from social and economic, literacy factors in dealing with their young women. Studies by Beckett and Taylor (2013) show that the following factors increase the impact of parental neglect on young adults;

- Failure to readjust parental roles to being supportive, role modeling, and mentorship
- Lack of empowerment though provision of higher training
- Lack of assessment and identification of individual needs, aptitudes, and interest
- Failure to maintain social support derived from intimate relationships that make the individual feel loved, valued, and cared for.

This study adopted Erick Erickson’s theory of 1959 on psychosocial development. This theory is focused on the ages where young people in early adulthood 20s through early 40s) are concerned with intimacy vs. isolation. According to Erickson (1959), young people must have a strong sense of self before they can develop successful intimate relationships. Studies done by Beckett, & Taylor, (2013) show that loneliness and self-absorption can develop when self-entity does not form in former stages. This theory has been considered in this study

because it focuses on competencies that are required in early adulthood. The theory in this study will build help strengthen the discussion towards parental support and adjustment for young women in transition to adulthood.

### **Methodology**

The study employed a descriptive research design which is fact-finding research, suitable to describe the variables as they are to offer a detailed understanding of the matter being investigated; the researcher was able to present the findings as representative of the population (Kothari, 2010). The sample comprised of 120 young women in the age bracket of 21-25 living with their parents Stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used to select the sample; data was collected by the use of a questionnaire named Young women questionnaire (YWQ). The data collected was analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics, frequency tables and percentages were used to analyze data, chi-square was used for hypothesis testing with the use of statistical analysis software-SPSS version 23.

### **Findings**

This section reports on the findings of the study which investigated the effects of parental neglect in maladjustment of transition to young adulthood: the case of young women in the rural areas in the Migwani sub-county. The study findings are summarized in the subsequent sub-headings and tables. The first objective of this study was to assess the causes of parental neglect in maladjustment of transitions to young-adulthood: the case of young women in the rural areas in the Migwani sub-county. To achieve this objective, a research question was formulated what are the effects of *parental neglect* in young-adult case women in the rural areas in the Migwani sub-county?. To answer this question, the participants were asked to respond to the following statements of the question findings are presented in Table 1

The majority of respondents (82%) discussed that they engage in risky lifestyles to deal with problems that come their way. Other impacts like Poor decisions, mistreatment from friends whom they seek among others, with a percentage of 79%, 78%, 78%, and 73% respectively.

**Table 1: Effects of parental neglect in young women in Migwani sub-county**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree	
	Mode	%	Mode	%	Mode	%	Mode	%
Lack of happiness	2	2	13	11	14	12	88	73
Transactional sex	6	5	12	10	6	5	93	78
Risky lifestyle	0	0	10	8	3	3	98	82
Lack of coping skills	3	3	17	14	0	0	94	78
Wrong advise from friends	3	3	18	15	9	8	85	71
Lack of motivation	0	0	30	25	8	7	82	68
Poor decisions	5	4	11	9	9	8	95	79
Mistreatment from friends whom I seek refuge in	0	0	17	14	6	5	94	78
Escapism in things that I am supposed to do	7	6	24	20	9	8	80	67
Drug abuse	3	3	22	18	6	5	83	69

The findings of this study revealed that there was a presence of parental neglect in the maladjustment of transitions to young adulthood among young women. Fingerman (2016) pointed out that providing help to young adults may be draining, particularly if the parent cannot resolve the problem because they question whether it is normal for grown children to be dependent on their parents. Other studies by Fingerman, Kim, Birditt, & Zarit (2016) show that parents who perceive their young adults as needing more help than others of comparable age report poorer well-being as they view themselves as remiss in raising children, who are less competent than those of comparable age. In most cases, the reasons for parental neglect for young women are caused by the beliefs, of the aversive cultures other than the characteristics of the young women.

Young women need parental support to be able to make a smooth transition to adulthood. This is because of the complexity of the new roles and the lack of knowledge on how to handle them. According to Roux, Shattuck, Rast, Rava, & Anderson, (2015), there is a notable relationship between maladjustment and perceived lack of support predicts an increase in the use of negative coping strategies among young women. When parental support is provided it can decrease maladaptive behavior and negative coping among young women.

Studies were done by Hartnett, Fingerman, & Birditt (2017) show that Parents' beliefs about their involvement with grown children may also be pivotal in the implications of that involvement for their well-being. Therefore most parents begin to develop negative attitudes against young women who may delay the easy transition to adulthood responsibilities. According to Wadsworth, (2016) by contrast, prolonged dependency on parents may stymie the offspring's psychological growth and could impede an intimate psychological relationship for both. Parents also need care and proper information to adjust to the new relationship and roles. Preference for social support directed to parental involvement most young adults

become prone to maladjustment when the coveted support is not given or it's withheld. According to (Lerner, 2014) when young women realize the influence of decisions that young women make will affect them for 50 years or more. The reliance and quest for support are sometimes flawed by a lack of knowledge and inability by the parents.

### **Conclusions**

A look at the impact of parental neglect among young women in the rural areas in Migwani sub-county showed that maladaptive behavior manifested in various ways like risky lifestyles in dealing with problems that come their way. Other impacts like poor decisions and mistreatment from friends were also noted among the young women facing parental neglect in the sub-county.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommended that there is need for parents to assume new roles in young adulthood parenting to prevent maladaptive behaviors among young women. As well, parents should be empowered to effectively respond to the various needs that young women face.

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