Influence of Dialectical Tensions between Parents and Teenagers on Academic Performance: A study of Students in Select High-cost Private Secondary Schools in Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract
This study investigated the influence of dialectical tensions between parents and teenagers on academic performance of the latter, using cases of select schools in Nairobi. Relational dialectics theory was used and objectives included establishing prevalence of interpersonal interactions between teenagers and their parents; influence of dialectical tensions on teenagers' academic performance and the role of parents in managing dialectical tensions. The study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design and used a structured questionnaire for data collection. Results: academic performance of respondents who were open with their parents was statistically significantly higher than those who reported being closed. In cases where the closedness dialectic was more prevalent, teenagers reported more anxiety towards exams. The study concluded that academic performance in high-cost private secondary schools in Kenya was influenced by dialectic tensions between parents and teenagers, and these tensions needed to be recognized and managed. The study recommends that parents and teenagers should create time and opportunities for open interaction for academic success.

Key Words: Kenya, Nairobi, Students, Parents, Relational Dialectics Theory, Academic performance, Secondary Schools

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Introduction

In spite of the abundance of financial resources enjoyed by high school students from affluent family backgrounds in Kenya, studies suggest that students from high-cost private secondary schools are academically outperformed by students from their public school counterparts. The reasons for poor performance may be many but unmanaged negative tensions in relationships are a major factor. Extant literature shows that children from wealthy families experience a major rise in levels of neuroses as a result of poor relationships which in turn influence their academic performance (Dollard & Miller, 1998). Previously, it was believed that children from richer families experienced reduced risk of neurosis because of comfort and privilege they receive at home but this study by Dollard and Miller (1998) found that having wealthy parents with high expectations and aspirations resulted in a stressful life which, as asserted by Muola (2010), lead to poor academic performance. Luther (2003) posits that children from affluent families are also far much more likely to develop mental health problems than less affluent youngsters. In Kenya today, psychological challenges are a common problem amongst the youth especially due to pressure from parents, lack of basic relationship needs and too many expectations from the society (Khasakhala, Ndetei, Mutiso, Ambwayo, & Mathai, 2012). All these cause tensions in relationships and often affect other aspects of the teenager's life, including academics.

The main objective of this study is to address the influence of dialectical tensions between parents and teenagers on the academic performance of the latter based on the relational dialectic theory that describes, explains and predicts the tensions that occur in our relationships. The focus of the study was on the openness-closedness dialectical tension between parents and teenagers on academic performance among students of select high-cost secondary schools in Nairobi, Kenya. Dialectical tensions are opposing tendencies of inherent contradictions found in any interpersonal relationship (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). These contradictions are present in all relationships but not in equal amounts across all relationships (Baxter, 1993, 1994). Dialectical tensions are managed through communication. A key assumption of the Relational Dialectics Theory (RDT) is that relating is a communicative process characterized by the unity of opposites. The unity of opposites is referred to as competing discourses (Baxter, 2011; Wozniak et al., 2014). Balancing the two poles in the various dialectical pairs is the work of communication. Parties to a relationship must communicate in such a way that there is a balance between the contradicting pairs. Failure to achieve some equilibrium leads to the unsatisfactory relationships and in some cases the breaking of relationships.

While dialectical tensions are inherent in all aspects of a person's social life, the degree and importance of each contradiction and the ability to manage them varies from relationship to relationship. Baxter and Montgomery (1996), proponents of the relational dialectics theory, assert that relational dialectics involve a set of conceptual assumptions that "revolve around the notions of contradiction, change, praxis, and totality" (p. 6). Among these four notions, the concept of contradiction is central to dialectics, and it refers to "the ongoing dynamic interaction between unified opposites" (p. 10). Unified opposites are two opposing

poles of a phenomenon where the presence of one influences the other, and neither pole can exist without the other.

Open interaction between parents and teenagers has been found to promote a host of individual socio-emotional benefits, particularly self-concept and emotional regulation (Berman, Weems, Rodriguez and Zamora, 2006). It has also been found that teenagers living with parents who engage them openly learn to get along better with teachers and peers than children with closed parents (Stright, Gallagher & Kelley, 2008). An attempt was made by Makworo, Wasanga and Olaly (2014) to establish the psychological factors affecting girls' academic performance in secondary schools in Kenya where they found that 51.7% of the girls in their study portrayed a negative academic self-concept. In a study by Kibaara and Kabura (2013) on factors influencing academic performance in Kibera, a low-income area which is located in Langata constituency in Nairobi Kenya, it was recommended that research should be carried out on factors affecting the academic performance of students in private schools. Onderi, Kiplangat and Awino (2014) acknowledged that performance of students is a product of socio-economic, psychological and environmental factors but did not study the correlation between parental interaction and academic performance. This research, therefore, investigated the influence of the openness-closedness dialectical tension between parents and teenagers in high-cost private secondary on academic performance.

Profile of a Teenager in a High-cost Private School in Kenya
According to Luther (2003), teenagers in high-cost private schools in Kenya live a life of material luxury and fun iced with holiday trips and experience in top international schools. They do not shop at ordinary malls, and they ride in sleek vehicles. Their weekends are full and include anything from flying to their beach houses in Mombasa or simply a road trip to Sagana for whitewater rafting and bungee jumping. If there is not much happening, they ride their motorbikes into country clubs for drinks. A good number of them have never been to the city centre of Nairobi as they revolve around their suburb homes, high-cost schools and travels out of town. Despite the resources ostensibly available to them, nearly one out of ten of every teenager from affluent homes exhibits high levels of behaviour disturbances and concurrently experience significant risk for poor grades in school. Luther and Becker (2002) established that excessive pressure from parents mostly causes psychological challenges among teenagers from affluent families. The scholars argued that most parents place high expectations on their children and put pressure on them to perform well in school and to be successful in life. The affluent parents tend to have an over-scheduled day while their children participate in numerous extracurricular activities which are expected to give them an added advantage when applying for competitive college spaces. In turn, the family misses out on bonding. This affects the relationship-building process.

Theoretical Framework: The Relational Dialectics Theory
To understand the common dialectical tensions in interpersonal relationships and to manage them, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) proposed the relational dialectic theory (RDT) which isolated several tensions between people in interpersonal relationships. The assumption behind the RDT is that relationships are characterized by constant oscillation between contradictory desires and that these contradictions are a fact of relational life which cannot be wished away. Dialectical tensions are managed through communication. Indeed, communication is indispensable in negotiating relational contradictions. The RDT has four basic elements or maxims: totality, contradiction, motion and praxis (Rawlins, 1992).

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The concept of relational totality is based on the belief that people in a relationship are interdependent such that when something happens to one person in the relationship, the other (s) will be also affected. The second maxim of the RDT is that parties to any relationship will inevitably have contradicting or opposing desires at one time or another. These contradictions are what the proponents of RDT labelled as dialectics, a central feature of the theory. The third maxim of the RDT is that relationships are always in motion; they change over time. The fourth and final element of the RDT is praxis which recognizes that people are social actors able to make choices. Additionally, people are objects of the choices they make and the actions they take.

Baxter & Montgomery (1996) argued that because of these four elements of relationships, any relationship will face at least three pairs of common dialectical tensions: openness versus closedness, autonomy versus connection and novelty versus predictability. In the first pair, tension arises because people in a relationship struggle between the need to openly share intimate ideas and feelings while at the same time needing to keep certain facts to themselves so as to maintain some degree of privacy. The degree of confidentiality and sharing of personal information that each member of a relationship is comfortable with is the essence of the openness-closedness dialectic. Both members of the relationship must negotiate the contradictions so that each gets satisfaction from the relationship. The choice of openness-closedness is based on individual perceptions of cost and benefits of disclosure and discretion because individuals must protect themselves from the vulnerability inherent in disclosure. Callan and Noller (1986) and Golish and Caughlin (2002) found that the openness-closedness dialectic tends to become more rigid during adolescence and young adulthood when relating to parents. These studies found that topic avoidance for young adult children depended on the type of relationship they reported having with their parents. Rawlins (1992) explains that the openness-closedness dialectic is further characterized by an individual's desire to be honest in disclosure while at the same time managing the risk of freely sharing information since once an utterance is spoken, its ownership becomes shared in the relationship.

The second dialectical pair that Baxter and Montgomery (1996) identified is the autonomy-connection dialectic. While autonomy is the need to be independent, connection is the need to link actions and decisions. People in a relationship find that they have to balance these two contradicting needs, hence the source of tension in the relationship. The third dialectical pair that Baxter and Montgomery (1996) identified is predictability and novelty. Here contradictions arise because partiers of a relationship, on the one hand, have a need for consistency, reliability and predictability. Yet, on the other hand, they also need some degree of surprise, originality and uniqueness in the relationship to guard against monotony and boredom.

Openness and closedness dialectics reflect the desire to be open and divulge information versus the desire to be exclusive and private. On the other hand, autonomy and connectedness reflect the desire to have ties and connections with others versus the need to separate yourself as a unique individual. Connectedness and openness will lead to good relationships, open communication and confidence which may affect performance in school. On the other hand, closedness and autonomy lead to little or no communication between parents and teenagers which are likely to affect performance. Burleson and Samter (1994) posit that openness, autonomy, and predictability needs in every relationship vary from topic to topic, activity, and from time-to-time, making negotiation of these contradictions perpetual, but individuals may not always be actively, explicitly managing them.

Dialectical Tensions between Parents and Teenagers

Teenagers struggle often with a feeling of tension between dependency on their parents and the need to break away. The relationship between parents and their teenagers is always in flux just as is the case at times with all relationships. Yet most studies on parent-teenage relationships seem to assume a static state of affairs ignoring the interplay of competing discourses (Baxter, 2011; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). The RDT is, therefore, a very useful theory in studying the fluidity and contradictions inherent in parent-teenage relationships. Wozniak, Lollis and Marshall (2014) used the relational dialectics theory (Baxter, 2011) to examine competing discourses within 20 parent–adolescent dyads' conversations about extracurricular activities during the transition to high school. They used content analysis to identify the presence of Baxter's (1988) three competing discourses within each category: autonomy– connection, openness–closedness, and certainty–uncertainty. Wozniak et al (2014) found that "Baxter's (1988, 2011) three competing discourses were evident in parent–adolescent conversations with autonomy–connection being the most frequent competing discourse noted either alone or co-occurring with another competing discourse" (p. 849). This study focused on the openness-closedness discourse.

Relationship Styles Exhibited by Teenagers from High-cost private Schools

Research has established that children from affluent families are more vulnerable to several mental health problems as a result of weak relationships, including anxiety disorders, depression, and chemical abuse than kids living in poverty (Luther & Latendresse, 2005). Teenagers from affluent families rarely spend time with their parents and therefore do not connect with their parents. Mugambi and Gitonga (2015) did a study in 5 private secondary schools in Westlands, Nairobi, Kenya and established that major stressor among the adolescents was due to uncaring and/or abusive parents. Affluent parents are often too busy and are more inclined to give presents than their presence. Also, teenagers from wealthy families commonly feel high expectations for achievement in all areas. This study discusses the influence of relationships in the life of a teenager, especially in their academic performance. It brings out how openness or lack of openness between teenagers and parents affect the life and development of a teenager, and how this, in turn, is perceived to influence their ability to excel in their studies. In a study conducted by Kabiru, Elungata, Mojola, and Beguy (2014), it was observed that teenagers whose parents monitored them and were more involved in their issues adjusted and coped well when exposed to distressful situations. They, therefore, concluded that supportive parent-child relationships ensured the emotional health of adolescents, enabling them to cope with stressful situations.

In another study conducted in public secondary, schools in Nairobi, Khasakhala et al., (2012) concluded that poor parent-teenager relationships exhibited by maternal rejecting parental behaviour, paternal under protective response and no emotional attachment parental behaviour were associated with maladaptive behaviours. The study was supported by previous studies which showed that children raised in such environments were vulnerable to developmental health challenges (Leinonen, Lantaus & Punamaki, 2003). In the recent past, there have been discussions around the issue of parents and teenagers relating with some studies showing that parents are not very important in the lives of teenagers. However, there is data to show that parents do make a significant difference when involved in the lives of teenagers (Moretti & Holland, 2003). This makes teenager-parent interpersonal interactions crucial for the teenager's emotional health.

Managing dialectical tensions between parents and teenagers

Baxter and Montgomery (1988; 1996) found eight strategies that two parties to a relationship use to manage relational dialectics: denial, disorientation, alteration, segmentation, balance, integration, recalibration and reaffirmation. Denial entails responding to only one side of the tension while ignoring the other side of the tension. Disorientation is about escaping the tension by ending the relationships. Alteration is about taking turns being privileged while segmentation is about choosing to deal with one side of the tension and ignoring another side of the tension. Another strategy that relational pairs use to manage tension is through balance which means reaching a compromise between two opposing sides. Integration as a strategy entails communicating and developing behaviors that are satisfactory to both pairs simultaneously. Recalibration is about re-framing the relational tension so that there is no longer any opposition while reaffirmation entails accepting the tension as a normal and healthy part of a relationship.

To maintain a healthy relationship, relational pairs need to employ some maintenance strategies so as to sustain the satisfaction levels of the parties. Studies have found several strategies used to manage each dialectical pair. For instance, to maintain openness, parties made efforts to communicate directly rather than give each other hints. Conversely, avoidance of discussions was a closedness tactic to meet the need for privacy. This could manifest in one partner avoiding to talk about the relationship or its problems (ibid). To manage the autonomy-connectedness contradiction, parties have been found to give each other assurances of commitment to the relationship and also to make efforts to spend more time together (Baxter & Dindia, 1990; Canary & Stafford, 1992; 1993; Dindia & Baxter, 1987; Stafford & Canary, 1991). Maintenance also involves the sacrifice of individual needs for the sake of each other and the relationship. In some cases, relational pairs maintain the relationship by allowing autonomy (Baxter & Dindia, 1990). To manage the predictability-novelty dialectic, parties have been found to balance times of novelty with times of predictability. Novelty tactics included spontaneous efforts such as celebrating memorable events or surprising the partner with a gift. Such spontaneity and creativity would result in a favorable mood thus strengthening the relationship. On the other hand, predictability-enhancing tactics included establishing regular routines or engaging in systematic joint planning and following through the plans (ibid).

Parent-teenager relationships and academic performance of students in high-cost private schools

Evidence-based studies clearly show that there is a relation between openness in a parent-teenager relationship and school outcomes. The results include the execution of tasks and resilience (Kerns, 2008). There are more chances of children in elementary classes to perform well in school when an open relationship exists. According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD, 2008), mother's responsiveness and warmth was shown to have an influence on the math and reading performance in the third grade. An Israeli study depicted teachers' perceptions of children who relate well with their parents as socially and intellectually competent. Their peers too had the same idea (Granot & Mayseless, 2001). New research is pointing to the fact that enhanced performance happens in different areas of an individual's life with socio-proximity (Kraus et al., 2010). Research has inextricably linked relationships in early life to school readiness and learning success (Commodari, 2013).

Open, secure relationships support mental processes and facilitate emotional regulation which in turn enables a child to handle difficult issues without getting offended.

Emotional control is essential in school in that it allows a child to face challenges in school. Insecure children on the other hand struggle with emotional adjustment and this leads to anxiety which interferes with learning (Gunnar, Brodersen, Krueger & Rigatuso, 1996; Hunsley 1987; Perry, 1997). In a more recent study by Moullin, Waldfogel and Washbrook (2014), there were indications that the emotional ties a child secured with their parents influenced their education and predicted their ability to learn, think and speak. The authors anchored their report on attachment theory which is a key theory in child development and revolves around interpersonal interactions and communication. The study done across a range of countries analyzed more than 100 studies performed in homes, through interviews and observations. The findings indicated that children who are not in secure relationships were likely to be aggressive among other problem behaviours and drop out of school and more likely fall out of employment in the future.

Immordino-Yang and Damasio (2007) reveal that developments in neuroscience are showing the relation between affect, social competence, memory and decision making which is going to change our comprehension of the influence of relationships and emotion in education radically. In particular, the neurobiological findings suggest that the aspects of cognition that we employ heavily in schools as follows; learning, attention, memory, decision-making and social competence are integrated within the processes of emotion. Neurologists have also expressed that it is crucial that the brain is nurtured in infancy in particular between 12 to 18 months. They lay stress on the fact that the brain is responsible for intellectual, social, relational and emotional cues (Shonkoff & Garner, 2012).

Hoevre, Stams, Van der Put, Dubas, Van der Laan and Gerris (2012) observed that with openness and appropriate relationships, the emotional guard is in place at the age of 3 to 4 years. To the contrary, inappropriate relationships will result in challenges of reading and verbal skills. The social competence is also compromised as an improper relationship is related to internalization of problems since a child who is in closedness dialectic, hence in an insecure relationship, does not seek for assistance from their parents when in distress. As teenagers, they are prone to be engaged in crime and risky behaviour.

Materials and Methods
This section presents the research problem, objectives of the study, research design, sampling, data collection methods and data analysis.

Statement of the Problem
Ordinarily people expect that high school students from affluent family backgrounds should perform better academically than those from public schools due to the abundance of wealth that enables them to study in schools with the best learning facilities and resources. However, statistics obtained from the Kenya National Examination Council suggest that students from high-cost private secondary schools are academically outperformed by students from their public school counterparts despite their affluent family backgrounds. Among the top 100 positions nationally, private schools only accounted for 28%, 27% and 29% of the best-performing students in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations, respectively.

Many studies have been undertaken on the factors influencing academic achievement in secondary schools in Kenya (Gitome, Katola, & Nyabwari, 2013; Korir & Kepkemboi, 2014; Koskei, 2014; Makworo, Wasanga & Olaly, 2014; Nyagosia, Waweru & Njuguna, 2013; Onderi, Kiplangat, & Awino, 2014). All these studies focused on public secondary

schools but few studies have been conducted in private schools. In addition, none of the studies focused on how relational contradictions between parents and their teenage children affected academic performance. This study therefore investigated the influence of dialectical tensions between parents and teenagers on academic performance. Originally, RDT was used extensively to study dialectical tensions in romantic relationships. However, over the years RDT has been extended to study non-romantic relationships such as workplace relationships (Baxter & Bridge, 1992; Tracy, 2004); democratic processes (Harter, 2004); manager-physician relationships (Kaissi, 2005) and even in teaching and classroom processes (Natalle, 2012). This study applied RDT to parent-teenage relationships to understand how dialectical tensions between them influenced teenagers' academic performance. The study focused on only one dialectical pair, the openness-closedness, to determine if the prevalence of open interaction between parents and teenagers or the prevalence of closedness between parents and teenagers had any influence on how teenagers in Kenya's high-cost schools performed academically.

Objectives of the Study

Three objectives guided the study:

1. To establish to the prevalence of open communication between teenagers in selected high-cost private secondary schools in Nairobi Kenya and their parents,
2. To determine the influence of the openness-closedness dialectical tensions between parents and teenagers, and the academic performance of students in selected high-cost secondary schools in Nairobi, and
3. To assess the role of parents in managing the dialectical tensions between themselves and their teenagers.

Research Questions

1. How prevalent is open communication between teenagers in selected high-cost private secondary schools in Nairobi Kenya and their parents,
2. In which ways does openness-closedness dialectical tension between parents and teenagers influence academic performance of students in selected high-cost secondary schools in Nairobi, and
3. What is the role of parents in managing the dialectical tensions between themselves and their teenagers?

Study Paradigm and Design

This research employed a descriptive research design. Mugenda and Mugenda (2010) explain the descriptive study as a systematic collection and analysis of data to answer questions concerning the current stance since it describes the relationship between two variables. The target population was students drawn from high cost private secondary schools in Dagoreti, Langata and Westlands Constituencies in Nairobi County. According to Cooper and Schindler (2008), a population is an aggregate of all units possessing specified certain characteristics on which the sample seeks to draw inferences. In other words, it is the totality or the universe of units from which samples of various sizes may be drawn.

According to Mugambi and Gitonga (2015), the total population of students in private secondary school in the study area was 6,761 students. For this study, three purposively selected constituencies namely Westlands, Dagorreti and Langata which are all located to the west of Nairobi City were considered. Nairobi was chosen because it has the highest

concentration of high cost private schools, highest number of working parents as well as social amenities, and so provided the data required. The researcher purposively focused on Westlands, Dagorreti and Langata because this is where 75 percent of the high cost private secondary schools are located. These constituencies play host to the majority of the high-cost private schools in Nairobi and therefore the study appropriately reflected the position of the target population. The western part of Nairobi was a preserve for the Europeans and the wealthy Asians during the colonial era and that is where most of the high cost private secondary schools are located. They include Karen, Langata, Lavington, Westlands, Muthaiga, Muthangari, Runda, Riverside, Spring Valley, Loresho, Kilimani, Kileleswa, Hurlingham, Kitusuru, Lower Kabete, Highridge, Nyari and Kyuna. These locations fall into the three constituencies. These areas host the wealthy Kenyans of all ethnic groups and are in Nairobi's posh residential estates. They are home to Nairobi's high-cost schools, malls, restaurants and various activity sites like golf and country clubs, animal parks and orphanages. In the high-cost category, the three constituencies have 4 boys' only schools, 5 girls' only schools and 20 mixed schools. Three schools, one from each constituency were purposively chosen for a balanced representation of the constituencies. In these three schools, the total population of teenagers was 1,610.

Study Sample and Sampling Method

The sample size for this study was a total of 161 respondents, equivalent to 10% of the target population as recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2010). The sampling frame was the enrollment record obtained from the respective school's admissions office. Stratified random sampling procedure was used. The population was split into categories and separate samples drawn from each stratum according to their proportion in the total population (Bruce (2014). The criterion for stratification was according to location. Within each stratum, the inclusion criteria were students in Forms I to IV who are on self-sponsorship. With the help of a teacher, the researcher put all students' names in a container and then randomly picked the required number as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Stratification of the Sample

Strata	Population	Sample	Percent
School in Dagoreti Constituency	160	16	10
School in Westlands Constituency	350	35	22
School in Langata Constituency	1,100	110	68
Total	1,610	161	100

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Data was collected by aid of a structured questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions were constructed using a five-point Likert-scale while open-ended questions were on an interview schedule and were administered by asking the interviewees questions to elicit answers to specific questions. The questionnaire was physically administered by the researcher who visited the selected schools and conducted the interview during class recess. The open-ended sections sought to gather the thoughts and beliefs of the respondents on how they related with their parents. The questionnaire was pre-tested on a small sample of 10 respondents from a private mixed secondary school outside the sample population. Pre-testing helped the researcher to identify the questions that needed re-framing and those that were ambiguous. Refinements were made in line with the results obtained.

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Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of data analysis and presents the findings and discussion of the study on the influence of the openness-closedness dialectical tension between parents and teenagers in academic performance.

Demographics

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of education. Table 2 shows that respondents from Form 3 and Form 2 accounted for most of the students at 45.2% and 32.5% respectively. Form 1 participants were least in terms of representation at 3.2% followed by Form 4s. A reason to explain the finding is that respondents from Form 2 and 3 were the most eager to participate in the study.

Table 2: Respondents' level of education

Level of education	Frequency	Percent
Form 1	5	3.2
Form 2	51	32.5
Form 3	71	45.2
Form 4	30	19.1
Total	157	100.0

Source: Research data of the author

The distribution of respondents by age shows that the median age was 16 years, the minimum age was 11 years while the maximum age was 20 years. Results show that 83.7% of respondents were of ages ranging from 15 years to 17 years. Thus, most of the respondents were late teenagers.

Relationship of Teenagers with their Parents

The results from this study show that less than half (42.67%) of the respondents reported being close to their parents. The study sought to determine the quality of time the respondent spent with their parents. Specifically, the study asked the respondents to indicate how frequent they spent time together with their parents. In terms of what respondents usually talked about during interaction with their parents, Figure 1 shows that education and career dominated the subject of discussion during quality time (37%) followed by social life and relationships (32%). Respondents also discussed entertainment, sports and current affairs (11%), family and the future (9%) and spiritual life and morals (8%). However, 4% of the respondents talked about nothing since their parents were always on their phone.

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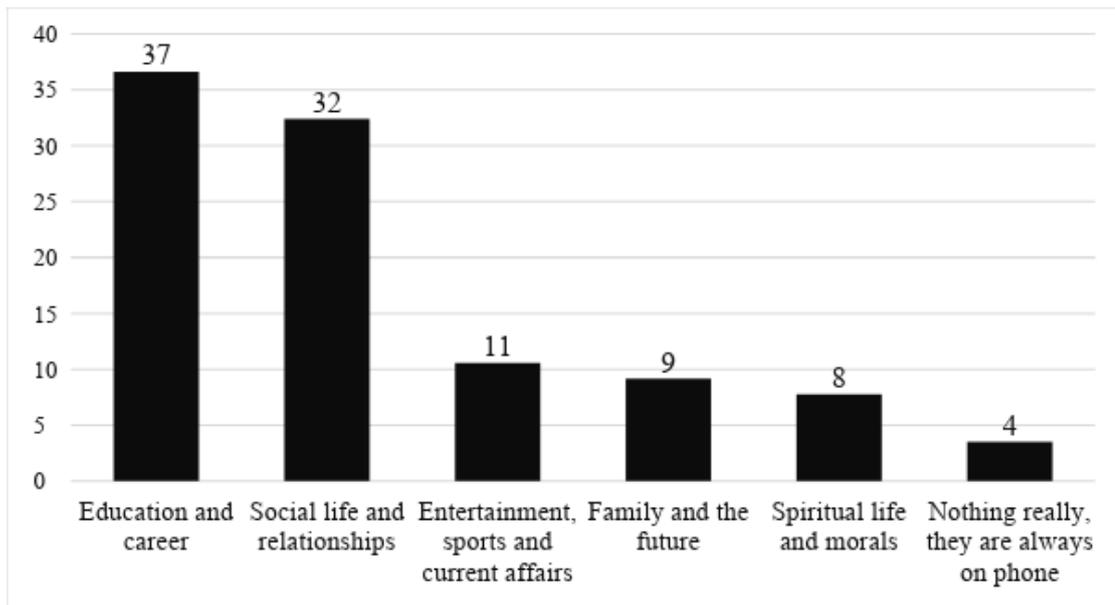

Figure 1 Salient issues discussed by parents during quality time
Source: Research data of the author

The study found that in cases where closedness dialectic was more prevalent (57.33%), teenagers reported more anxiety towards the exam. These respondents commented that their parents expected too much from them, which increased their anxiety. Only 42.67% of the respondents reported that their parents were encouraging. The study also sought to assess the role of parents in managing the dialectical tensions between themselves and their teenagers. Wealthy parents push their teenagers to work hard in school yet do not provide adequate avenues for open discussion of the challenges teenagers face in school. That lack of openness often triggers conflict between parents and children, which pushes them into antisocial behavior and in some cases poor academic performance (Cook, Spinazzola, Ford, Lantree, Blaustein, Cloitre, & Van der Kolk, 2005).

Quality time with parents

The study sought to determine the longest time respondents' parents had deliberately decided to spend with them alone just to have a good time together or talk heart to heart. Figure 2 shows that longest time respondent spent with their parent for most of the respondents was a whole day (24%) while 23% of the respondents spent quality time with their parents for a few hours (23%). Nineteen percent of the respondents indicated that they had quality time with their parents for an hour or less while 18% of the respondents spent more than a day with their parents. The findings are a manifestation of openness dialectic between the children and their parents.
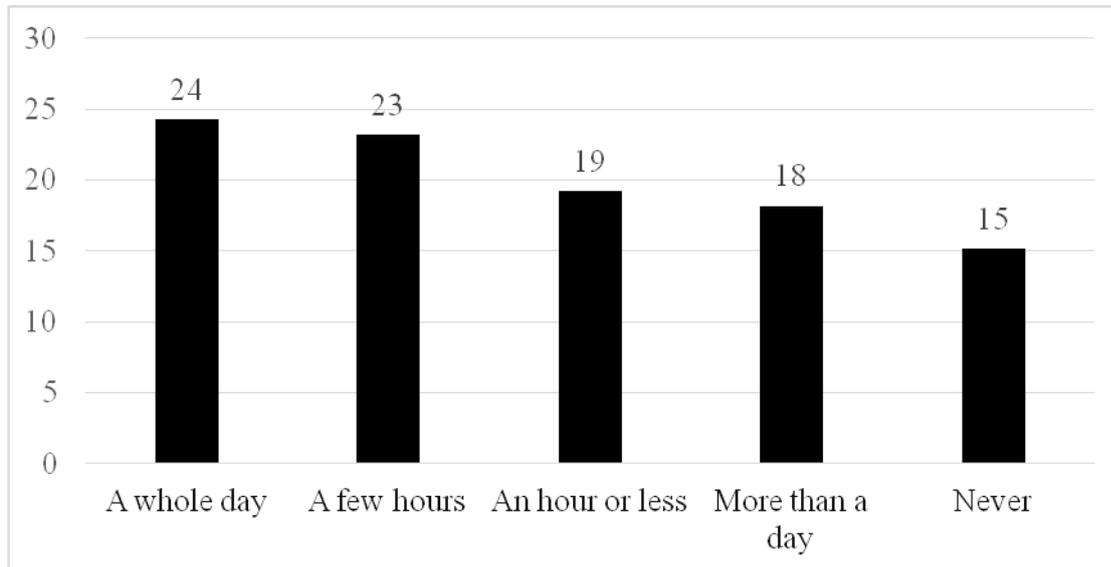
Figure 2: Time taken by parents to spend with respondents

Academic performance

Respondents were asked to indicate their average grade for the last academic term. Table 3 shows most of the respondents performed relatively poorly academically.

Table 3 Mean grade for the last academic term

Mean grade	Frequency	Percent
C (plain and below)	83	52.6
C+	18	11.2
B	23	14.5
B+	18	11.2
A-	9	5.9
A	7	4.6
Total	157	100.0

Source: Research data of the author

Comparison was made between those indicating openness dialectic and closedness dialectic in their relationship with their parents in order to test whether there was any significant difference between openness and closedness in terms of academic performance. Table 4 presents the results that show that respondents presenting openness dialectic scored higher academic performance than respondents exhibiting closedness dialectic. This implies that closedness dialectic in respondents resulted in poorer performance compared to respondents presenting openness dialectic. From the distribution of respondents in table 4, it can be seen that most of the respondents presented closedness dialectic.

Table 4 Ranks

	Dialectic	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Academic performance	Closedness dialectic	90	70.59	6071.00
	Openness dialectic	67	83.15	5405.00
	Total	157		

Influence of dialectical tensions on the academic performance of students

The results showed that together with exhibiting closedness dialectic, most of the respondents performed relatively poorly in their academics. This finding agrees with the argument by Luther (2003) that despite living a life of material luxury and fun iced with holiday trips and experience in top international schools, adolescents from these schools experience significant risk for poor grades in school. It is reflective of the records from the Kenya National Examination Council (2016) which showed that students from high-cost private secondary schools were academically outperformed by students from their public school counterparts despite their affluent family backgrounds. The study found that academic performance increased with increase in openness but decrease with increase in closedness. These imply that as closedness dialectic increased, academic performance declined. This agrees with the perspective of Muola's (2010) that students in the category of closeness dialectic relationship end up with conditions such as anxiety and fear of failure causing them to perform poorly academically as a result of pressure from their parents. It is, however, important to note that there were respondents who presented openeness dialectic relationships yet they did not perform well in their academics. Given that openness dialectic is a product of how a parent relates to their child, it is possible that how they connect is likely to affect the child's performance.

The results also showed that respondents presenting openness dialectic scored higher academic performance than respondents exhibiting closedness dialectic relationships. This agrees with previous literature which showed that children from wealthy families experience insecure relationships and closedness, which in turn influences their academic performance (Dollard & Miller, 1998). Further findings showed that majority of the respondents were in closedness dialectic relationships. This agrees with Luther and Latendresse (2005) who suggested that children from affluent families are more vulnerable to poor performance as a result of closedness dialectic relationships. The academic performance of the openness dialectic relationships group was significantly higher than the closedness dialectic group, thereby confirming Orodho's (2002) speculation that dialectical tensions could have an influence on the academic achievement of teenagers.

The Role of Parental bonding on Teenage-Parent Relationships

In this section, respondents' feelings about how each of their parent bonded with them is analyzed. Table 5 shows the mean scores with respect to how respondents felt about their mother and father. The mean scores are ranked by order from the highest to the lowest on a 5-point scale. For all the positively worded statements, high score meant more secure and stronger bond whereas for negatively worded statements, high scores denoted less secure and weaker bond. The table shows that the scores were high for positively worded statements and low for negatively worded statements. This implies that there was secure and stronger bond of attachment with respect to how both parents bonded with their teenage child. However, a comparison of the mean scores suggests that the bond was stronger between the mothers and their teenage children on all dimensions of parental bonding. This implies that the respondents bonded better with their mothers than with their fathers. This could also be an influence from the Kenyan cultural orientation which dictates that the mother is the one held responsible in the bringing up of the children. This explains the reason most of the respondents bonded better with their mothers compared to their fathers as they are likely to have spent more time with their mothers.

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Table 5 Bonding by the Parent

Parental bonding	Mother's mean score	Father's mean score
1. My parent accepts me as I am.	4.39	3.84
2. My parent respects my feeling.	3.79	3.42
3. My parent understands me.	3.69	3.32
4. When we discuss things, my parent cares about my point of view.	3.63	3.43
5. I get upset a lot more than my parent knows about.	3.52	3.65
6. My parent expects too much from me.	3.50	3.66
7. When I am angry about something, my parent tries to be understanding.	3.46	3.22
8. I like to get my parent's point of view on things I'm concerned about.	3.37	3.17
9. My parent trusts my judgment.	3.30	3.15
10. My parent helps me to talk about my difficulties.	3.29	2.98
11. My parent doesn't understand what I'm going through these days.	2.97	3.22
12. I tell my parent about my problems and troubles.	2.86	2.35
13. I feel it's no use letting my feelings show around my parent	2.85	3.3
14. Talking over my problems with my parent makes me feel ashamed/foolish.	2.81	2.94
15. My parent(s)have their own problems, so I don't bother them with mine.	2.46	2.9
16. I don't get much attention from my parent.	1.85	2.38
17. I wish I had a different parent.	1.32	1.84
Average	3.12	3.10

Source: Research data of the author

From the findings on maternal and paternal bonding, understanding, attention and acceptance stood out as the most important feature of parental bonding according to majority of the respondents. This is consistent with Dollard and Miller (1998) who recommended that parents need to recognize that their teenage children need them the most, even though the teenager may become independent from the parents. Openness and connectedness as depicted here, must coexist with closedness and autonomy and this is negotiated through communication. The need for the teenager to have closedness and autonomy must be balanced with openeness and connectedness for healthy parent-teenager relationships.

Conclusion and recommendations

Research findings in this article have revealed the need for parents of teenagers in high-cost secondary schools to create time and opportunities for more open interaction with their teenage children. The relational dialectics approach employed in this study can help parents understand and manage inherent relational contradictions, particularly the openness-closedness dialectic because if unrecognized and unmanaged, it can negatively affect academic performance. Further, relational tensions should not always be viewed as negative from the theoretical perspective of relational dialectics. Hence they should be framed as a fact of life and an opportunity to foster stronger relationships (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Understanding, attention, balance and acceptance as well as the quantity and quality of time the parents invested were key strategies used in managing the openness-closedness dialectic between parents and teenagers. Based on the findings, the study recommends that parents and teenagers should create time and opportunities for open interaction for academic success.

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