

The Relationship between Parenting Styles and Learners' Academic Performance in Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract: *The main purpose of this study was to find out the relationship between parenting styles and learner's and academic performance in Nairobi County, Kenya. There is ample evidence to support the correlation between parenting styles and learners' academic performance. Mixed research method involving descriptive and correlational research designs was used in carrying out this study. Quantitative data was collected from learners using questionnaires while qualitative data was collected from parents using interviews. The theoretical model by Diana Baumrind, (1966) on parenting styles formed the basis of this study. Findings of the study revealed that learners of authoritative parents perform better academically as compared to learners of authoritarian, permissive and neglectful parents. It also revealed that learners with neglectful parents rank low in academic performance as compared to learners of parents using other parenting styles. It is recommended that parents should strive to understand their children and use positive parenting styles. Further, parents should purpose and dedicate quality time with their children, dialogue with them, listen to their concerns and address them effectively.*

Keywords: Parenting styles, Learners, Academic performance

1. Introduction

Parenting involves providing physical care, support, love and guidance for healthy development of a child. This includes creating a nurturing environment of attention, encouragement and love for the child. All these should be provided with the aim of helping each child develop to his/her fullest capacity in order to succeed in life. Children learn by observation, so conscious effort must be made by parents to be good role models to their children (Hamner&Turner 2001; Muturi, 2011).

Parenting styles have been a major topic of study for the later part of the twentieth century. Parenting styles are emotional climate in which parents raise their children. Numerous studies have been conducted on effects of parenting styles on academic achievement of students and others on the influence of parenting styles on learners' behaviour (Sarac, 2001; Wachira, 2002; Spera, 2005; Nyarko, 2011; Tope, 2012). Baumrind (1966) has been credited for defining three specific parenting styles and their consequences on children's academic performance and behaviour. These are (a) authoritative, (b) authoritarian, and (c) permissive parenting styles. The styles are based on levels of demandingness and responsiveness of parents. Maccoby and Martin, (1983) also added one other parenting style referred to as uninvolved or neglectful. Studies that have been conducted reveal a correlation between parenting styles, and children's academic achievement (Sarac, 2001).

In the United States of America during the eighteenth century, the church and state worked together to manage children's behaviour according to the strict interpretation of

the Bible. Moreover, parents believed it was important to conform to religious doctrine (Hamner& Turner, 2001). In Europe before the advent of Christianity, the Spartans of ancient Greece raised their children by exposing them to very harsh conditions and discipline. When Europe embraced Christianity, church leaders became responsible for matters of child upbringing. Religious doctrinal view dominated and held the view that parents should be very strict because they assumed that children were born evil (Miller, 1983).

Throughout history, family structures and living arrangements have continually changed to meet the needs of family members. In the whole world, nuclear family has been the most common arrangement since at least the Sixteenth Century (Lauer & Lauer, 2000). Typically, the nuclear family of the middle 1900's had a stay - at - home mother and an employed father. This pattern has changed as more and more women have entered the workforce over the years (Lauer & Lauer, 2000; Munroe & Burrows, 2007; Sasse, 2004). In traditional African society, children belonged to the community and were well taken care of by their parents, grandparents and extended family members. Everyone ensured that children were disciplined, well behaved and played their roles (Berk, 2003).

Munroe and Burrows (2007) and Santrock (2002) noted that today's children are exposed to so much and are easily influenced by what is happening around them. They further reported that there is increase in the rate of parental separation and divorce which means that children might not be receiving appropriate parenting from both parents.

In Kenya today, family value systems have changed. There is overemphasis on nuclear family as opposed to the traditional extended family. Changes in socio - economic conditions and customs have affected child rearing. Employed and working parents move from rural to urban centres with their children and therefore, members of the extended family no longer play their role in shaping children's behaviour. In some cases, young persons opt for single parenting by choice because of careers, hence do not get married. While others opt for divorce or separation (Berk, 2003; Santrock, 2001).

Parenting styles can be both positive and negative in their tone, both of which affect learners' academic performance. For instance, parenting styles where children are left unsupervised for long periods of time coupled with influence from exposure to different types of media may lead children to engaging in behaviour problems, which may affect their academic performance (Kinai, 2002). However, it must be noted that while there are so many factors that influence learners' academic performance, family background and more so parenting style, is the most important factor (Tope, 2012).

2. Statement of the Problem

The modern world has seen changes in family trends, structures and systems. This has drastically shifted parenting and general upbringing of children. In most cases in Nairobi for example, both parents work outside their homes and hence many families find it more difficult to stay connected with their children's behaviour and education (Wang'eri, 2007).

Research studies indicate that parenting style influences learners' academic performance. For instance, Wang'eric conducted a study on The Conflict between traditional Parenting Behaviours as Perceived by Students in Some Selected Secondary Schools in Nairobi. The results showed that facilities and resources of parenting have shifted from what they were in the past, parental grip on children appears to be slipping away as indicated by substantial presence of electronic devices in the families. Further, the parenting role of educating their children has been taken over by the school system. Even though there are many other factors that may influence learners' academic achievement such as media, peer influence, environment, but parenting style has been perceived as the main cause (Kinai, 2002).

3. Literature Review

All parents want their children to succeed at school, but not all parents are effective in facilitating this success (Hong, 2012). Parents' behaviours send clear and decisive messages about their thoughts and feelings on the importance of schooling. Parenting style helps or hinders a child's engagement in school; encouraging a child to do well in school or insisting that homework be completed are important forms of promoting engagement (Tope, 2012).

Research has shown that the home environment has an influence on children's academic achievement (Deslandes,

1997). David, Della, and Punsalan (2010) conducted a study on the relationship between parenting styles and academic achievement of students. The study results showed that there is no significant relationship between parenting styles and academic achievement of students. The results revealed that parents of the respondents were primarily democratic and the respondents' academic achievement was found to be on the average level as indicated in the grade point average (GPA). However, democratic parenting style was found to be positively correlated with academic achievement. Authoritarian and permissive parenting styles on the other hand were found to be negatively correlated with the academic achievement of the respondents.

a) Authoritarian Parenting Style and Academic Performance

Authoritarian parents bring up children who are likely to do well in academics because they are high in demandingness and low in responsiveness (Baumrind 1966, 1967, 1991). Research shows that children of authoritarian parents often are anxious and unhappy (Santrock, 2002). They do well in academics (Berk, 2003; Santrock, 2002). A study conducted by Kinai (2002) also indicated that parents who are authoritarian bring up children who perform better academically.

A research study carried out by Dehyadegaryet al. (2012) in Iran showed that there is no significant relationship between authoritarian parenting and academic achievement. Similarly, David et al. (2010) conducted a study on the relationship of parenting styles to academic achievement of students in which study results showed that authoritarian parenting style was negatively correlated with academic achievement. However, Hong (2012) argues that placing excessive pressure on children and interfering with their studies as is the case in authoritarian parenting, may lead to children having lower academic competence and consequently lower academic achievement.

b) Permissive Parenting Style and Academic Performance

Permissive parents are low in demandingness and high in responsiveness. They bring up children who perform poorly in academics (Berk, 2003). Permissive parents have relatively low expectations for their children, set very few, if any rules. Children raised by these parents are less likely to be intrinsically motivated, thus lacking persistency in approaching learning tasks (Hong, 2012). Permissive parenting tends to lead children toward lower academic performance. It is negatively associated with higher academic achievement, which is most likely the result of the parents' lack of control and discipline over their children. Darling (1999) is also of the same view that children of permissive parents perform less well in school. Berk (2003) also concurs that children of permissive or indulgent parents tend to do less well academically.

The study carried out by Dehyadegaryet al. (2012) in Iran indicated that permissive parenting style has negative correlation with academic achievement. A similar research conducted by David et al. (2010) on the relationship of parenting styles to academic achievement of students and the

results showed permissive parenting styles to be negatively correlated with academic achievement.

c) Uninvolved or Neglectful Parenting Style and Academic Performance

Uninvolved or neglectful parents are low in demandingness and low in responsiveness. They bring up children who perform poorly in their academics (Berk, 2003). A study conducted by Kinai (2002) indicated that parents who were uninvolved or neglectful brought up children who were most aggressive and performed poorly in academics. This could be because they may not have the necessary motivation for educational pursuits (Hong, 2012). Methodology. This research study applied mixed method research that made use of descriptive and correlational research designs. Qualitative data was collected from parents using interview schedule. The data provided information on the influence of parenting styles on learners’ academic performance. Qualitative data was collected from learners using questionnaires.

4. Methodology

This study was carried out in Nairobi County, Kenya. Nairobi is the capital city of Kenya. It is a cosmopolitan city with many people belonging to different educational backgrounds, occupations and different economic strata.

Learners in Nairobi schools come from different social - cultural backgrounds. This study targeted learners in form three drawn from fifteen regular public secondary schools in three randomly selected sub - counties.

Multi - stage random sampling technique was used to sample four hundred learners who constituted 10% of the target population. Qualitative data collected during interviews was organized and analysed by themes. Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used to analyse quantitative data and results interpreted. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse and present quantitative data. Hypothesis was tested using chi square. Information collected from both interviews and questionnaires was triangulated.

5. Findings and Discussion

The main objective for this study was to find out the relationship between parenting styles and learner’s academic performance. This was to be determined through analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. To achieve this objective, data on parenting styles and data on learners’ academic performance were cross - tabulated. The findings are presented in Table 5.1

Table 5.1: Number of Learners’ by Level of Academic Performance and Parenting Style

Parenting Style	Level of Academic Performance				Total
	Very high (A - to A)	High (B - to B+)	Average (D+ to C+)	Below average (D to E)	
Authoritative	17	112	172	15	316
Authoritarian	1	2	8	1	12
Permissive	7	14	29	4	54
Neglectful	1	1	5	0	7
Total	26	129	214	20	389

The study findings revealed that 172 learners with authoritative parents scored average grades between D+ and C+, 112 scored high grades from B - to B+, 29 learners of permissive parents scored average grades D+ to C+, 17 learners with authoritative parents scored very high grades between A - to A, 15 learners scored below average grades between D to E, 14 learners with permissive parents scored high grades between B - to B+, 8 learners with authoritarian parents scored average grades between D+ to C+ and 7 learners with permissive parents scored very high grades between A - to A+.

The hypothesis was tested using Chi - Square test and the findings are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Chi - Square Test: Parenting Style and Learners’ Academic Performance

Test Statistics	
	Parenting style and learners’ academic performance
Chi - Square	669.766 ^a
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	0
a.0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 97.3.	

Table 5.2 shows the probability of the chi - square test statistic ($\chi^2=669.766$) was $p<0.000$, less than or equal to the alpha level of significance of 0.05. This study established that there is a significant relationship between parenting style and learner’s academic performance.

a) Authoritative Parenting style and Academic Performance

The study findings revealed that majority of learners with parents who used authoritative parenting style scored above average grades compared to learners with other parenting styles as shown in Table 5.1. This indicated a positive relationship between authoritative parenting style and academic performance. These findings are supported by several previous research studies (Baumrind, 1991; Stainberg et al., 1992; Kinai, 2002; McPherson, 2004; Nyarko, 2011; Dehyadegary et al., 2012; Tope, 2012) that have indicated a positive correlation between authoritative parenting style and academic achievement. However, other studies have concluded that these findings are not consistent across ethnicity, culture, and socio - economic status (Spera, 2005) and that authoritative parenting style is positively associated with academic success for European and Mexican Americans, but not Asian and African Americans’ academic achievements (Jackson et al., cited in Nyarko, 2011).

b) Authoritarian Parenting Style and Academic Performance

The study findings showed that majority of learners with parents who used authoritarian parenting style scored average grades as shown in Table 5.1. This indicated a negative relationship between authoritarian parenting style and children's academic performance. These findings are supported by findings of previous research studies (David et al., 2010; Dehyadegary et al., 2012; Hong, 2012) which indicated that there is a negative relationship between authoritarian parenting style and academic performance. However, the findings are not supported by other previous research findings (Baumrind, 1991; Kinai, 2002; Santrock, 2002) which indicated that children of authoritarian parents perform well academically.

c) Permissive Parenting Style and Academic Performance

The study findings revealed that majority of learners with parents who used permissive parenting style scored average grades and less than a quarter of them scored above average grades as shown in Table 5.1. These findings indicated that there was a negative relationship between permissive parenting style and academic performance. These findings are supported by previous research findings (Darling, 1999; David et al., 2010; Dehyadegary et al., 2012; Hong, 2012) which indicated that permissive parenting style is negatively correlated with academic achievement.

d) Uninvolved or Neglectful Parenting style and Academic Performance

The findings of the study revealed that majority of learners with parents who used neglectful parenting style scored average grades as shown in Table 5.1. The findings are supported by previous studies (Kinai, 2002 & Hong, 2012) which indicated that children of uninvolved or neglectful parents performed poorly in academics.

e) Authoritative Parenting Style and Academic Performance

Authoritative parents are high in acceptance and involvement and therefore, they bring up children who tackle life with a balanced, confident, optimistic outlook and who achieve higher grades in school (Baumrind 1966, 1967, 1991). Santrock (2002) is of the view that children of authoritative parents are achievement oriented, maintain friendly relations with peers, co - operate with adults and cope well with stress. This style of parenting is seen as the most successful approach to child rearing (Berk, 2003).

A number of studies have suggested that children raised by authoritative parents usually achieve better than their peers in school (Stainberg et al., 1992). Similarly, a study conducted by Kinai (2002) showed that children of parents performed well in school. Similar research studies reveal that authoritative parenting style is related to better student performance and other non - authoritative parenting styles have been found to be associated with lower student academic performance (McPherson, 2004). Another study conducted by Tope (2012) to examine the influence of parenting style on the academic performance of students in secondary schools in Lagos state Nigeria indicated that academic performance of students in the selected schools

was significantly positively correlated with a good parenting style.

Several other studies have also documented a positive impact of authoritative parenting style by indicating that parental authoritative parenting style is associated with higher academic achievement (Nyarko, 2011). Dehyadegary et al. (2012) conducted a study to determine the relationship between parenting styles and academic achievement among adolescents in Iran. The results of the study revealed that authoritative style has positive significant correlation with academic achievement. Hong (2012) concurs that authoritative parenting has often been found to be positively associated with higher academic achievement.

Although several research studies indicate that authoritative parenting styles are associated with higher levels of children's achievement in school, other studies have however, concluded that these findings are not consistent across ethnicity culture, and socio - economic status (Spera, 2005). Jackson et al. cited in Nyarko (2011) observed that authoritative parenting style was positively associated with academic success for European and Mexican Americans, but was not related to Asian and African Americans academic achievements.

6. Conclusion

A majority of parents in the study used authoritative parenting style in bringing up their children with a few of them using permissive and authoritarian parenting styles. Findings showed that authoritative parenting style was positively correlated with academic performance and compared to other parenting styles, learners of parents who used authoritative parenting styles performed better academically. Authoritarian, permissive and neglectful/uninvolved parenting styles were found to be negatively correlated with learners' academic performance. The study findings were supported by previous research findings (David et al., 2010) that authoritative parenting style is positively correlated with academic performance and authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved or neglectful parenting styles are negatively correlated with children's academic performance.

7. Recommendations

The following recommendations arising from the study findings have been suggested to parents.

- 1) Parents need to understand their children as capable individuals who have the abilities and tools to influence their own destinies. Therefore, parents should provide an atmosphere that allows children to make informed decisions and choices. More so, parents should strive to know their children's whereabouts and monitor their activities as this can protect children from engaging in behaviour disorders.
- 2) Parents should allow their children to take initiative in exploring and understanding their environment as this can serve as a platform to prepare them to excel academically, socially, emotionally and psychologically. Parents should also seek better and effective ways of controlling what their children access

through media and more especially internet on mobile telephones. They should also keep their children busy with constructive activities when they are not in school to keep them from engaging in behavioural disorders.

- 3) Parents should take up their parental roles seriously and avoid delegating them house - helps and teachers. Therefore, they should have regular meetings with teachers or make telephone calls to talk about their children's academic performance and general wellbeing. Parents should work hand in hand with teachers to identify their children's behaviour disorders and work together to discipline them.
- 4) Parents should purpose and dedicate quality time with their children, dialogue with them, listen to their concerns and address them effectively. Additionally, parents should seek to know their children's friends, their places of residence and possibly the parents of their children's friends.
- 5) Parents need to be close and friendly to their children from a young age. In addition to this, parents should:
 - Supervise their children's school work, such as homework.
 - Listen to what people say about their children.
 - Encourage their children to go to church.
 - Provide their children with basic needs especially school items
 - Be honest about economic/financial situation and not lie.
 - Encourage their children to join youth groups especially religious ones, send them to church/religious camps and encourage them to attend church, family functions and seminars.
 - Be exemplary role models to their children and model good behaviours such as honesty and truthfulness.
 - Be consistent in the way they deal with their children's behaviour.
 - Listen to their children and accommodate their ideas in family matters whenever possible.
 - Find out the root cause of bad behaviour and look for professional ways of intervening.

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