

Influence of Parenting Styles on Academic Performance among Girls in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya

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Abstract This study investigated the influence of authoritarian parenting style on Academic Performance among Girls in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya. The study employed correlation survey design. The study was informed by Baumrind's Theory of Parenting Styles (TPS). Thirteen secondary schools in Makadara Sub-County were randomly sampled. The target population of the study comprised form two students sampled through stratified sampling and counseling teachers were randomly sampled. The study used questionnaire, interview guide and document analysis guide to collect data. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive (mean and standard deviations) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation coefficients) on IBM SPSS version 22 while qualitative data was analyzed using quotes and narratives. The findings of the study revealed that authoritarian parenting style had a negative association of 43.2% on girls' academic performance.

Keywords Authoritarian Parenting Style, Adolescent, Girls, Academic Performance

1. Introduction

The academic performance of adolescents is a central focal point for any society due to the idea that ensuring their education helps promote a more successful future [3]. Students who have higher academic performance are at an advantage in terms of positive outcomes such as joy, pride, and happiness [7]. Having higher academic performance has been associated with positive characteristics, including self-esteem, self-efficacy, and motivation [5]. Academic success in terms of higher academic performance has long been thought to be the path to a stable livelihood and a successful future [9]. It may relate to having high academic achievement in childhood [8]. Low academic achievement may create many negative consequences for students. Students with low academic achievement may be more vulnerable to problems such as stress, hopelessness, delinquency, psychopathology, and substance abuse [2]. Researchers such as [10] have shown that parents, through their parenting styles built critical foundations for various aspects of children's development and achievement. Moreover, [11] indicated that parenting style is one of the significant contributors to student's academic achievement in school in Iowa State. Further, [13] postulated that

parenting styles emphasize on the response parents provide to their children and the method which they use to demand compliance from their children. [4] categorized types of parenting style based on two dimensions which are responsiveness and demandingness. According to Baumrind, responsiveness refers to the degree that parents promote self-assertion and individuality by showing care and acceptance to children's desires. Care and acceptance includes kindness, support for independence, and logical contact. Demandingness refers to demands that parents make on children to be included into society [4]. The demands are imposed through monitoring and controlling of children's behaviors, as well as communicating the demands directly to the children.

Literature on relationship between authoritarian parenting style and academic achievement exists. For example, [12] conducted a study in South Africa and concluded that parents practicing this style of parenting demand too much from their children while they seem to neglect their responsibility toward their children. [14] showed a positive and significant relationship between parents' authoritarianism and their children's school grades (academic achievement). According to [15], authoritarian parenting follows a rather dictatorial style involving the highest degree of control on children and very low levels of warmth in the United Kingdom concluded that the use of this authoritarian style precludes effective discussion, of any sort, between parents and children, which places more pressure on the children than any other parenting style. [18] conducted a study in India reported that in terms of academic performance they revealed that the high level of parental pressure incorporated

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within the authoritarian style often reduced children's intrinsic motivation, causing them to be reliant on extrinsic sources, thus undermining the process of learning and academic performance. [1] found that authoritarian parenting leads to a competitive environment in which parents discourage spontaneity and support within the parent-child relationship decreases.

In Kenya like many other African countries, parenting style is an issue of concern when considering adolescents' academic performance especially girls. In Makadara Sub County, the mean score from Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education revealed poor performance especially in girls' public secondary schools (KNBS, 2012). This was attributed to various factors but parenting styles was left out. Out of 10 school adolescent girls in the Sub County, 5 girls had poor academic performance which could be directly linked to home environment [16]. Despite the increasing dismal performance of girls in secondary schools, less has been done to analyze its correlation with parenting styles [17]. This is true despite the fact that the search for potential factors affecting the academic performance of secondary school students has long been a major research theme in the educational psychology literature because of its theoretical and practical significance.

2. Research Methodology

The study employed correlational survey design in order to measure the extent to which parenting styles were related to adolescent girls' academic performance (Field, 2014). However, qualitative data was also collected by means of interviews. This design was appropriate in this study because it might be scientifically difficult to control for other factors that influence girls' academic performance. The target population of this study comprised 13 public girls' boarding secondary schools. Two of these were Extra-County schools with 600 girls while the remaining 11 schools were sub-county category with 4,900 girls. These schools were chosen in order to find out if parenting styles influence girls' academic performance. Further, the study also targeted all the adolescent girls in public boarding schools and teachers. Girls were key informants of this study because they explicate any relationship between parenting styles and their academic performance while teachers participated because they had been trusted with the social, psychological and intellectual up-bringing of adolescent girls in schools. The sample included 6 schools, 50 teachers and 600 adolescent girls.

Questionnaires, interviews and document analysis guide were used to collect participants' views concerning the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent girls' academic performance. Content validity of this study was based on the examination of the instruments by researcher's supervisors, researcher's own reflective commentary, peer

scrutiny, negative case analysis and pilot study. Cronbach's coefficient alpha method was used to determine internal consistency (reliability) of the items. The reliability test yielded a value of .81 indicating that the questionnaire had met its conceptual fit. The researcher ensured credibility by the adoption of well established research methods, developing an early familiarity with the culture of participating schools before the first data collection dialogues took place, iterative questioning, negative case analysis, frequent debriefing sessions, peer scrutiny of the research project, thick description of the phenomenon under scrutiny, examination of previous research findings to assess the degree to which the project's results would be congruent with those of past studies.

First, exploratory data analysis was conducted to establish if the data met all assumptions of each statistical procedure. Data was then analyzed using parametric test (Pearsons Correlation Coefficient) using effect sizes to establish the degree of association between parenting styles and adolescent girls' academic performance. The null hypotheses were tested and retained or rejected based on the significance level, *p*- value at 0.05 as the threshold. Finally, qualitative data was subjected to thematic analysis and integrated with the quantitative component based on similarity of themes and categories.

3. Findings & Discussions

The results of demographic characteristics on category of school and age were reported. The participants comprised 221 from two girls. In terms of school category, majority (*n* = 138, 62.4%) of the girls were in extra county schools while (*n* = 10, 4.5%) were in county schools. These findings imply that this group of girls had done well in their last primary examination. Sixty nine (31.2%) of the girls were in sub county schools while (*n* = 4, 1.8%) were in national schools implying that they had good academic performance in primary school. In consideration of age, the results indicated that majority (*n* = 137, 62%) of the girls were within the age bracket of 16 – 17 years. Seventy nine (*n* = 35.7%) of the girls were 14 – 15 years. Two (0.9%) were within the age bracket of 18 – 19, (*n* = 2, 0.9%) were above 19 years while (*n* = 1, 0.5%) were below 13 years.

The study sought to establish how authoritarian parenting style influences adolescent girls' academic performance in public secondary schools in Nairobi, Kenya. To establish this, the study used a five-point Likert scale with 10 items denoting authoritarian parenting style. The scale was weighted as follows: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Undecided = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1. In addition, the measure of linearity of this scale revealed a Median of 3.0. The researchers then used frequency table to establish the responses concerning authoritarian parenting attributes. This analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Authoritarian Parenting Style

Authoritarian Parenting Style	Frequency	Percentage (%)			
Whenever my parents told me to do something as I was growing up, they expected me to do it immediately without asking questions			As I was growing up my parents would get very upset if I tried to disagree with them		
Strongly Disagree	10	4.5	Strongly Disagree	29	13.1
Disagree	37	16.7	Disagree	38	17.2
Undecided	26	11.8	Undecided	42	19.0
Agree	71	32.1	Agree	51	23.1
Strongly Agree	77	34.8	Strongly Agree	61	27.6
While I was growing up my parents felt that in a well-run home the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do			As I was growing up I knew what my parents expected of me in the family and they insisted that I conform to those expectations simply out of respect for their authority		
Strongly Disagree	88	39.8	Strongly Disagree	34	15.4
Disagree	65	29.4	Disagree	31	14.0
Undecided	28	12.7	Undecided	55	24.9
Agree	19	8.6	Agree	56	25.3
Strongly Agree	21	9.5	Strongly Agree	45	20.4
My parent has always encouraged verbal give-and-take whenever I have felt that family rules and restrictions were unreasonable			My parent feels that most problems in society would be solved if parents would not restrict their children's activities, decisions, and desires as they are growing up		
Strongly Disagree	58	26.2	Strongly Disagree	42	19.0
Disagree	29	13.1	Disagree	52	23.5
Undecided	58	26.2	Undecided	52	23.5
Agree	38	17.2	Agree	28	12.7
Strongly Agree	38	17.2	Strongly Agree	47	21.3
As I was growing up my parents did not allow me to question any decision they had made			My parent tries to tell me how to run my life		
Strongly Disagree	42	19.0	Strongly Disagree	32	14.5
Disagree	55	24.9	Disagree	34	15.4
Undecided	30	13.6	Undecided	35	15.8
Agree	51	23.1	Agree	40	18.1
Strongly Agree	43	19.5	Strongly Agree	79	35.7
My parents felt that wise parents should teach their children early just who is boss in the family					
Strongly Disagree	32	14.5			
Disagree	30	13.6			
Undecided	52	23.5			
Agree	57	25.8			
Strongly Agree	50	22.6			
My parents have always felt that more force should be used by parents in order to get their children to behave the way they are supposed to					
Strongly Disagree	46	20.8			
Disagree	44	19.9			
Undecided	29	13.1			
Agree	46	20.8			
Strongly Agree	56	25.3			

The results of Table 1 indicate that majority (n = 77, 34.8%) of the girls strongly agreed that whenever their parents told them to do something as they were growing up, they expected them to do it immediately without asking questions. They strongly disagreed (n = 88, 38.9%) that while they were growing up their parents felt that in a well-run home the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do. Similarly, majority of the girls strongly indicated that their parents had always encouraged verbal give-and-take whenever they felt that family rules and restrictions were unreasonable (n = 58, 26.2%).

The girls also disagreed that as they were growing up their parents did not allow them to question any decision they had made (n = 55, 24.9%). These findings were also echoed in the interview by a parent who postulated that "I use a cane or rod at times to punish them and deny them what they like because my NO is always final and I sometime use excessive force to scare them from doing wrong things" [Female Parent 5, 16th May, 2017]. These findings are

similar to those found out by [13] who articulated that authoritarian parents are those who attempt to shape, control and evaluate the behavior of the child without considering the feelings of the child. They demand too much from their children while they seem to neglect their responsibility toward their children.

In addition, the girls ($n = 57, 25.8\%$) also agreed that their parents felt that wise parents should teach their children early just who is boss in the family their parents felt that wise parents should teach their children early just who is boss in the family and my parents have always felt that more force should be used by parents in order to get their children to behave the way they are supposed to ($n = 56, 25.3\%$). This is symmetrical to the findings of [15], who established that authoritarian parenting follows a rather dictatorial style involving the highest degree of control on children and very low levels of warmth in the These findings imply that the parents used punitive strategies and directiveness to rule their children. The information derived from the interview also supplemented this view as one teacher counselor indicated that:

“Most girls can do well though they are their parents’ puppets and do things to please them. Most of the girls have misunderstanding and they rebel to an extent that they don’t do well. They interpret rules as they are set without an option of flexibility to ideas whether wrong or right. This makes them go the paths set by people not because they want but to follow rules” [Female Teacher Counselor 4, 19th May, 2017].

The girls also disagreed that their parents controlled them with hostility: as I was growing up my parents would get very upset if I tried to disagree with them ($n = 61, 27.6\%$), as I was growing up I knew what my parents expected of me in the family and they insisted that I conform to those expectations simply out of respect for their authority ($n = 56, 25.3\%$). This is similar to the findings established by [18] who concluded in their study that authoritarian parenting had adverse effects on children’s psychological development and children with authoritarian parents tended to exhibit anxious and withdrawn behaviors, lack self-reliance and rely on authority figures to make decisions and have diminishing sense of personal value and responsibility.

Similarly, one of the interviewee indicated that *“girls from this background lack confidence and are very afraid to make mistakes”* [Female Teacher Counselor 2, 16th May, 2017]. These findings imply that the girls agreed that their parents assumed absolute power and authority over their lives. The parents possessed and operated with characteristics such as verbal hostility, corporal punishment and non-reasoning. The girls strongly disagreed that their parents always encourage verbal give-and-take whenever I have felt that family rules and restrictions were unreasonable ($n = 58, 26.2\%$), as I was growing up my parents did not allow me to question any decision they had made the girls strongly agreed that their parents feel that most problems in society would be solved if parents would restrict their

children’s activities, decisions, and desires as they are growing up ($n = 79, 35.7\%$). These findings support those of [1] who found out that authoritarian parenting leads to a competitive environment in which parents discourage spontaneity and support within the parent-child relationship decreases. These imply that some parents though are authoritarians, do not subject their children to this type of parenting. This could partly be attributed to influence of a partner (father or mother) who may not necessarily be an authoritarians.

The above findings were corroborated by the interviewee who articulated that *“girls from authoritarian background have low self-esteem, socially withdrawn, rebellious and some of them even develop fear of failure”* [Female Teacher Counselor 3, 17th May, 2017]. After understanding the characteristics of the authoritarian data, the researcher employed inferential statistics to find out how it influences academic performance.

It was important to investigate the inter-dependence between the variables using Pearson’s correlation analysis. This was because, correlation makes no prior assumption as to whether one variable is dependent on the other(s) and is not concerned with the relationship between variables; instead it gives an estimate as to the degree of association between the variables. As such, the researcher applied Pearson’s correlation (Bivariate) analysis to establish the inter-dependence between authoritarian parenting style and girls’ academic performance. The strength and direction of the relationship was presented as r - values (values between -1 and +1). The r -values were interpreted in line with recommendations provided by [6]. The effect size were rated as follows $r = .10$ denoted small effect, $r = .30$ denoted medium effect, and $r = .50$ denoted large effect. But it is important to note that r is not measured in a linear scale.

To achieve this, the researcher computed all the items denoting authoritarian parenting style against mean grade (academic performance) of the girls. The researcher also sought to test the null hypothesis by computing both p - value which is the probability of observing results as extreme (or more) as observed, if the null hypothesis (H_0) is true and effect size which is simply a measure of the magnitude of observed effect. This analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation between Authoritarian Parenting Style and Adolescent Girls’ Academic Performance

		Authoritarian Parenting Styles	Girls’ Academic Performance
Authoritarian Parenting Styles	Pearson Correlation	1	.432
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.212
	N	10	10
Girls’ Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	.432	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.212	
	N	10	221

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The analysis on Table 2 indicate that the correlation coefficient was non-significant at ($r = .432, p = .212$). This non-significant p -value implies that the relationship between authoritarian parenting style and girls' academic performance is not significant ($p = .212 > .05$) as such, the first null hypothesis stating that "there is no statistically significant relationship between authoritarian parenting style and adolescent girls' academic performance in public secondary schools" is retained.

However, this conclusion does not make the null hypothesis true because it can never be true! And merely retaining or rejecting it tells nothing about it. This is because p -value is based on probabilistic reasoning, depends on sample size and is purely arbitrary. This could invariably limit the conclusions and scientific search for knowledge in this study. To address this unsound and poor scientific strategy, the researcher made conclusions based on effect size using correlation coefficients (r - values). In consideration of this, the results in Table 4.9 indicate that $r = .432$ which means that there is a relationship of 43.2% ($.432 * 100$) between authoritarian parenting style and girls' academic performance.

In other words, authoritarian parents (those who are verbally hostile, give corporal punishment, non-reasoning, have punitive strategies and directiveness towards girls) affect their girls academic performance. This is similar to finding by [18] who found out that in terms of academic performance, the high level of parental pressure incorporated within the authoritarian style often reduced children's intrinsic motivation, causing them to be reliant on extrinsic sources, thus undermining the process of learning and academic performance. [1] also articulated in his study that Authoritarian parents were extremely strict and highly controlling; they dictate how their children should behave without giving room for any dissenting opinion or behaviour from their children thereby creating little communication between parents and children. Adolescents of this type of parenting may become rebellious, or aggressive or dependent on their parents. Based on the findings, recommendations were made including that parents should be encouraged to adopt the best parenting practices in the upbringing of their children because it has been proven that authoritative parenting style is the method that yields the best result in child upbringing and academic performance.

4. Conclusions & Recommendations

In conclusion, the study findings pointed out to the fact that authoritarian parenting style negatively influenced the academic outcome (performance) of girls. Parents in this group were found to be verbally hostile towards the girls. They carried out corporal punishment and did not reason anything out with their girls. This lead to a lot of punitive strategies and directiveness when dealing with their girls and eventually made the girls to be anxious, fearful, indecisive, parent reliant and resistant to new ideas. This led to low

academic achievements under democratic school environments where they were given the autonomy to freely think and learn alongside other girls from different backgrounds. This means that authoritarian parents limit and are a psychological threat the academic potential of their children. The study recommends that, Parents should continually seek advice of professional counselors and evaluate themselves against guidelines given concerning desirable parenting. When they do this, they may be able to know if the parenting style they ascribe to is best for positive influence of their children's academic performance. This would make it easy to understand the other possible sources (causes) of low academic performance among children, isolate the problems and address them establish hence improving academic performance.

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