

Influence of Parenting Styles on Adolescent Autonomy and Self-Esteem Among Kenyan Secondary School Students in Wareng District, Uasin Gishu County

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Article History

Received: 13.05.2018

Accepted: 23.05.2018

Published: 30.05.2018

DOI:

10.21276/sjhss.2018.3.5.11



Abstract: Parenting styles have been cited to have brought conflict between young people and their parents on values or ethical principles, and morality or religion. This is an element which is present in almost all cultures. Therefore, parenting style may have an influence on adolescent self-esteem, autonomy, independence and openness. This study focused on the influence of parenting styles on adolescent autonomy and self-esteem among students in secondary schools in Wareng district, in Uasin Gishu county – Kenya. It views family parenting styles as the main precursors towards adolescents’ decision making, self-reliance and conformity. The objective of the study was to establish the relationship between parenting styles on adolescent autonomy and self-esteem. It targeted a population of 23027 adolescents. A sample size of 394 was drawn from 10 secondary schools through stratified random sampling. The researcher employed causal-comparative research design. This research was based on Carl Rogers’ Self Theory and Adult Attachment Theory by Bowlby, where both theories are used to explain autonomy and self-esteem development. A self-administered questionnaire was used, examining different parenting styles and aspects of autonomy, scored on a five-point Likert scale and a self esteem questionnaire, scored on a three-point scale. To ensure the validity of the research instruments, the researcher used expert judgment. On obtaining complete data, it was organized, edited, tabulated and coded to facilitate effective analysis. Hypotheses were tested at 5% significance level. Data analysis was done using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS), where both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The findings revealed that, there was a significant positive relationship between authoritative parenting style and adolescent autonomy and self-esteem, while authoritarian parenting showed no significant relationship with adolescent autonomy. Further, the findings revealed that permissive parenting style does not yield autonomous adolescents, while uninvolved parenting has an influence on adolescent autonomy. However, the study generated information on parenting styles, self-esteem and autonomy related aspects, and these might be of value to school stake holders, more so the parents who have a direct influence on adolescent autonomy.

Keywords: Parenting Styles, adolescents, Autonomy, Self-esteem.

INTRODUCTION

Life starts right from conception, through childhood, pre-adolescence, adolescence (teenage years), adulthood and ends up in old age. Possibly no stage in life is more complex and troubled than the teenage years (13-19 years) of adolescence. It is a transition period, where all the human doubts, hesitations and uncertainties appear. If these doubts, are not correctly treated signs of immaturity in the adult person will remain. Adolescence is both the age of idealism and hope, when the young person’s energy opens up all the bright paths of life and he/she is ready to commit himself or herself to great and noble projects, “limitless hope is the most precious jewel of youth”, a Spanish poet quoted [1]. All adults have had to go through adolescence. However, often it is difficult for parents and older people in general to understand the adolescents. The best formula for understanding between adolescents and their parents is based on a well – known premise; understanding and tolerance as a fruit of genuine love which can result in a balanced life style [2]. Adolescence is a period of “storm and stress” [2]. Melgosa, describes adolescence period as an upheaval, and a disruption of peaceful growth, so did Anna Freud a prominent theorist, who argued that those adolescents who maintain their psychological balance during adolescence may be abnormal. According to Kabiru & Njenga [3], the adolescents are in a stage of formal operations – which involve thinking abstractly. At this time thinking becomes quite adult like where most adult capabilities are thought to be in place by about the age of 16 years. Harter [4] asserts that several other interlocking capacities are revealed during this stage. Adolescent thinking allows them to judge the “reasonableness” of a purely

hypothetical line of reasoning. These includes; deduction and induction, inter-positional logic, reflective thinking and judgement.

Deduction and induction entail hypothetical and abstract thinking in the adolescents which make sophisticated deduction and induction possible. Inductive thinking is the complementary process of observing a number of specific events or instances and inferring an abstract general principle to explain those instances. The two processes can be seen in the adolescence about nature, science, and even social problems. Inter -propositional logic for individuals in adolescence stage have an ability to judge whether propositions are logically connected to one another. Regardless of whether the propositions are logical or not, the concrete – operational child is able to test the factual truth of a single proposition. This ability to use inter propositional logic really involves judging the formal relationships among events.

Reflective thinking is the process of evaluating or testing one’s own reasoning. It allows the formal operational person to be his or her own critic, to evaluate process, ideas or solution from the perspective of an outsider and to find errors or weak spot on it. This allows the reflective thinker to sharpen plans, arguments or point of view making them more effective and more powerful. This makes an adolescent an opponent in games or in debates on such social issues as the morality of abortion or the wisdom of a nuclear freeze. It also makes the adolescent a powerful problem solver. The parents should be able to accept some behavioral deviations in adolescents as a natural consequence of growth that is sometimes ‘painful’, by being calm when personality aberrations threaten, and by systematically varying the environmental conditions in an effort to correct them; and by accepting each adolescent as a unique personality who may never be like the adolescent next door. Different researches reveal two broad classifications of parenting: Demandingness and Responsiveness [5].

Demandingness refers to the extent to which parents make control, supervision and maturity demands in their parenting. On the other hand responsiveness refers to the extent to which parents show their children warmth and acceptance, give them support and reason with them .Using these two dimensions, four parenting styles have been identified [6]. Authoritative parenting style, who are high on both demandingness and responsiveness; Indulgent, who are low on demandingness and high on responsiveness; Authoritarian, who are high on demandingness and low on responsiveness and neglectful; who are low on both demandingness and responsiveness. Of all these four classifications no parenting style can bring about a balanced life style in adolescence [2]. The adolescent child needs autonomy and a good self-esteem. According to Steinberg [7], the growth of independency is a sure part of becoming autonomous during adolescence; but autonomy means more than behaving independently. It means thinking, feeling and making moral decisions that are truly one’s own, rather than following along with what others believe [7]. Development of autonomy helps prepare adolescents to make decisions and take care of themselves. Yet, attempts at autonomy are sometimes blamed for fighting that goes on between parents and adolescents [8].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Wareng District, in Uasin Gishu County. The researcher opted to use Wareng District because adolescents come from varied cultural backgrounds. Thus research variables; adolescent autonomy, adolescent self-esteem and parenting styles could be well catered for, since Wareng district is a cosmopolitan district. Through numerous school programs, the region reported adolescent involvement in drug and substance abuse, communication problems and teenage pregnancies among others. Administratively the district is divided into two divisions; namely Kapseret and Kesses.

A causal-comparative research design was used to study the level of adolescent autonomy and self-esteem based on different parenting styles. This design was found relevant because it is a quantitative method of research in which the researcher was able to examine two or more quantitative variables from the same respondents. These helped the researcher to determine if there was a relationship or co-variation between the variables under study. Besides these, the researcher had no room to manipulate the independent variables and was able to score on the variables from the same participants. The design was found to be flexible, appropriate, efficient and economical [9]. The study targeted a total population of 23027 students in 33 secondary schools. This covered a population which ranged on average between 14 to 18 years as shown in table-2 below.

Table-1: Population Distribution According to gender

| Age-group in Secondary schools | Gender | Population |
|--------------------------------|--------|------------|
| 14-18 years | Male | 11,684 |
| 14-18 years | Female | 11,343 |
| Total | | 23,027 |

Source: Wareng District Development Plan, 2008-2012

The researcher used 30% [9] of the 33 schools (10 schools) which were selected by stratified random sampling; there after the researcher adapted Cochran's formula of 1977 for obtaining the sample size. The formula involves two key factors:

$$n_0 = \frac{(t)^2 \times (s)^2}{(d)^2}$$

t = value for selected alpha where level of 0.025 in each tail = 1.96.

S = estimate of the standard deviation in the population. Estimate of variance deviation for 5 point scale calculated by using 5 of the standard deviations that include almost all the possible values in the range.

d = acceptable margin of error for mean being estimated = 0.15 that is (5x 0.03). Number of points on primary scale acceptable margin of error; point = 5; acceptable margin of error = 0.03 (error researcher is willing to accept). For a population of 23027 the required sample size is 394

$$\begin{aligned} n_0 &= \frac{t^2 \times s^2}{d^2} \\ &= \frac{1.96^2 \times 1.25^2}{0.15^2} \\ &= \frac{3842 \times 1563}{25200} \end{aligned}$$

$$n_0 = 394$$

This is further defined as follows:

$$n_1 = \frac{n_0}{(1 + \frac{n_0}{\text{population}})}$$

n_0 = required return sample size according to Cochran's formula

n_1 = required return sample size because sample > 5% of population

From research population 394 adolescents were selected and these constituted the sample which participated in the study.

Adolescent questionnaires measuring parenting styles, measuring self esteem in relation to adolescents autonomy were used. The items were scored on a Likert five-point scale, and on a three point scale.

Reliability of the research instruments was estimated by using the split half method of correlation and correlation coefficient of 0.84, 0.80, 0.73, 0.79, 0.87 and 0.78 were obtained in both the five-point and three-point scales respectively. Pre-testing research instrument on a small sample of respondents was done. Thus the researcher carried out a pilot study with at least ten respondents, who were not part of the representative sample and reliability coefficients were obtained as; 0.80, 0.81, 0.76, 0.77, 0.86 and 0.77 provided a measure of stability of the research instruments [9].

With the self esteem scale, items were scored on a three point scale, and scores ranged between 16 and 48 as follows:

- 27 and below was rated as low,
- 28-37 was rated as optimum, and
- 38- 48 was rated as high

With the adolescent autonomy scale, items were scored on a five-point scale.

The score ranged between 24 and 120 as follows:

- 62 and below was rated as low,
- 63-82 was rated as semi-autonomous
- 83-120 was rated as high.

The researcher used SPSS package in analysis where, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. With descriptive statistics, the mean and standard deviation were used. A Correlation Analysis and Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA) were also used since variables required comparison. Pearson coefficient of correlation was used to measure the degree of relationship between variables. The findings were presented in form of tables for easier interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section addresses the first which was meant to establish the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent autonomy

Table-2: Correlations Among Parenting Styles and Adolescent Autonomy

| | | Authoritative | Authoritarian | Permissive | Uninvolved | Autonomy |
|---------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|------------|------------|----------|
| Authoritative | Pearson Correlation | 1 | -.296** | -.056 | -.368** | .399** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 | .265 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 394 | 394 | 394 | 394 | 394 |
| Authoritarian | Pearson Correlation | -.296** | 1 | .077 | .443** | -.065 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | .128 | .000 | .195 |
| | N | 394 | 394 | 394 | 394 | 394 |
| Permissive | Pearson Correlation | -.056 | .077 | 1 | .287** | .084 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .265 | .128 | | .000 | .096 |
| | N | 394 | 394 | 394 | 394 | 394 |
| Uninvolved | Pearson Correlation | -.368** | .443** | .287** | 1 | -.136** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | | .007 |
| | N | 394 | 394 | 394 | 394 | 394 |
| Autonomy | Pearson Correlation | .399** | -.065 | .084 | -.136** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .195 | .096 | .007 | |
| | N | 394 | 394 | 394 | 394 | 394 |

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

The Table-2 above shows that authoritative parenting has a positive influence on adolescents’ autonomy, with a P (r) = 0.399, and a coefficient of determination of $r^2 = 0.159$. With authoritarian parenting, P (r) = -0.065, and a coefficient of determination, $r^2 = 0.004$, showing that authoritarian parenting weakly, but negatively influences adolescents’ autonomy. Permissive parenting and adolescent autonomy shows a positive relationship, giving a P (r) = 0.084, and a coefficient of determination, $r^2 = 0.007$, meaning that permissive parenting has a significant influence on adolescents’ autonomy. Uninvolved parenting and adolescent autonomy gave a P (r) = -0.136, and a coefficient of determination of $r^2 = 0.018$, which further translates to a weak, but significant relationship between the two. This further shows that parenting styles influence adolescents’ autonomy either positively or negatively.

This section addresses the second objective which was meant to establish the influence of parenting styles on adolescents’ self-esteem.

Table-3: Parenting Styles and Adolescent Self-Esteem

| | | Parenting Styles | | | | Total |
|-------------|---------|------------------|---------------|------------|------------|-------|
| | | Authoritative | Authoritarian | Permissive | Uninvolved | |
| Self-Esteem | Low | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| | Optimum | 1 | 38 | 24 | 0 | 63 |
| | High | 3 | 201 | 118 | 2 | 324 |
| Total | | 4 | 243 | 143 | 2 | 392 |

Table-4: Influence of Adolescents’ Self-esteem on Parenting Styles Parenting Styles Mean Scores

| Self-Esteem | Authoritative | Authoritarian | Permissive | Uninvolved | Total |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|------------|------------|-------|
| Low | 26.62 | 22.85 | 16.71 | 18.15 | 21.08 |
| Optimum | 36.07 | 31.33 | 28.66 | 28.17 | 31.06 |
| High | 47.09 | 39.35 | 42.66 | 38.23 | 41.8 |
| Total | 36.59 | 30.98 | 29.34 | 28.18 | 31.31 |

Table-5: ANOVA Source Table for the Interaction Between Parenting Styles and Adolescent Self-esteem

| Source of variation | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---------------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|--------------|
| Between Groups | 1236.16 | 3 | 412.05 | 1.164 | F(3,6), 4.76 |
| Within Groups | 708.02 | 2 | 354.01 | 1.000 | |
| Total | 1944.18 | 5 | | | |

Table-5 revealed that self-esteem of adolescents is not influenced by parenting styles $F(2,389) = .1106, P > .05$. The null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that adolescents develop some self-esteem irrespective of the parenting styles subjected to them.

According to Baumrind [5], adolescents from authoritative parenting are found to be relatively happy and self-confident in a number of tasks, self-controlled and can resist destructive behaviors. A similar research by Steinberg [10], revealed that, authoritative parenting is linked to many aspects of competence, such as high self-esteem, social and moral maturity, high independency and openness, and high achievement in various tasks. Melgosa [2] believed that authoritative parenting is where there is discussion, parents and children listen to each other, and the parents offer firm guidelines and boundaries, but with flexibility. She proposes that it is the most healthy, and parents offer unconditional love, and that it is probably the most important factor in children's lives. Authoritative parenting styles prepares the adolescents for an autonomous life, helps them to attain a high self-esteem, on rare occasions are capable of making independent decisions and acting on them. The study revealed that authoritarian parenting has no significant relationship with adolescent autonomy (Table-2). This parenting style demands too much from their children and is unresponsive. Normally, parents resort to force and punishment. The children brought forth through this type of parenting are full of anxiety and are unhappy [2]. Baumrind [5], argues that such children, especially girls become dependent on others, lack exploration and they retreat from challenging tasks. Children of authoritarian parenting do well in school and do not engage in antisocial behavior [2].

Melgosa [2] stresses on discipline rather than punishment. Behaviors that constrain or limit the development of autonomy typically are described as exerting psychological control, a phenomenon increasingly studied in the field today [11]. Further, studies by Chao [12] showed that adolescents raised in authoritarian households do not do worse at school and other aspects of life in general, as compared to authoritative homes. Permissive parenting style releases children too early into the world of decision making without parental support, hence does not give forth autonomous adolescents (Table-2). In this parenting style, children do as they like and the parents do not take much notice. In the early 80s' James Dobson proposed that, the most unhappy teenagers and adults come from extremely permissive homes. Parents do not make demands out of their children, and this allows them to make decisions at an early age. Baumrind [5] found these adolescents to be very immature and very rebellious. They were also found to be too dependent on adults and showed less persistence on school tasks, and these was especially strong among boys. However, they are creative and original.

The analysis indicated that there was a significant negative relationship between uninvolved parenting style and adolescent autonomy (Table-2). In this parenting style, children get the minimum in terms of basic needs from their parents. Parents do little as pertains enforcement of rules in areas of school work and social life [13]. Parents get less concerned with their children, who later show deficits in several areas, such as in parental attachment, acting-out behavior and cognitive area which play a vital role in autonomy development [14]. Adolescents from neglectful parenting style attain their freedom too early in life, yet care little about these freedom. These leads to poor interpersonal relationships and they tend to suffer from poor self-esteem [2].

This section addresses the second objective, which was meant to find out if parenting styles influence adolescent self-esteem. Authoritative parenting was the leading with a mean of 31.310, while least mean index was registered in uninvolved parenting 16.1600 (Table-4). Parenting styles have an influence on adolescents' self-esteem. The null hypothesis is rejected. In this study the association of parenting styles with adolescents self-esteem was examined; whereby it has been one of the traditional measures of adolescent adjustment in parenting studies [15]. This study shows that adolescents of authoritarian parents have high self-esteem than those of authoritative, permissive and neglectful parent (Table-4). With inferential statistics it showed that adolescents self-esteem is not influenced by parenting styles. According to Martinez and Garcia [16], parents-adolescents relationship has consistently reported that adolescents raised in authoritative families have higher psychosocial competence and lower psychological and behavioral dysfunctions than adolescents from authoritarian, indulgent and neglectful homes [14, 7].

Further, the results of these researches have confirmed that high levels of parental warmth, responsiveness and involvement combined with high levels of strictness, foster optimal adjustment in children, offering emotional support by means of responsiveness, and establishing adequate guidelines and limits to control children's behavior by means of demandingness [12]. This correlates with the current study, further showing that parenting in Wareng District is not unique as compared to other parts of the world. Finally in Italy and Brazil, studies measuring the impact of parenting on self-esteem have illustrated that adolescents from indulgent homes have similar or higher self-esteem than adolescents from authoritative and authoritarian house-holds [16]. This contradicts the current study.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In parenting, there are three broad types of parents: those who have never really thought about parenting at all, those who have been convinced that one theory is supreme, and those who are confused about parenting [17]. However, as per this study, parenting can be classified as either demandingness or responsiveness. This study shows that parenting, do influence the development of both adolescent autonomy and self-esteem. Further, it is true that no parenting style can bring about autonomy and self-esteem development. With adolescents' autonomy, certain parenting practices such as discussions between parents and adolescents, delegation of duties to adolescents among others, have been found to be associated with the healthy development of autonomy and self-esteem. In a family, individuals with higher self-esteem would be expected to present more positive interactions with others and perform their role more effectively. The researcher affirms that, parenting requires firm boundaries with plenty of age-appropriate discussions between the adolescents and the parents to promote autonomy and self-esteem. Also adolescents should be given motivation techniques to help them see the advantages of cooperating with parents for better autonomy and self-esteem development. The society or learning institutions should establish programs where program administration should be adolescent based, so that the motivation, direction and goals comes from the adolescents. Moreover adults, should provide the structure (s) in form of specifying rules and constrains, while emphasizing the importance of the youth based aspects in organizations.

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