

# Different Parenting Styles Used by Parents of Students in Public Boarding Secondary Schools in Kiambu East District

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## Abstract

Parenting is a process that requires thoughtful attention, patience and good understanding of the child. The parenting style a parent applies on a child determines the type of discipline a child will display in school and well as in life. The parenting styles used by parents of students in Public Boarding Secondary Schools in Kiambu East District had been blamed for the discipline problems manifested by students in the District hence the need to study the parenting styles used by parents of students in the district. The study targeted a population of 11,296 students in public secondary schools in the District with the accessible population of 1060 form four students in public boarding secondary schools in the District. Using Simple Random Sampling, a sample of 280 students and 28 teachers was selected to participate in the study. An *ex post facto* survey research design was used. One set of questionnaire for students was used to collect the needed information. The instruments were validated using five experts from the faculty of Education. The instruments were piloted in the neighboring Kiambaa Division to establish reliability. Data was randomly split into two sets and analyzed. Reliability co-efficient of 0.74 and was obtained and accepted. With the help of SPSS, data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency tables, percentages and graphs. The findings revealed that the major parenting style used by parents was authoritative parenting though other parents were authoritarian and permissive. A few parents were negligent.

## Background to the Study

One of the most important factors in psychosocial development is the approach to parenting particularly the use of discipline. Parenting refers to the different ways of bringing up a child and it is important in instilling discipline and family values. Psychologist Baurmind (1999) distinguishes among permissive, authoritarian and authoritative parenting. Parents evolve a style of interaction with their children based on two dimensions: Parental warmth or responsiveness and parental control or demand (Martin & Colbert, 1997).

Parental warmth refers to how accepting, responsive or affectionate a parent is towards a child. Parental affection includes things like a smile, encouragement, and trying to see things from a child's perspective. On the other hand, parents who are not affectionate are low in warmth, criticize, punish and ignore their children often showing insensitivity to the needs of the children. Parental control or demand refers to establishing of high standards and expectation for children within supervised settings. According to Baurmind (1999), there are three main parenting styles. They are Authoritarian Parenting, Authoritative Parenting, and Permissive

Martin & Colbert, (1997) refers to Authoritarian Parenting is parenting style based on controlling everyone and forcing children to obey strict rules and laws. The parents feel that they are in charge and the child has no say. This is a restrictive punitive style which the parent force the child to follow their directions. The parent firmly limits and controls the child with little verbal exchange. The emotional tone used by authoritarian parents is often cold and rejecting (Ngugi, 2008). The question is how one's parenting tactics change, as children get older. Before a child learns to reason, it must learn to obey. When the child can reason, there must be give and take. To treat a senior as if she were a child is tantamount to disrespect while to continue to treat an adolescent as if she were a child is tantamount to abuse. Authoritarian parenting is not desirable when it comes to instilling proper discipline in a child. Children of authoritarian parents do not seem to benefit from parental autocracy. Most studies identify this parenting style as undesirable because young people from authoritarian families were found to have higher rates of delinquency and aggressiveness than any of the others (Baurmind, 1999). They also tend to suffer from a poor self-concept and develop a negative attitude towards their parents' ideas (Melgosa, 2001). Autocratic control produces a combination of rebellion and dependency. Such children are taught to be submissive, to obey and be dependent on their parents. They rarely show initiative or autonomy nor do they show adult independence (Rice, 1984). Such adolescents are more hostile to their parents, deeply resent their control and domination and are less likely to identify with them. When

they succeed in challenging authority, they become rebellious, overtly aggressive and hostile especially if discipline has been harsh and unfairly administered without love and affection. Children who have been routinely treated in an unfair way tend to be moody, unhappy, fearful, withdrawn, unspontaneous and irritable (Martin and Colbert, 1997). Authoritarian parents often bring up children run away from home and school, are fearful, angry, are aggressive and fight on slightest provocation, who are bullies and irritable and also underachievers (Ngwiri, 2008). Such children may end up developing a maladjusted behavior.

Parents who use Permissive style are high in warmth but low in control. They give children large amount of freedom and allow them to behave as they wish. These parents contribute to emotional support of their children but exhibit very little control on the behavior of their children. They are ready to listen and talk to their children but they set no restrictions for them. Some parents allow their children unlimited time with the television, unrestricted use of the Internet, the children can do their homework when they want to or how they want to. If they do not feel like eating breakfast they do not have to. Too much freedom is inappropriate for a growing up child as it encourages behavior that is impulsive and aggressive (Martin & Colbert, 1997).

The adolescents from these families receive very little guidance and direction, get few restrictions from parents and are expected to decide for themselves. If not properly guided, children from these families may not be prepared to accept frustrations, responsibility or show proper regards for others with whom they associate. They often become domineering, self-centered and selfish and get in trouble with those who do not pamper them the way their parents do. Without limits in their behavior, these children are often insecure, disoriented and uncertain. Lax in discipline, rejection and lack of parental affection have been associated with behavioral problems (Rice, 1984). Children of permissive parents are usually creative and original but tend to feel insecure. These children are immature, moody and have little self-control. They interpret their parents' permissive attitude as a sign of lack of pride in and love for them (Melgosa, 2001).

Negligent parenting is the parenting style where parents are extremely lax in the discipline. The parents do not give their children time, listen to them or encourage them. For them, children are a burden or obstacle that hinders them from living their own lives (Melgosa, 2001). Parents implementing this parenting style are not responsive or demanding and have an erratic family control which is inconsistent. Sometimes it is authoritarian, other times authoritative and other times permissive. Erratic inconsistency in parental control has negative effects on adolescents. Lack of definite clear guidelines makes adolescents confused and insecure (Holenen & Santrock, 1999). Children of negligent parents do not possess the best emotional inheritance because they are given their freedom too soon and their parents do not care what they do with this freedom. This results in the lack of the ability for the children to establish good interpersonal relationship and the tendency to suffer from low self-esteem. Children from this type of family tend to be lacking both socially and academically. Children of negligent parents are more likely to have discipline problems during adolescence (Martin & Colbert, 1997). These young people are more externally than internally oriented in their behavior hence they show less control and therefore need more external control of their behavior (Rice, 1984). This is a parenting style that is believed to be the most unsuccessful. There is no apparent positive effect on this style for it lowers the self-worth of children. The adolescents from this type of families become resentful and hostile.

Authoritative Parenting on the other hand is a parenting style where parents are high in control and in warmth (Martin & Colbert, 1997). These parents are nurturing yet demanding: they set clear standards that are developmentally reasonable and set limits to enforce the standards. These parents encourage a verbal give and take with their children. The parent may allow children to disagree with them or even to respectfully answer them back. The child is free to say, "I do not like you daddy or you were not fair to me." Parents must recognize that a child may love them one week and hate them the next. There is a thin dividing line between what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior at this point. The parents expect discipline conformity but do not intimidate the children with heavy-handed restrictions (Rice, 1984). The child expression of strong feeling, even hostility and resentment is encouraged if it exists, but the parents prohibit the child from resulting to name calling and open rebellion (Holford, 2004). In authoritative families, decisions are made jointly by parents and their children. Both adolescents and parents contribute freely to discussions on relevant issues but the final decision is made by the parents or meets the parental approval. Parental concern expresses itself through guidance but also encourages responsibility, decision making, initiative and autonomy. Adolescents are encouraged to detach themselves gradually from their family but the home atmosphere is that of respect, warmth, appreciation, fairness and consistency associated with conforming trouble free and non-delinquent behavior (Rice, 1984). Authoritative parenting is firm and sometimes commanding but does not carry dictatorial overtones. Children from Authoritative parents experience satisfactory feelings, with respect to themselves and a positive attitude towards their parent's values. Adolescents from democratic families are more likely to identify with their parents. They are much more confident in their ideas and opinions and independent in decision making especially if the parent explained rather than enacted the rules. The children of authoritative parents tend to be socially competent, energetic, friendly and curious (Martin & Colbert, 1997).

In general this is the most desirable style. The general consensus among child developments is that

children should be given freedom of choice within bounds of responsibility (Nelson, 2007). Baumrind (1999) observed that adolescents from authoritative family environments are typically more positive and responsive in their behavior and lower in drug use and psychological problems than those adolescents from other types of families.

### **Research Question**

The study was aimed at answering the following question.

- i. What are the different parenting styles used by parents of students in public boarding secondary schools in Kiambu East District?

### **Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The study was conducted in all boarding public secondary schools in Kiambu East District. The researcher used only students of public boarding secondary schools in Kiambu East District as the respondents. The findings of the study were limited to Kiambu District and can only be generalized with caution to the rest of the county.

### **Research Design**

Research design adopted in the study was an *ex post facto* survey research. *Ex post facto* research design was employed in this research because the researcher had no control of the variables as well as the outcome.

### **Location**

The study was done in Kiambu East District of Kiambu County of Kenya. This is a region with people from diverse Kenyan communities as well as diverse religions and the parents of this region are of various socio-economic backgrounds.

### **Target Population**

The target population for this study was 11296 students in public secondary schools in Kiambu East District. However, the accessible population of this study consisted of 1060 form four students in all public boarding secondary schools in Kiambu East District.

### **Sampling Procedures and Sample Size**

According to Mugenda & Mugenda (1999), 20% to 30% sample of target population is sufficient to make a generalization. The researcher used 25% of the target population which is slightly higher than the minimum recommended percentage. This was to help to cater for attrition and poorly responded questionnaires. Therefore, 25% of 1060 is approximately 265 students. A normal class is expected to have 40 students hence the researcher collected data from 7 schools. The classes the data was collected from had slightly more than forty students hence data was collected from 296 students. Using simple random sampling, the researcher sampled 3 boys' schools, 3 girls' schools and 1 mixed school. Where there are more than two streams in a school simple random sampling procedure was used to select the required stream.

### **Research Instruments**

Researchers use different methods to investigate the same phenomena to enable the researcher to gather enough information from different perspectives on a particular issue (Kisuli, 2006). Therefore, this research used a set of questionnaires to collect information from the students. The questionnaire was used to establish the different parenting styles used by parents.

### **Validity and Reliability**

The instrument was validated by five experts from the Faculty of Education. The questionnaire was given to at least five experts to assess face, construct and content validity. The instrument was piloted to 80 students in two schools in the neighboring Kiambaa division so as to determine the reliability of the instrument. This is because the students in Kiambaa division share similar experiences and characteristics with those in Kiambu East District. The questionnaires were then randomly arranged into two sets and data was analysed and the reliability was estimated. The Questionnaire had reliability co-efficient of 0.74 and was accepted as reliable because according to Mugenda & Mugenda (1999), an instrument with reliability co-efficient of at least 0.7, is considered able to give consistent results thus reliable.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data was collected from students in their respective classes with the help of the class teachers after the researcher had sought permission from the respective principals

## Data Analysis

The data that collected was organized, coded and analyzed using frequency tables, percentages, bar-graphs and cross-tabulation. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed to analyze the data. Interpretation of the data was made and conclusions drawn.

## Findings

### General Characteristics of the Sampled Students

The first five questions of students' questionnaires were intended to give the demographic characteristics of the students. The students' characteristics have been presented in table 1, 2 and 3.

**Table 1:  
Gender of the Respondents:**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	156	52.7
Female	140	47.3
TOTAL	296	100

Table 1 above shows that a sample of 296 students in public boarding secondary schools in Kiambu East District filled in the questionnaire. Out of the 296 students who filled the questionnaire, 156 which is equal to 52% of the sample were male and 140 which is 48% of the sample were female.

**Table 2:  
Student Respondents' Parents Marital Status**

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	228	77.3
single	14	4.7
Divorced	11	3.7
Seperated	24	8.2
Widowed	18	6.1
Total	295	100

Table 2 indicates that 77% of the respondents were from married families, 5% were from single families, 4% were from divorced families, 8% from separated families and 6% from widowed parents.

**Table 3:  
Student Respondents' Fathers' Level of Education**

Father's level of education	Frequency	Percentage
Never Gone to School	5	1.8
Primary	31	11.4
Secondary	126	16.9
College	46	46.3
University Graduates	64	23.5
Total	272	100.0

Information contained in table 3 indicate that out of those interviewed, 24% had fathers who are university graduates, 46% had fathers who have attained college education, 17% of the fathers were secondary school graduates, 11% had attained primary school level of education and 2% of the fathers had never gone to school.

**Table 4:  
Students' Respondents' Mothers' Level of Education**

Mother's level of education	Frequency	Percentage
Never Gone to School	1	1.8
Primary	61	11.4
Secondary	89	16.9
College	119	46.3
University Graduates	26	23.5
Total	296	100.0

In Table 4, the respondents indicated that 9% of the mothers of the sampled were university graduates, 40% of the mothers had attained college education while 30% were secondary school graduates and 20% had attained primary school level of education.

### Different Parenting Styles to School Students in Kiambu East District

The study revealed four parenting styles authoritarian, authoritative, Permissive and Negligent- as the styles applied by parents of students in Kiambu East District as shown in table 5 and 6

**Table 5:**  
**Fathers' Parenting Style**

Parenting Style	Frequency	Percentage
Authoritarian	30	11
Authoritative	217	78
Permissive	17	6
Negligent	15	5
Total	279	100.0

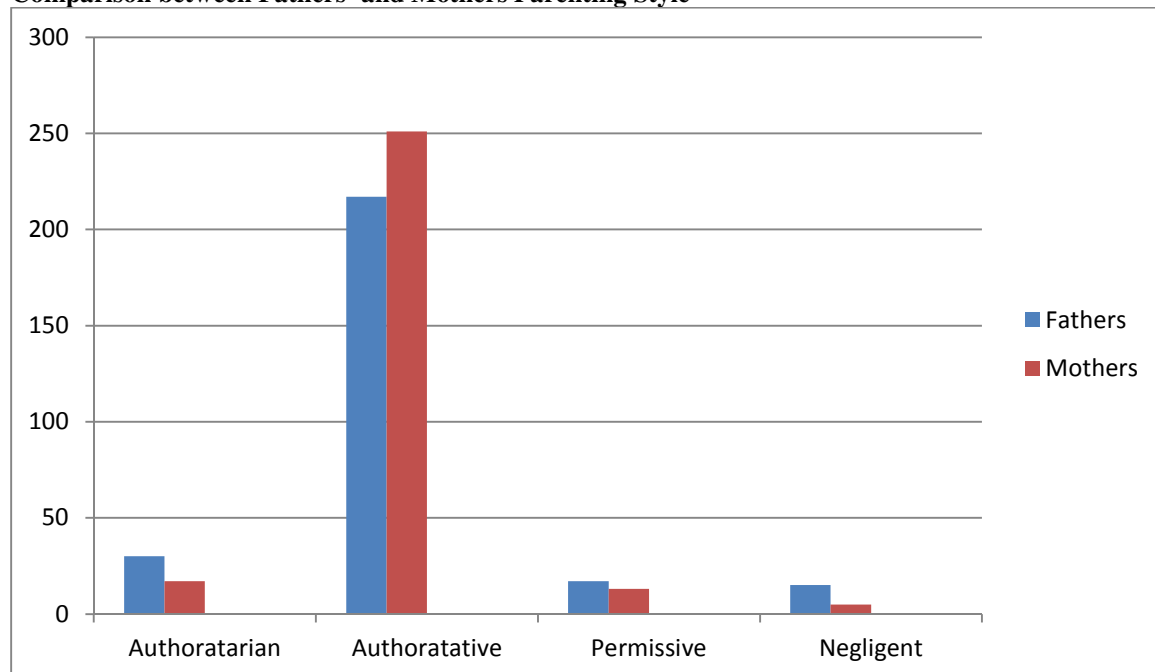
Information contained in table 5 shows that 11% of the fathers were reported to be dictators whowhatever they say is law and must be followed whether it is right or wrong while 79% of the38 fathers were democratic, so they discuss issues with their children before drawing conclusions and 6% of the fathers are permissive so they let their children to do whatever they feel like doing and have no objection to anything the child does. It was found that 5% of the fathers were reported to be negligent.

**Table 6**  
**Mothers' Parenting Style**

Parenting Style	Frequency	Percentage
Authoritarian	17	6
Authoritative	251	87
Permissive	13	4
Negligent	5	2
Total	296	100.0

Table6 shows that 6% of the respondents said that their mothers authoritarian while 87% saidthat their mothers were dictators. The rest, 4% and 2% said that their mothers were permissiveand negligent respectively.

### Comparison between Fathers' and Mothers Parenting Style



### Discussion

The data collected revealed that fathers were more authoritarian, permissive and negligent whereas the mothers were more authoritative. The data also reveals that 12% of the parents used the wrong parenting style. With 6 % of the parents using Authoritarian parenting, it means that there was a possibility of having adolescents in schools who have low self-confidence and who are less likely to conform to rules set in absence of the

significant adults leading to indiscipline in schools. There was also a possibility that these adolescents are rebellious to school rules, run away from school, were aggressive and fought at the slightest provocation and they might also have been irritable, bullies and underachievers because according to Ngwiri (2008), these are some of the side effects of authoritarian parenting.

The findings also revealed that 6% of the fathers and 4% of the mothers respectively were permissive parents. This means that in the schools there were children who are delinquents and engage in delinquent antisocial acts as Martin and Colbert (1997) asserts. The study also revealed that 5% of fathers and 2 % of the mothers are negligent. This shows that there is a possibility that there are students in schools in Kiambu East who do not respect other people and have a problem in controlling their behavior because according to Halonen and Santrock (1999), children from negligent families never learn to respect others and have difficulty in controlling their behavior.

However, there are parents who apply the recommended type of parenting – Authoritative Parenting. 78% of fathers and 87 % of mothers are authoritative parents. This is a positive sign and it means that there were students in these schools who are responsible in their behavior and have less discipline problems. According to Baumrind (1999), observational studies showed that children from authoritative parents are typically more positive and responsible in their behavior than children from parents who are authoritarian, permissive or negligent.

### **Conclusion**

Parents of students in Kiambu East District Apply the four parenting styles and majority of the parents were reported to be authoritative parents.

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