

Parental Acceptance as a Predictor of Behavioural Adjustment among Primary School Pupils in Kisii Central Sub-County, Kenya

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.701125>

Received: 28 August 2023; Revised: 10 October 2023; Accepted: 16 October 2023; Published: 11 November 2023

ABSTRACT

The present study sought to investigate the extent parental displayed acceptance predicts behavioural adjustment among pupils in primary schools in Kisii central Sub-County, Kenya. The study was guided by the Object relations theory and supported attachment theory. The study adopted mixed method approach in which the embedded research design was used. To obtain the sample for the study, the study used cluster sampling, stratified sampling and simple random sampling techniques. The target population comprised of 14876 pupils, 10582 parents, 229 deputy head teachers and 218 guidance and counselling teachers. The sample size for the study consisted of 374 pupils, 30 parents, 30 deputy head teachers and 30 guidance and counselling teachers. The study also used questionnaires and interview schedules to gather data. In analysing qualitative data, the study used thematic analysis while descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyse quantitative data. The study established that there was statistically significant positive correlation ($r=.552$, $n=356$, $p<.05$) between parental degree of displayed acceptance and learners' overall behavioural adjustment. It was further revealed that there were statistical significant ($p<.05$) positive correlation between parental degree of displayed acceptance and all the five aspects of behavioural adjustment (Emotion Symptoms Conduct Problem, Hyper-creativity, Peer relationship Problem and Pro-social Behaviour) explored into. However, all the correlations were weak but it was evident that conduct problem adjustment reflected the highest correlation ($r=.448$), while peer problem adjustment had the least correlations ($r=.331$) to parental degree of displayed acceptance. From the regression analysis, it was also established that parental displayed acceptance alone accounted for 30.5% of the variation in overall behavioural adjustment among the pupils. In addition, linear regression reveal that if the parental display of acceptance was improved by one standard deviation, then perceived scores in level of overall behaviour adjustment of children would improve by .552 standard deviation units. Similarly, if improve their parental display of acceptance by one unit then the level of overall behaviour adjustment among the children would improve by .301 units. From the qualitative findings, it was found that parental psychological unavailability, negative criticism and over-emotional were associated with pupils' behavioural maladjustments.

Keywords: parental displayed acceptance; behavioural adjustment; primary school pupils; kenya

INTRODUCTION

Students' indulgence in behaviour problems has been a threat to the serenity and tranquillity enjoyed by members of the families, schools and community in the last two decades (Augustine, 2012). Beside the gradual moral degeneration which befalls the society where pre-adolescent and adolescents involve in behaviour problems, there arises security and economic cost to a nation fraught with juvenile deviant behaviours due to students' lack of necessary behaviour adjustment strategies (Simoes, Matos & Batista-Foguet, 2008). Hence, students' maladjustment has become one of the global social issues which many developed and developing countries are currently trying to manage and bring under control amidst the glaring evidence that, if the right nurturance is not given to young children, pre-adolescents and adolescents, they graduate as adult without social and emotional competencies (Hess & Drowns, 2010).

Globally, experts from various disciplines have expressed a great concern in relation to the implications of

behaviours exhibited by adolescent, pre-adolescent and young children in their homes and learning institutions (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Statistics on students' indulgence in behaviour problems have a worrying trend globally. In UK, more than two thousand primary school learners were suspended in the year 2009 as school administration struggled to control the aggressive and uncontrollable students (Mucmahron, 2009). In another incident in UK, in 2009, a total of 16393 public primary and secondary students were suspended and more than two hundred were expelled (Mucmahron, 2009). Unfortunately, there remains unclear understanding across experts regarding the effective preventive and intervention strategies to curb these worrying trends (Dunlap, 2006).

In Ghana, for many years there has been an upward surge of young children's involvement in behaviour problems (Bosiakoh & Andoh, 2010). According to the Department of Social Welfare annual performance report, two hundred and seventy six juvenile criminal behaviour cases were handled in 2007. Further, the Ghana prison service yearly report in 2010 also observed that there was an average daily lock-up of one hundred and fifteen children offenders who should be learning in primary or secondary schools. The effort by the parents and teachers to curb the problem of child delinquency has not brought impressive results owing to the fact that the number of juvenile delinquent cases are increasing every day. This is supported by evidence showing that students frequently involved themselves in theft cases like stealing from other students, breaking into school offices and other staff common rooms (Samuel, Rejoice & Gabriel, 2015).

In Zimbabwe, Student involvement in various behaviour problems has been a source of worry to stakeholders in education (Regis and Tichaona, 2015). Although effective parental physical and psychological control is needed for children's acquisition of appropriate behaviour patterns, and most schools and homes have set standards of moral conducts and rules to control their children, the phenomenon of disruptive behaviour persists in Zimbabwe (Madziyire, 2012). This is because the cases of students' indulgence in behaviour problems in Zimbabwean schools ranges from minor cases like going to school late, absenteeism, harassment, bullying and stealing to major cases like rape, violent fights, assassination and drug abuse (Ncube, Dhlamini, and Moyo, 2013)

Behaviour problems trends among Kenyan students have been of great worry and concern in the last two decades (Kariuki and Aloka, 2014). However, available studies have consistently recognized the crucial role played by parents in a child's personality, mental, social and emotional functioning (Shahyada, Besharath, Asadic, Alipourc and Mirib, 2011). In addition, other studies have shown that when parents use appropriate parenting practices, they enhance their children's capacity to regulate their behaviours which leads to a shift from behavioural adjustment vulnerability to competence (Wairimu, 2013). Despite these evidences, sometimes parents have been found unconsciously socialising with their pre-adolescent and adolescent children in a manner that make them to adopt behaviours parents may not want their children to acquire. In this regard, parents have constantly been blamed when their children involve themselves in antisocial behaviour. For some parents are affectionate, approachable and friendly while others are discarding, rejecting, insensitive, unloving and essentially uninvolved with their children. On the other hand, some parents are tough, harsh and restrictive on their children while others are tolerant, permissive, unchallenging and undemanding. These differences in parenting practices are perceived to influence children differently leading to variations in children's personality, emotional and social functioning. However to date, it is unclear the extent to which these variations of parental rearing practices impacts on child development.

In Kenya, adolescents frequently indulge in various behaviour problems which are manifested in the form of rioting, sexual violence, fighting and bullying (Changalwa, Ndurumo, Barasa & Poipoi, 2012). In Kisumu Municipality, Ouma, Simatwa and Serem (2013) found that between 2006 and 2010 public primary schools experienced 9870 cases of pupil indiscipline. The behaviour problems experienced in primary schools included; noise making which was rated 3.7%, failure to complete class and other duties assignment to 3.8%, absenteeism 4.0%, unpunctuality 4.0%, stealing 3.5%, and sneaking out of school 3.5%. In Kisii and Nyamira County, Kostelny, Wessells and Ondoro (2014) established that 26.9% of the children drop out of

school yearly, 11.5% of school girls experience early pregnancy annually, 9.1% of school boys and girls use alcohol and other illegal drugs and 3.5% of the girls frequently involved themselves in prostitution. In Kenya, the Government is committed towards finding a solution towards problem behaviours in schools. However, the efforts by the governments have not been impressive given the number of cases of students' involvement in maladaptive behaviours in both primary and secondary schools which are manifested in the form of rioting, sexual violence, fighting and bullying. It is in the light of the above problems that the proposed study sought to establish the relationship between parental acceptance and behavioural adjustment among primary school pupils in Kisii Central Sub-County, Kenya.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed method approach (Creswell, 2014). This involved the collection, analysis and integration of both quantitative and qualitative research methods within a single research study in order to answer research questions (Creswell & Plano, 2011). Within the mixed method approach, the embedded research design was employed. The target population comprised of 14876 classes 7 and 8 primary school pupils, 10582 parents, 229 deputy head teachers and 218 guidance and counselling teachers. To obtain the sample for the study, the study used cluster sampling, stratified sampling and simple random sampling techniques. According to Shari (2012), a sample size of 25-30 is acceptable in an in-depth interview. However, the actual sample size for interview was determined by the theory of saturation in which the researcher collected data to a point in which new collected data no longer brought additional insights to the research questions (Patel, Doku & Tennakoon, 2003). Therefore, the theory of saturation was used to sample deputy head teachers, guidance and counselling teachers, and parents. Also, according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), for quantitative data to have 95% confidence level with 5% margin error. Therefore, Krejcie and Morgan table was only used to obtain primary class 7 and 8 pupils and sampled primary schools. The sample size for the study consisted of 374 pupils, 30 parents, 30 deputy head teachers and 30 guidance and counselling teachers. The study employed questionnaires and interview schedules to gather information to address the research objectives. The Parental Nurture Scale (PNS; Buri, Misukanis and Mueller, 1987) was modified to measure parental warmth while the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (4-16year old version) was modified to measure behavioural adjustment among primary school pupils. The study also employed the One-on-One interviews and focus group interviews. The study gathered both quantitative and qualitative data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analysing quantitative data while thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Objective of the study

To establish the relationship between parental degree of displayed acceptance and behavioural adjustment among primary school pupils

To investigate whether there was any significant relationship between parental displayed acceptance and learners' behavioural adjustment, the null hypothesis was tested. The null hypothesis stated as follows:

H₀: *There is no statistical significant relationship between parental displayed acceptance and learners' behavioural adjustment.*

To do this, a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was computed; with overall scores from the five aspects of behaviour adjustment indicators (emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems and pro-social behaviour) put together as dependent variable and scores of parental displayed acceptance, as the independent variable. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the

assumptions of normality. Table 1 shows the correlation analysis results in SPSS output.

Table 1. Correlations between Parental Degree of Displayed Acceptance and Learners’ Behavioural Adjustment

		Parental Acceptance	Overall Behavioural Adjustment
Parental Acceptance	Pearson Correlation	1	.552**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	356	356
Overall Behavioural Adjustment	Pearson Correlation	.552**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	356	356

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

Table 1 reveal that there was statistically significant positive correlation ($r=.552$, $n=356$, $p<.05$) between parental degree of displayed acceptance and learners’ behavioural adjustment. Given that the relationship was statistically significant, the hypothesis that, “*there is no statistical significant relationship between parental degree of displayed acceptance and behavioural adjustment*” was rejected. This finding is supported by Abdollahi, Mansor and Seyedeh (2013) who conducted a research among Iranian boy students that established a positive correlation between affectionate parenting style and high emotional intelligence among boys. On contrary, this finding does not concurs with that of Ronald, Rohner, Parminder and Masoumah (2010) who established that parents’ perceived acceptance did not correlate significantly with the girls’ school conduct and psychological adjustment.

Correlation between Parental Acceptance and Individual Aspects of learners’ Behavioural Adjustment

The study further sought to establish the relationship between parental degree of displayed acceptance and the individual aspects of behaviour adjustment. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation between Parental Degree of Displayed Acceptance and Individual Aspects of Learners’ Behavioural Adjustments

		Emotion Symptoms	Conduct Problem	Hyper-creativity	Peer Problem	Pro-social Behaviour
Parental Acceptance	Pearson Correlation	.375**	.448**	.439**	.331**	.437**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	356	356	356	356	356

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The finding of the study (Table 2) reveal that there were statistical significant ($p<.05$) positive correlation between parental degree of displayed acceptance and all the five aspects of behavioural adjustment. However, all the correlations were weak but it was evident that conduct problem adjustment reflected the highest correlation ($r=.448$), while peer problem adjustment had the least correlations ($r=.331$) to parental degree of displayed acceptance. This finding concurs with those of Fulya (2012) who conducted a study in Turkey that established that students who perceived their parents as non-judgmental had higher scores than adolescents who viewed their parents as neglectful in the life satisfaction. The study further established that increased parental acceptance was found to contribute highly to children’s feelings of being secure and less

controlled in the relationships with their friends. The finding is further supported by Abel (2014) who established that high levels of perceived parental criticism were associated with low levels of authenticity while high levels of perceived support were associated with high levels of authenticity.

To illustrate the relationship between parental degree of displayed acceptance and learners' overall behavioural adjustment, a scatter plot was generated as shown in Figure 1.

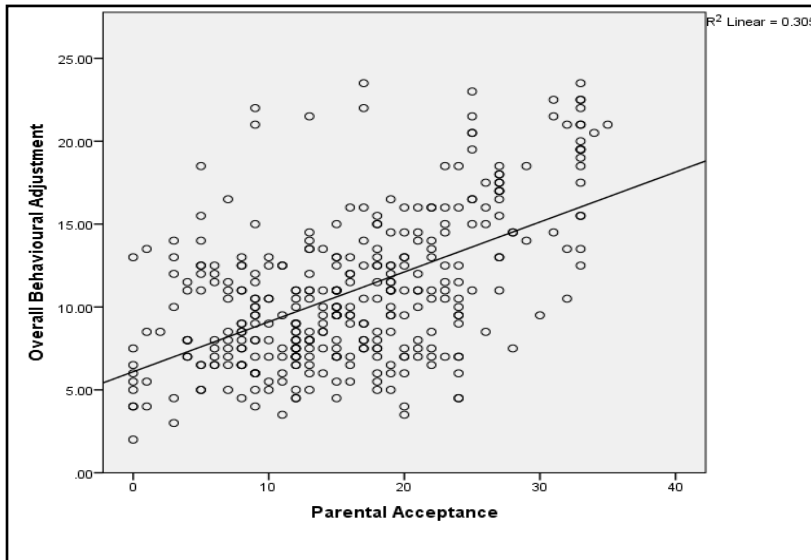


Figure 1 Influence of Parental Acceptance and Overall Learners' Behavioural Adjustment

The scatter plot shows that there were some evident of positive correlation between the two variables, as the pattern of dots seem to slope from lower left to upper right, an indication of a positive correlation between the two variables. The line of best fit further confirms this since the coordinate points seem to cluster near the line of best fit and are scattered around it forming almost a visible pattern. The fact that the scatters tend to concentrate in the neighbourhood of the identity line imply the relationship is real and not by chance. These findings agree with those of Marshall (2015) who established that paternal acceptance and warmth were associated with greater improvement in social skills and adaptability among students. Contrary, this finding does not concurs with that of Ronald, Rohner, Parminder and Masoumah (2010) who also established that parents' perceived acceptance did not correlate significantly with the girls' school conduct and psychological adjustment.

Regression Analysis of the Influence Parental Display Acceptance and Overall learner's Behaviour Adjustment

To estimate the level of influence of parental display of acceptance on overall behaviour adjustment, a coefficient of determination was computed using a regression analysis whose results were as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Regression Analysis of Parental Acceptance and Learners' Overall Behavioural Adjustment

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.552 a	.305	.303	3.79566
a. Predictors: (Constant), Parental Display of Acceptance				

The model shows that parental display of acceptance alone accounted for 30.5% of the variation in overall

behavioural adjustment among the pupils of class 7 and 8, as signified by coefficient R^2 of .305. This finding is supported by that of Hulya (2014) who found a positive significant relationship between maternal acceptance-rejection degrees and preschoolers' flexibility degrees.

In addition, linear regression was generated to estimate the actual influence of parental acceptance on overall learners' behavioural adjustment, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Coefficient of Parental Display of Acceptance and Overall Learners' Behavioural Adjustment

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	6.093	.434		14.038	.000
	Parental Acceptance	.301	.024	.552	12.460	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Overall Behavioural Adjustment

Regression equation: $Y = 6.093 + .301X_1 + \epsilon$.

Where, Y is Overall Behaviour Adjustment and X_1 is parental display of acceptance.

The results in Table 4 reveal that if the parental display of acceptance was improved by one standard deviation, then perceived scores in level of overall behaviour adjustment of children would improve by .552 standard deviation units. Similarly, if improve their parental display of acceptance by one unit then the level of overall behaviour adjustment among the children would improve by .301 units; this is a fairly sizeable effect from one independent variable. The finding is supported by Rowe, Zimmer, Rudolph and Nesdale (2014) who conducted a longitudinal study that established that parental rejection, coercion, and psychological control were associated with adolescents' escalating socio-emotional symptoms and peer victimisation. Contrary, these findings are not supported by that of Hulya (2014) who found that there was no significant relationship between maternal neglect/indifference, undifferentiated rejection, aggression/hostility levels and children's flexibility levels.

From the qualitative findings, there was no clear consensus in terms of the effects of parental psychological availability as an expression of parental acceptance on learners' behavioural adjustments. However, it was noted with a lot of concerns that some parents were negligent. These statements bear testimony to this:

"During guidance and counselling sessions in our school, I have come to understand that most of the behaviour problems we handle in our school are associated with parents being unavailable when the children critically require them. For example, we have a girl in class eight who is stressed with life and it was reported by her neighbour that twice she has attempted to commit suicide. In school, she is ever lonely and has very few friends. As I was trying to understand the girl's situation, she told me that her parents had separated two years ago, and she was staying with her father who was ever drunk and ignored to provide anything at home" (Guidance and counselling teacher, 22).

The above assertion appears to capture the idea that parental unwillingness and unavailable psychologically to engage in parental duties and role due to family instability was associated with the pupils' increased susceptible to various behaviour problems where some students develop negative emotional symptoms, low general contentment and negative self evaluation. However, parental psychological availability was generally associated with students' adoption of pro-social behaviours. This finding is supported by Mendi and Eldeleklioglu (2016) whose results showed a positive links between parental availability and their children's well-being.

The study further established a link between parental degree and type of criticism which were either associated with parental acceptance or rejection and children's social functioning and susceptibility to behaviour problems. The following statements support this finding:

"With me, I don't have any problems with my parents because they allow me to discuss with them my beliefs without feeling restrained or embarrassed. This makes me feel comfortable with them and I rarely do things that make them unhappy" (Learner 4, FGD 1).

"My mother is always a good listener than my father. I am always afraid to ask my father for what I want. When I have done a mistake, I often give my father a silent treatment and when I have to talk to him, I have to be insincere to avoid unnecessary criticism" (Learner 2, FGD 1).

From the above response from the focus group discussion with the primary school pupils, it is evident that parental negative criticism towards their children as an expression of parental rejection was associated with children's increased susceptibility to behaviour problems while positive and constructive criticism as an expression of parental acceptance was frequently associated with students' adoption of pro-social behaviours and increased general contentment among learners as they attempted to solve their day to day pre adolescent and adolescent related challenges and developmental tasks. This finding is consistent with those of Suzanne, Kelsey, Courtney and Anne (2016) who established a strong positive relationship between maternal hostility in the conflict task and children's emotional and conduct problems. These findings further concurs with that of Alyssa (2016) that the correlational analysis revealed significant associations between parental depression symptoms and childhood bullying and victimization.

On the extent parental over-emotional as a sign of parental rejection influenced pupils' behavioural adjustment, the study generally established that parental high emotional expressions towards their children were associated with behavioural maladjustment among students. The following statements appear to capture the essence:

".....last year there was a girl who was generally good at school in term of conduct and class work, one day the parent was very much annoyed when this girl drastically dropped in her performance. The girl was caned by the father and the mother was ever accusing her for even what she had not done. This girl all over sudden deliberately did things that will annoy other people, was hard to control at school and became messy and disorganized at school. To make the story short, I called the mother of the girl and I reunited the parent and the child and things are normal with this girl in terms of performance and conduct" (guidance and counselling teacher, 9).

From the above statement, it is evident that parental over-emotional is associated with the children's development of negative emotional symptoms and conduct problems. In particular it was established that when a parent overreacts or over punishes a given child, the punished child tends to deliberately do things that annoy other, become hard to control, messy and disorganized. The finding is supported by a study by Rowe, Zimmer, Rudolph and Nesdale (2014) who conducted a longitudinal study that established that parental coercion was associated with adolescents' increasing symptoms of social anxiety and parental psychological control was associated with increasing emotional symptoms among adolescents.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the current findings, it can be concluded that parental degree of displayed acceptance is a significant predictor of behavioural adjustment among primary school pupils. Consequently, it is evident that parental degree of child acceptance can either be devastating or healthy to the child's social and emotional competencies. On students' behavioural adjustment, the consequences of parental acceptance or rejection range from minor or no behavioural maladjustment to severe behavioural adjustment problems

which usually require clinical interventions. Therefore, the dilemma posed by parent-adolescent rejection was found to increase students' susceptibility to emotional symptoms, peer relation problem, conduct problems and hyperactivity symptoms. However, the findings demonstrate that parental-adolescent relationship characterized by parental acceptance had a great positive impact on pre-adolescent and adolescents' developmental outcomes. Hence, adolescence and pre-adolescence phase of human growth is very critical in the lives of human beings and the implication of the kind of parent-adolescent relationship at this stage is of great importance. Hence, it can be deduced that a healthy parental-adolescent acceptance characterized by parental verbal praise, expressive encouragement, psychological availability, physical involvement and reduced parental criticism and over-emotional have a profound effects on appropriate psychological adjustment of adolescents.

Despite the importance of parental acceptance on children's behavioural adjustment, the current study further indicated that parents greatly differed in terms of parental degree or acceptance or rejection. Nevertheless, the study established that a good proportion of children were frequently exposed to conditions of low levels of parental verbal praise, compliment and high level of parental negative criticism and excessive use of punitive approaches which were positively linked with behavioural maladjustment. In this regard, the present findings therefore provide ample results that should motivate every parent to achieve parent-adolescent interaction characterised by parental acceptance and avoid rejection. In light of the findings that parental acceptance predicted pupils behavioural adjustment in the current study, the study recommends that the government should introduce a course or seminar to equip parents with necessary skills related to appropriate parental nurturing practices which

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