

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

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ABSTRACT

The present study sought to investigate the extent parental expressed warmth 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 unit of analysis included 218 primary schools. 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 employed questionnaires and interview schedules to gather data. The study adopted the triangulation approach to measure the validity of the instruments. Split half method was also used to establish the reliability of instruments whereby the correlation coefficient value of .808 was established. 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 ($r=.682$, $n=356$, $p<.05$) between parental expressed warmth and pupils' overall behavioural adjustment. The statistical significant ($p<.05$) positive correlation were also established between parental warmth and all the five aspects of learners' behavioural adjustment (conduct problems, peer relationship problems, emotional symptom, hyperactivity and pro-social behaviours). Further analysis reveals that parental warmth alone accounted for 46.5% (Coefficient $R^2 = .465$) of the variation in overall behavioural adjustment among the class 7 and 8 pupils and it was evident that parental warmth was a significant predictor of the overall learners' behavioural adjustment [$F(1, 354) = 308.067$, $p < .05$]. The study also established that as parental warmth increased by one standard deviation, then perceived scores in level of behaviour adjustment of pupil would also increase by .682 standard deviation units. Similarly, if the parental warmth increases by one unit then level of overall adjustment would improve by .292 units; this is a substantial effect from one independent variable. From qualitative findings, it was established that that parents as role model for their children were crucial for children to acquire pro-social behaviours. On this note it was found that most pupils develops unacceptable behaviours because of parental frequent discouragements, unclear guidance and unsupportive home environment that did not promote children's use of proactive and problem-focused coping styles. The way parents communicate to their children was also found to have a positive effect on children's behavioural adjustment. Loving children unconditionally by providing developmentally-appropriate physical care and environment (feeding, clothing and home safety) was also found to foster children's positive emotional development and fewer behaviour problems at school and home.

Keywords: parental expressed warmth; behavioural adjustment; primary school pupils; kenya

1.0 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). However this study did not establish the factors surrounding behaviour problem.

In Zimbabwe, Student involvement in various behaviour problems has been a source of worry to stakeholders in education (Regis & 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, 2013).

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 the slums of Nairobi, drug abuse and misuse is a common behaviour problem among primary and secondary school students where 65% of young boys and girls use cigarettes, 52 % marijuana, 14% glue and 11% petrol (APHRC, 2002). With a lot of concern, over 26% of school going children who live in slums of major towns in Kenya frequently indulge in behaviour problems like violent fights, bullying, theft, truancy, watching pornographic materials and coming home late (Wairimu, 2013).

Despite the government's effort to curb behaviour problems through designing preventive programmes in school like the introduction of guidance and counselling in primary and secondary schools, reports on

indiscipline cases are worrying. For instance between 2000 and 2001, two hundred and eighty schools reported cases of student unrest in Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2001). 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. To date, the factors associated with this kind of trend has not been established in the two counties. Hence, the present study sought to fill this gap by examining the relationship between parental expressed warmth and primary school pupils' behavioural adjustment in Kisii Central Sub-County, Kenya.

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 expressed warmth and behavioural adjustment among primary school pupils in Kisii Central Sub-County, Kenya.

2.0 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. 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) (4-16 year 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.

To ensure validity of research instruments in the present study, face, construct and content validities of the questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis was determined by presenting and discussing the various items in research instruments with two experts in the school of Education of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (JOUST) who were actually the PhD thesis supervisors. The supervisors gave their views on the relevance, clarity and applicability of the questionnaire scales, interview schedule guides and document analysis guide. Their suggestions, together with the findings from the pilot study were used to modify the items in the research instruments. This ensured that the test items were clear, relevant and well organized. The study further adopted the triangulation approach so as to ensure the validity of the research instruments. 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.

3.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To investigate whether there was any relationship between parental expressed warmth and learners'

behavioural adjustment, the null hypothesis was tested. The null hypothesis stated as follows:

H₀: *There is no statistical significant relationship between parental expressed warmth 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 expressed warmth, as the independent variable. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality. Table 4.1 shows the correlation analysis results in SPSS output.

Table 4.1 *Correlations between Parental expressed warmth and behavioural adjustment*

		Parental warmth	Overall Behavioural Adjustment
Parental warmth	Pearson Correlation	1	.682**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	356	356
Overall Behavioural Adjustment	Pearson Correlation	.682**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	356	356

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

The finding of the study shows that there was statistically significant positive correlation ($r=.682$, $n=356$, $p<.05$) between parental expressed warmth and learners' behavioural adjustment. Given that the relationship was statistically significant, the hypothesis that, "there is no statistical significant relationship between parental expressed warmth and learners' behavioural adjustment" was rejected. This finding concurs with that of Andrew, Norman, Pamela, Mariana, and Xiaoyi (2015) whose study established that affectionate parental behaviours were associated with children's self regulated, mental health and emotional symptom. On contrary, the present finding is not in line with those of Lim, Rozumah and Tan (2013) whose findings revealed that perceived parental warmth had an indirect effect on students' emotional symptom and self-esteem.

In addition, the study sought to establish the relationship between parental warmth and the individual aspects of behaviour adjustment, as indicated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 *Correlation between Parental Expressed Warmth and Individual Aspects of Behavioural Adjustment*

		Emotion Symptoms	Conduct Problem	Hyper-creativity	Peer Problem	Pro-social Behaviour
Parental warmth	Pearson Correlation	.444**	.522**	.575**	.368**	.601**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0	0	0
	N	356	356	356	356	356

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

The findings of the study show that there were statistical significant ($p < .05$) positive correlation between parental warmth and all the five aspects of behavioural adjustment. However, pro-social behaviour adjustment reflected the highest correlation ($r = .601$), while peer problem adjustment had the least correlation ($r = .368$) to parental warmth. This finding concurs with that of Nor, Siti and Ismi (2017) which established that there was a significant positive relationship between parent-child attachment and the youth's social and emotional competence.

Further, a coefficient of determination was computed using of a regression analysis whose results were as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 *Model Summary on Regression Analysis of the influence of parental warmth and overall behavioural adjustment*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.682 a	.465	.464	3.32891
a. Predictors: (Constant), Parental warmth				

The model shows that parental warmth alone accounted for 46.5% (Coefficient $R^2 = .465$) of the variation in overall behavioural adjustment among the class 7 and 8 pupils. This finding do not concur with those of Schneider (2016) who established that the adolescents' perceived quality of parental attachment accounts for only 18% of the adolescents' internalizing symptoms. However, the finding concurs with a quantitative study that was conducted among postgraduate students in Malaysia by Chee-Huay, Kee-Jiar and Nora (2014) that indicated that early childhood parental nurturing practices greatly influenced children's later psychological development, in particularly self-esteem and self regulation skills.

Further, linear regression was generated to find the actual influence of parental warmth on overall behavioural adjustment, as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 *Coefficient of Parental Warmth and Pupils' Overall Behavioural Adjustment*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.803	.249		31.350	.000
	Parental warmth	.292	.017	.682	17.552	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Overall Behavioural Adjustment						

Regression equation: $Y = 7.803 + .292X_1$:

Where, Y is Overall Behaviour Adjustment and X_1 is parental expressed warmth.

It is evident from Table 4.4 that if the parental warmth was increased by one standard deviation, then perceived scores in level of behaviour adjustment of children would increase by .682 standard deviation units. Similarly, if the parental warmth increases by one unit then level of overall adjustment would improve by .292 units; this is a substantial effect from one independent variable. This finding agrees with those of Stevens (2014) who established that parental negative emotions were associated with children's tendency

of engaging in oppositional behaviour like frequent anger expression, impatient, restless and did not value life because they frequently involved in risky behaviours.

The result on the relationship between parental warmth and primary pupils' behavioural adjustment was also obtained from interviews. In one of the focus group discussion, primary school pupils had this to say:

“When I perform badly in school, my father does not give me any gifts because he says that I am wasting family money and he does not want to listen anything from me while he always buy gifts to my younger sister who is performing relatively better in school. Since my father doesn't like me, I usually beat this sister when my parents are away”. (Learner, 05, FGD, 3)

“My desk mate is an orphan, her guardians are not good because they don't provide anything to her, and she keeps on asking for pen and exercise book from me. Aaaah, this child even beg everything she sees you with. Last month I found my lost exercise book in her bag which she had even used. I was not happy with her but I did not report her to the teacher because I understand her problem and she is always suspected of stealing” (Learner, 1, FGD, 3)

The above excerpts from the focus group discussion with the primary school learner further shows that when parents don't express unconditional positive regard to their children regardless of their academic achievement and who they are in the family, the affected children tend to indulge in aggressive behaviours so as to call the attention of the parents and other steal from other to get what they need in their daily life which their parents or guardian fail to provide them with because they don't meet given family standards. This finding concurs with those of Nor, Siti and Ismi (2017) which indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between parent-child attachment and child social and self regulation competencies.

In the present study, it was established that the way parents communicate as a way of expressing parental warmth to their children was found to have either positive or negative impact on children's behavioural adjustment. The following statement bears testimony to this:

“During standard seven and eight class conference, I came to realise that some parents here in our school don't allow much discussion with their children in relation to their school performance and day to day needs. For most of them, a parent is final. If a child has an idea, he is not allowed to express. This is partly culture and some are just individual. This usually make child to resist parental directions”. (Guidance and counselling teacher, 5)

The above observation from the interview shows that one way communication and parent-child interaction model had a negative effects on the children's adjustment in that it lead the affected children to become hard to control, uncooperative and resisted parental direction.

The study also established a relationship between parental loving touch and students' behavioural adjustment. The following assertion appears to capture these findings well:

“My mother is always happy to see me after school and check what we have done in school. When watching the TV during and after supper, she always guides me on bad behaviours that I should avoid and how to choose my friends. This has really helped to have very few problems with my class mate unlike my friends who frequently involve themselves in fights, unnecessary quarrel and disagreements as they play and share things in school during games and break time”. (Learner, 2, FGD, 15)

From the above statements gleaned from the focus group discussion with primary school pupils, it is evident that parental loving touches as an expression of parental warmth where by parents strived to give their children emotional connection by providing developmentally-appropriate physical care and environment was strongly associated with children's positive emotional development and fewer behaviour problems at

school and home. These findings are in line with those of Stephanie, Esther and Nayena (2010) who established that the child's secure attachment to parents was positively associated with ease friendship formation among racial minority and white participants and satisfaction with friendships among minority participants.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It can be concluded that parental expressed warmth is a significant predictor of behavioural adjustment among primary school pupils. Hence, parental warmth is an important aspect of positive parent-child relationships that is critical for children's well-being and future interpersonal interactions. This important aspect of parental nurturance usually occurred as parents protected, guided, communicated and shared with their children. In this regard through parental warmth, parents were found to set the tone for any of the parent-child's interactions which were positively related to the child's social and emotional competencies. Hence, the present study provides ample findings that support the roles parental warmth plays in children's social and emotional development. Parental warmth was also linked with positive developmental outcomes among children like higher self-esteem, better parent-child communication, and fewer psychological and behaviour problems like peer relationship problems, conduct problem and hyperactivity. However, insufficient levels of parental warmth was found to foster a feel of alienation, expressions of hostility and aggression, diminished self-esteem, antisocial and risk behaviours.

Further it can be concluded that parent-child interactions characterized by parental warmth usually foster the preservation of social and emotional fabric which underlies a healthy population in term of behavioural adjustment. Thus, there is a great interest in finding the appropriate rearing practises for parents which would not only mitigate the behaviour problems among young children in schools and at home, but would also lower cases of emotional symptoms, conduct problem, peer relationship problems and hyperactivity among students. These behaviours are not only potentially risky for individual learner, but also put the society at risk due to their impact through various criminal activities. Thus, there is need to sensitize parents/guardians on their important role in influencing their children's behaviour in addition to empowering them with appropriate parenting skills and knowledge.

In light of the findings that parental expressed warmth predicted pupils behavioural adjustment in the current study, the study recommends that board of management of primary school, teachers and the government should organize seminars with parents to not only discuss students' performance and behaviours problems, but also the importance of parental two-way communication with their children, parental-child loving touch, positive regard and modelling which were associated with parental expressed warmth in the present study. This will ensure that parents are in position to appreciate the role of parental expressed warmth in curbing pupils' susceptibility to behavioural maladjustment.

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