

Exploring the Relationship Between Parental Practices and Child Outcomes in Selected Catholic Parishes in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya.

Catherine N Mwarari, Henry Tucholski, Pius Muasa, Ruth Walioli, Alice K. Nzangi, Fredrick Kamande

Tangaza University, Nairobi, Kenya

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.807030>

Received: 06 June 2024; Revised: 22 June 2024; Accepted: 26 June 2024; Published: 29 July 2024

ABSTRACT

Parenting practices are widely acknowledged as having an impactful influence on child outcomes. Based on Baumrind's parenting styles, this paper explores the relationship between parenting styles and child outcomes. Exploratory embedded research design was used involving 50 parents from five Catholic parishes from the Archdiocese of Nairobi. The participants took part in Focus Group Discussions that solicited information on their parenting practices and the ensuing child outcomes. Results indicated that authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles were the parenting practices adopted by parents in the five selected parishes. Interestingly, despite widely held assumptions that authoritarian parenting style has negative child outcomes, results indicated some positive outcomes such as discipline that emanated from this parenting practice. Implications and strategies for effective parenting as well as ideas for further research are presented.

Keywords: Child outcomes, parental practices, authoritative parenting style, authoritarian parenting style,

INTRODUCTION

Research indicates that there is a relationship between parenting practices and child outcomes (Jackson & Dumas, 2016; Moreland, et al., 2017). Parenting practices which include: acceptance, aspirations, control, demandingness, disciplinary practices, and encouragement of autonomy correlate to a child's positive social-emotional skills, acquisition and use of knowledge and skills as well as the use of appropriate behavior to meet needs (Carreteiro, Justo, & Figueira, 2016; Meinck et al., 2015).

Parenting Practices and Child Outcomes

Parenting practices are behaviors applied by parents to their children to guide their attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs (Pérez et al., 2022). These include parental involvement, and monitoring, encouragement of autonomy support, nurturance, and discipline practices (Spera, 2005; Kamenderi et al., 2021). Often, the terms parental styles and parental practices are used interchangeably, however, Spera (2005) argues that these terms are different. Parental style is the emotional environment in which parents bring up their children. Parental styles are indicated by dimensions of parental responsiveness and control. The parental styles include authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive depending on the degree of warmth responsiveness, and control they have over their children. Largely parenting styles therefore influence the parental practices applied by parents to their children (Spera, 2005). Sidze and Defo (2013) add that parental

practices influence quite a range of child behavior including both risky and prosocial behaviors

Baumrind (1966) is credited with identifying three distinct parenting approaches and the effects they have on children. These parenting approaches are (a) authoritarian, (b), authoritative, and (c) permissive. The parenting styles are determined by how demanding and accommodating parents are. The uninvolved or neglectful parenting style has also since been included (Maccoby and Martin, 1983). Authoritarian parenting practices typically involve a one-way manner of communication in which the parent sets down rigid guidelines that the child is expected to follow. Consequently, children are well-behaved due to the repercussions of misbehaving. However, it produces aggressive, timid, socially awkward children who are unable to make their judgments (Masud, 2019). Research has found negative links between high demandingness combined with lower responsiveness on youth outcomes in authoritarian parenting style (Carlo et al., 2017). Further, as children grow older, strict parental regulations and penalties inspire rebellion against authorities. Additionally, Hopkinson and Johnson (2019) noted there exists a relationship between ineffective parenting and juvenile behavioral outcomes in children. Notably, the majority of parents of juvenile children use authoritarian parenting styles. Fear is another negative outcome of authoritarian parenting (Ahmad, 2021; Thabet & Qrenawi, 2017). Additionally, studies correlate with authoritarian parenting practices and negative child outcomes (Divecha, 2019; Mak, Yin, Cheung & Oon, 2020).

Authoritative parenting typically cultivates a tight, nurturing bond between parents and their children. They provide clear boundaries for expectations and provide justifications for disciplinary measures. Authoritative parenting has been correlated with overall positive outcomes (Kawabata et al., 2011; McDermott et al., 2014). Children raised by authoritative parents are capable of self-control, confidence, and responsibility Masud (2019). They are better at controlling their negative emotions, which improves social functioning and emotional well-being. Parental responsiveness correlates positively with self-compassion among adolescents (Dakers & Guse, 2022) They grow up knowing they can achieve on their own and these children have high self-esteem and register good school performance.

In families that use an authoritative style, it has been found that there are reasonable interactions in relationships between parents and children and there is participation in decision-making (Shahsavari, 2012). In this case, parents, however, exert strong control but do not limit the capabilities and competencies of children (Sadeghi, et al., 2007; Shahsavari, 2012). Further, in authoritative parenting, there is the transference of facts and understanding insights to their children better than others styles (Shahsavari, 2012). Authoritative parents are good in communication, and often reason issues with their children other than subjecting them to subjection. Dolati (2010) and Shahsavari (2012) in their research have pointed out that authoritative parents communicate with their children in such a way that the process and responses invoke a feeling of happiness. This style of parenting comes with a positive development outcome such as higher academic achievement, higher self-reliance, less deviance, and better relationships with peers (Laali-Faz and Askari, 2008). Moral socialization theorists postulate that parenting high on responsiveness and demandingness (i.e., authoritative) facilitate an orientation toward the needs of others and is associated with good self-regulation skills, moral values, sympathy, and moral reasoning (Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006; Grusec & Sherman, 2011). This presumably is because such parenting provides models for good self-regulation and prosocial actions and moral values (including the consideration of and respect for others) and fosters responsivity to others' needs.

Permissive parenting is warm and loving, permissive parents typically have few, if any, demands. They place a few restrictions on their children and parents behave as friends. In general, children of permissive parents typically have some sense of self-worth and respectable social abilities. However, they tend to be impetuous, unreasonable, egotistical and lack self-control (Piotrowski, Lapierre & Linebarger, 2013).

Uninvolved parenting is the kind where parents typically keep their distance and children are allowed a great deal of independence with the parent having few or no expectations for their children (Maccoby &

Martin, 1983). While often maintaining their distance from their child's life, showing little care, they meet the child's fundamental necessities but the parent has little communication with their child and doesn't use a particular method of correction (Sahithya, Manohari & Vijaya, 2019) This may result in children who struggle with emotional regulation, have less effective coping mechanisms, experience academic difficulties, and problems fostering or maintaining social relationships (Pinquart & Gerke, 2019).

It has been argued that authoritative parenting combined with an authoritarian style represents a culturally situated combination of behaviors that deviates from predominant views of responsiveness (Brody & Flor, 1998; Carlo et al., 2017). Furthermore, some scholars have suggested that these techniques create normative expectations that may mitigate negative youth consequences (Chao & Otsuki-Clutter, 2011). Positive outcomes such as academic achievement and self-efficacy were among child outcomes that resulted from authoritative parenting practices (Lavrič & Naterer 2020; Hayek, Schneider, Lahoud, Tueni, M., & de Vries, 2022).

Kotchick and Forehand (2002) observed that various factors determine parenting practices. Such factors are parental personality, psychological function, and the environment they interact. They further argue that parenting is a dynamic process and parental practices emerge from the internal working models of attachment that get established depending on how the parents were treated by their caregivers. Parenting practices thus continuously develop due to the transactional interaction between the parents and children, and families and the environment they are interacting in as observed by Pérez et al., (2022) who noted that parental practices differ depending on the different situations parents and children interact. A relationship between inconsistent discipline with maternal distress has been identified more so, inconsistent discipline partially mediates the relationship between maternal distress and the conduct behavior of children (Dubois-Comtois et al., 2013).

As aforementioned various studies have been done on parental practices and child outcomes. A study conducted by Prevatt (2003) in America evaluated the risk and resiliency of children's adjustment and concentrated on the relationship of parenting practices to the risk and protective factors reported a direct effect of parenting practices on child outcomes, however, it was not found to be a strong moderator of the relationship between risk and protection factors and child outcomes. Additionally, a review and synthesis study by Devlin, Wight, and Fenton (2018) comparing the impact of parenting practices on child outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa and high-income countries reported that there was similarity in outcomes across different global regions and, hence proposing that parenting interventions used in high-income countries might be effectively applied to Sub Saharan Africa, considering appropriate adaptation. Watts et al. (2018) conducted a cross-sectional study to establish whether higher maternal psychological distress, lower provision of psychosocial stimulation, and parenting experiences predict lower cognitive, motor, social emotional, and development among children below 3 years in Kenya. The results revealed that higher maternal psychological distress was correlated with lower emotional development in children. However, it was not correlated to the cognitive, motor, and adaptive development of children. Kamenderi et al. (2021) noted that home and school environments and parenting significantly correlated with lifetime alcohol use.

In traditional African society, children belonged to the community and were well taken care of by their parents, grandparents, and extended family members where everyone ensured that children were safe, provided for, and well-behaved wherever they were (Walioli & Kangethe, 2020). Childhood was therefore well balanced as the entire community participated in the parenting of children. Recent decades have seen major changes in child rearing notably, typical households are no longer a joint family with a large support system; members of the extended family no longer play their role in safeguarding, protecting, nurturing, and parenting children (Ulferts,2020).

Further, children are being raised in different types of families with resultant challenges in terms of child outcomes. The increase in the rate of parental separation and divorce, means that children are growing up

without the love and care of both parents and the outcome of such situations in children are feelings of rage, worry, sadness, confusion, and frustration which contribute to a child's wholistic behaviour (Kumar, 2022). Children from divorced families may start externalizing their feelings; this could result in conduct disorders, destructive behavior, and acting impulsively (Yazdi et al., 2015). Additionally, children with divorced biological parents are more prone to becoming involved in confrontations outside the home (Wave Clinic, 2022).

It is against this backdrop that the present study intends to identify effective parenting strategies that will lead to positive child outcomes which are necessary for wholistic child development. Besides, it is apt to note that the bulk of research in this area has been done in the West thus this study intends to fill this contextual gap by finding out if there is a relationship between parenting practices and child outcomes in selected parishes in the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

Design

The proposed study employed a mixed-method research approach, specifically utilizing an exploratory embedded research design. The rationale for choosing this approach was to explore the qualitative aspects of parenting practices and ensuing child outcomes in the selected parishes and then quantify the findings to provide broader generalizability.

Sampling and Research Instruments

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather in-depth qualitative data. A purposive criterion sampling procedure was employed, with participants drawn from five parishes within the Archdiocese of Nairobi. These parishes were chosen based on their involvement in the Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC) and Missionary Youth Movement (MYM) training of coordinators. The participant pool consisted of 50 parents (10 from each selected parish). The geographical (rural/urban) and socioeconomic status of the parents were considered in the selection process. The interviews were conducted with selected parents to gather in-depth information on parenting practices and child outcomes.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data was analysed using thematic data analysis to identify patterns and themes related to parenting practice and child outcomes within families. In the following step of data analysis, the same set of data was subjected to content data analysis to obtain numerical information that could be statistically analysed. Quantitative data was examined through descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to examine the relationship between parental practices and child outcomes. The integration of qualitative and quantitative data occurred after the qualitative analysis phase. Data transformation and comparison methods were used to integrate the qualitative and quantitative data, ensuring a cohesive interpretation of the findings. Strategies such as member checking and triangulation were employed to ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the qualitative data. The qualitative data collection tool was pre-tested using cognitive interviewing, scrutiny by experts, reviewing, and revising. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board and NACOSTI. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Measures were taken to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, including secure storage of data and anonymization of interview transcripts. The dissemination of findings will involve collaboration among all study participants. The results will be shared with the participating parishes and relevant stakeholders to inform future initiatives.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Parenting Practices that promote various child outcomes in selected parishes in Nairobi Archdiocese

The study sought to establish parenting practices used by parents in the selected parishes in Nairobi Archdiocese. Authoritarian and authoritative styles of parenting emerged as the parenting practices adopted by parents. About the authoritative style of parenting parent 21 intimated, *‘I have given them the leeway to be open to me...Mom I know I did this and I am sorry. What can I do to make up?’* Parent 17 who uses the authoritarian style had this to say, *‘I am not giving them a chance to discuss with me...they have to know their place.’* This study corroborates Sahithya, Manohari, and Vijaya’s (2019) study who found that both authoritative and authoritarian styles of parenting are adopted across cultures. Indeed, the authors established that culture is not a moderator for parenting styles and child outcomes.

Authoritative parenting style has always been associated with positive child outcomes (Dakers & Guse, 2022; Masud,2019; Yaffe, 2023 and this study attested to it. Among the positive child outcomes associated with the authoritative parenting style was, the acquisition of social skills, *‘When you sit down with your child and you reason together, they will have a reference point on how to live with other people (Parent 14)’* Responsibility was another child outcome when parents adopted authoritative parenting style, *‘... you will know that even if you are not there, the child will know there is something you said... (Parent 7).’* *‘Openness is very important especially for a girl when in adolescence.... (Parent 1)’* Another positive child outcome that emerged from the study was spiritual growth, *‘...when you bring up your child in the way of Christ they will not leave it. You told him why it is good... (Parent 11)’*

On the flip side, authoritarian parenting style is associated with negative child outcomes. Among them include fear, *‘I can see it (authoritarian) did not work with my firstborn. I cannot recommend authoritarian style ...she (firstborn) has a lot of fear. She doesn’t want to be with people. (parent 13)’*. Another parent noted, *‘If parent and teacher are commanding the child the child develops fear’* (parent 14). Lack of bonding is another negative outcome that emanates from the authoritarian style of parenting as indicated by parent 27, *‘Telling children what you don’t want in the house will make them never be your friend. They will shy away from sharing with you.’* Lack of confidence and low self-esteem are other negative outcomes of authoritarian style of parenting, *‘They are afraid to ask questions even to the teacher...’* (Parent 5). Another negative outcome is illogical thinking... *‘A child might think you hate them (Parent 22).* Poor academic performance is yet another negative outcome of authoritarian style of parenting, *‘they are afraid to ask questions to the teacher so they do not do well in school... (Parent 35)’*

Interestingly, parents indicated that there were positive outcomes that emanated from the use of the authoritarian style of parenting which include, obedience *‘In my view, my children are good. They go to church. My daughter tells me things ...I am strict because children might use their freedom in the wrong way... (Parent 28).* Coupled with this is discipline, the effective side of this style (authoritarian) is discipline level...*you have to be in the house by six and all my children are home by six... (Parent 9).* This is not unusual since Chua (2021) also found the same positive outcomes among children raised by Chinese parents who used authoritarian parenting practices.

Using content analysis, the study endeavored to establish if there exists a significant relationship between parenting styles (specifically authoritative and authoritarian) to child outcome. Table 1 shows practices related to authoritative parenting style and the child outcomes resulting from the practice.

Table 1 Authoritative parenting style practices and attendant child outcomes

	AUTHORITATIVE STYLE OF PARENTING PRACTICES	Frequency
1	Dialogue with children	47

2	Loving children	12
3	Praying for children	13
4	Correcting children	10
5	Teaching children	16
6	Taking children to Church	17
7	Establishing good relationship	29
8	Caring for children	5
9	Providing children with information	3
10	Being role model to children	6
11	Creating to children personal space	12
12	Protecting children	7
13	Sharing on a deeper level	6
14	Listening to children	9
15	Assigning children responsibilities	23
16	Guiding children	4
17	Nurturing children	7
18	Communicating with children	6
	CHILD OUTCOMES	
1	Respect for parents	2
2	Child mannerism /Courtesy	6
4	High self-esteem	6
5	Confidence	9
8	Happiness	1
9	Appreciation	2
10	Acquisition of social skills	10
11	Responsibility	11
12	Openness	12
13	Spiritual growth	28

Table 1 indicates that among the parents who use the authoritative parenting style majority (94%) dialogue with children while only a few (6%) provide information to their children. In regards to child outcomes, spiritual growth was the highest (56%) with happiness being the least (2%) acquired outcome related to authoritative parenting style. The results are similar to views by Baumrind (1966); Faber and Mazlish (2012) and Markham (2012).

In regards to the authoritarian style of parenting, Table 2 shows the practices adopted by parents using this style and the ensuing child outcomes.

Table 2 Authoritarian parenting style practices and consequential child outcomes

	AUTHORITARIAN STYLE OF PARENTING	Frequency
1	Punishing children	17
2	Demanding obedience	5
3	Emphasizing on ‘rule of the house’	7

4	Being strict with children	7
5	'Disciplining' the children	12
6	Being absent from home	2
7	Shouting at children	33
8	Getting angry with children	4
9	Having closed personality	10
CHILD OUTCOMES		
1	Fear	26
2	Low self-esteem	2
3	Lack of confidence	11
4	The feeling of being ignored	1
5	Insecurity	3
6	Illogical thinking	5
7	Poor academic performance	19
8	Suspicion	2
9	Suffering	2

Table 2 shows that shouting at children was the most (66%) adopted practice used by parents using the authoritarian style while absenting oneself from home was the least (4%) used practice. The highest child outcome from this style of parenting was fear (52%) while the feeling of being ignored was the least (2%). The findings are corroborated by Thabet and Qrenawi (2017) and Ahmad (2021).

To establish if there was any significant relationship between parenting practice and child outcomes a correlation test was carried out using Pearson correlation. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Correlation between authoritative parenting style and child outcomes

		AUTHORITATIVE STYLE OF PARENTING	CHILD OUTCOME
AUTHORITATIVE STYLE OF PARENTING	Pearson Correlation	1	.046
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.894
	N	18	11
CHILD OUTCOME	Pearson Correlation	.046	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.894	
	N	11	11

Table 3 shows the correlation between authoritative parenting style and child outcomes: $R = .46$ ($r = .05$) which indicates a moderate positive correlation. This finding is similar to findings by others (Baumrind, 1966; Lavrič & Naterer 2020; Hayek, Schneider, Lahoud, Tueni, M., & de Vries, 2022).

Additionally, a correlation was carried out to establish if there is any relationship between the authoritarian style of parenting and child outcomes. Table 4 indicates the findings

Table 4 Correlation between authoritarian style of parenting and child outcomes

		CHILD OUTCOME	AUTHORITARIAN STYLE OF PARENTING
CHILD OUTCOME	Pearson Correlation	1	-.409
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.274
	N	11	9
AUTHORITARIAN STYLE OF PARENTING	Pearson Correlation	-.409	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.274	
	N	9	9

The findings show that there is a weak negative correlation $R = -.409$ ($r = .05$); $P = .274$ (27.4% of data is generated by chance). This means that the statistics somehow reflect reality and the implication is that the more parents exercise an authoritarian style of parenting the more negative outcomes they generate. These findings are similar to findings by other studies (Divecha, 2019; Mak et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this study has provided valuable insights into the relationship between parenting practices and child outcomes. Through the mixed methods of research, the study revealed that parents in the selected parishes in the Archdiocese of Nairobi used either authoritarian or authoritative styles of parenting practices. Authoritarian style, the study indicated had both positive and negative child outcomes. These findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge on child outcomes about parenting practices and have implications for parents and the field of developmental psychology. Furthermore, our analysis suggests that the authoritarian parenting style is not detrimental to the child’s development as perceived, indicating the need for further research in this area. Overall, the results support the notion that there exists a relationship between parenting style and child outcomes.

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